

ISRO
organizes
Space Analog
Mission in
Tso Kar Valley,
Ladakh

Online
Gaming Bill
2025
Passed



US Tariffs
on **Indian**
Imports



20
25 | **SCO**
Summit



Independence
Day

New
Income Tax
Bill 2025

5 Years of
NEP 2020



Peace
Agreement



SEPTEMBER 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



REAL MENTORSHIP. REAL RESULTS.



NPLC's TOP PERFORMERS 2025



AIR 02, AILET



Chaitanya Ghosh



AIR 02, CLAT



Daiwik Agarwala



AIR 04, CLAT



Aditya Ankhad



AIR 6, AILET



Dhruv Kamath



AIR 10, AILET



Vidisha Singh



AIR 24, AILET



Samyuktha Kovilakath



AIR 30, AILET



Goohika Joshi



AIR 51, AILET



Aditya Mehta



AIR 78, AILET



Yutika Kumar

YE POSTER NAHI, PROOF HAI!

N^{PO} NISHANT PRAKASH LAW CLASSES

"Gurukul for CLAT & AILET"

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.

At NPLC, students are not identified by roll numbers but by their potential—and we make it our mission to ensure they live up to it.

What sets us apart?



91% Success Rate



Online & Offline Classes



Personalized Mentorship



Detailed Study Materials
& Tests



1:15 Mentor - Student
Ratio



Only 60 intakes per year

N
NAVIGATE.
P
PREPARE.
L
LEAD.
C
CONQUER.

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.

Their Next Chapter



NLSIU - Bengaluru

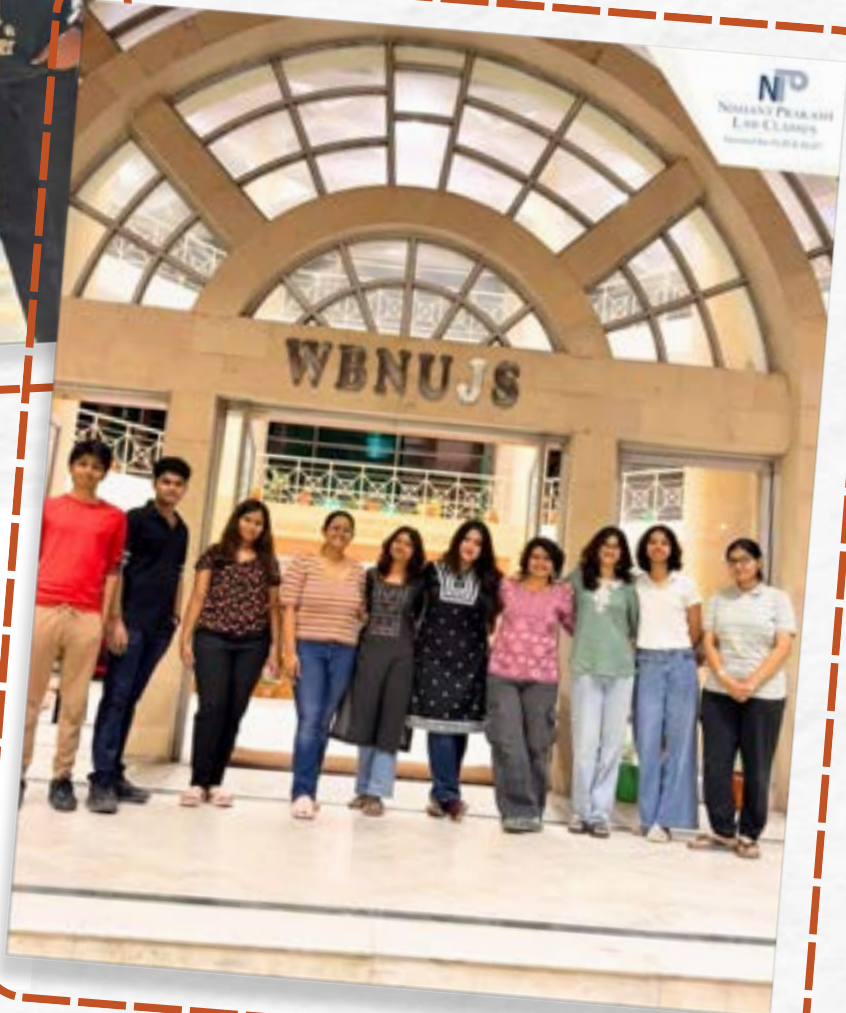
(Left to Right)

**Dainik Agarwala
Daksh Balakrishnan
Dhruv Kamath
Aditya Ankhad**

WBNUJS - Kolkata

(Left to Right)

**Reyhaan Aryan, Shashwat
Singh, Aanya Arora,
Shivakshi Dixit, Dhara
Mittal, Vaishali Bhatra,
Labonyo Banerjee, Yutika
Kumar, Janani Murugan,
Megha Malhotra**



Their Next Chapter



NLU - Delhi

(Left to Right)
Ananya Prakash,
Amoolya Kapani, Vidisha
Singh, Goohika Joshi,
Masirah Hussain, Krish
Walia, Chaitanya Ghosh,
Aditya Mehta

NLU - Jodhpur

(Left to Right)

Vivaan Mehta
Khushi Gaur
Maahi Yadav
Shefali Talwar
Kaushtubh Anand



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1 5 YEARS OF NEP 2020

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

- **Venue and Timing:** On 29 July 2025 in New Delhi, the Union Education Minister inaugurated the **Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Samagam (ABSS) 2025** to mark the **5th anniversary of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.
- **Curriculum and Language Reform:** The policy's 5+3+3+4 structure and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education promoted mother tongue-based early education and experiential, competency-driven pedagogy.
- **Inclusivity Measures:** More than 1.15 lakh students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups and 7.58 lakh girls enrolled in residential schools, while the PRASHAST App expanded disability screening.

Event Overview and Dignitaries

- ABSS 2025 brought together Ministers of State **Shri Jayant Chaudhary** and **Dr. Sukanta Majumdar**, Education Ministers from thirteen States and Union Territories, the Secretaries of **Department of Higher Education** and **Department of School Education & Literacy**, senior officials of **CBSE, KVS, NVS, and NCERT**, Vice-Chancellors and Directors of higher education institutions, autonomous body heads, regional officers, state education secretaries, project directors of **Samagra Shiksha**, **SCERT** directors, startup founders, teachers, and school students.
- The proceedings opened with floral tributes to **Padma Vibhushan Dr. K. Kasturirangan**, Chair of the NEP 2020 Drafting Committee, followed by a welcome song by **Kendriya Vidyalaya** students and the reading of the Prime Minister's message on the policy's fifth anniversary.



Announcements Under the Department of Higher Education (DoHE)

Language and Testing

The **National Testing Service-India (NTS-I)** unveiled a web-based **Local Language Proficiency Test Portal** assessing **Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing (LSRW)** across **twenty-two Indian languages**, supported by a bank of **182,480 LSRW items** spanning **1,825 tests**.

Skill Development and Apprenticeships

Under the **National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS)**, the Ministry announced **AI Apprenticeships** projected to benefit about **one lakh** students, with a minimum stipend of **₹9,000** for graduates and **₹8,000** for diploma holders and an estimated total stipend support of **₹500 crore** co-funded by government and industry across **healthcare, manufacturing and construction, education, BFSI, electronics, and IT/ITES**.

AI Platforms and Knowledge Systems

- IIT Ropar launched **ViBe: Engage. Enjoy. Enlighten.**, an **AI-powered continuous active-learning platform** that segments lessons into small chunks, runs adaptive challenges with real-time feedback, and automates routine checks to free teachers for experiential learning.
- The **Centre of Indian Knowledge Systems and Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Sanskrit (IKS-ED)** at **Deccan College (Deemed University)**, established by **Central Sanskrit University** with Ministry approval, showcased the **Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Sanskrit on Historical Principles** tracing linguistic development from **Rigveda (c. 14th century BCE)** to **Hāsyārṇava (1850 CE)** across **1,500 texts** and **sixty-two disciplines**, covering **over fifteen lakh vocables** and **one crore references**.
- The **KoshaSHRI** project, funded by **DST** under **SHRI** with **C-DAC Pune**, digitised all **thirty-five volumes** and prepared a public portal with advanced search, authoring tools, and Sanskrit fonts to enable collaborative scholarship.

Internationalisation of Indian Higher Education

- In the presence of the Minister, **Letters of Intent** were presented by leading foreign universities to establish campuses in India, signalling an acceleration of NEP's internationalisation.
- **Western Sydney University** proposed a **Greater Noida** campus with undergraduate programmes in **Business Analytics** and **Business Marketing** and postgraduate MBAs in **Innovation & Entrepreneurship** and **Logistics & Supply Chain Management**, building on collaborations with **AIIA, Ministry of Jal Shakti, ICAR, and IISc**.
- **Victoria University** proposed a **Noida** campus with undergraduate programmes in **Business, Data Science, and Cyber Security** and postgraduate degrees including **MBA** and **Master's in IT**, leveraging its dual-sector expertise and India-Australia sports and vocational links.
- **La Trobe University** planned a Bengaluru campus in Business, Computer Science (AI and Software Engineering), and Public Health, anchored in joint research platforms with **IIT Kanpur, BITS Pilani, and TISS**.
- The **University of Bristol** announced a **Mumbai** presence with partnerships in AI, design, policy, and analytics, including 3+1 pathways with Indian institutions.
- These collaborations aim to deliver world-class curricula, faculty exchanges, and research ecosystems inside India, reducing the need for outbound mobility while strengthening the knowledge economy.

Thematic Deliberations at Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Samagam (ABSS) 2025

- Four thematic sessions framed the forward agenda: the use of **Bharatiya Bhasha** in teaching and learning; **Anusandhan** and the **Prime Minister's Research Fellows (PMRF) scheme** for cultivating academic and industry leadership; re-envisioning secondary education to reach a 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio by 2030; and the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence in pedagogy and learning assessment.
- A short film on NEP 2020's impact preceded a multimedia exhibition on experiential learning, AI-driven solutions, inclusive infrastructure, digital transformation, sustainability, and community engagement, with stalls such as **Prerana – Experiential Learning, Atal Tinkering Labs – AI Innovations, and Vidyanjali & ULLAS – Community Engagement**.

5 Years of NEP 2020

Achievements and Progress

School Education Reforms

- At the school level, the policy's headline reform is the transition from **10+2** to the **5+3+3+4** structure comprising **foundational (ages 3–8)**, **preparatory (8–11)**, **middle (11–14)**, and **secondary (14–18)** stages.
- The **National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE)**, notified in 2023, gradually reorients learning towards **experiential** and **competency-based** outcomes with **mother tongue-based instruction** in early years.
- **NCERT** has rolled out new **Classes 1–8** textbooks in which, for instance, **social science** is taught as a single integrated book, while **Classes 9–12** textbooks are under preparation. In **Early Childhood Care and Education**, the **Jaadui Pitara** learning kits are in use and the **WCD Ministry** has issued a national **ECCE curriculum**.
- Several states, including **Delhi**, **Karnataka**, and **Kerala**, are enforcing the **minimum age of six** for entry into Class 1; corresponding **2023–24** data show Class-1 enrolments declining from **2.16 crore** to **1.87 crore**, with about **73%** of entrants having attended preschool.
- Foundational literacy and numeracy have received national salience through **NIPUN Bharat** and **Vidya Pravesh**, reaching over **4.2 crore** students across **8.9 lakh** schools; yet a recent government survey records average scores of **64% in language** and **60% in mathematics**, underscoring the distance to universal proficiency.
- On the assessment side, **PARAKH** has designed **holistic progress cards** embracing peer and self-assessment, although many boards are still transitioning.
- Digital platforms like **DIKSHA** and **PM e-Vidya** support multilingual content, teacher professional development, and online access. At the entry to higher education, **CUET** since **2022** has become a key gateway for undergraduate admissions.

Higher Education Reforms

- In higher education, **Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)** and the **National Credit Framework (NCrF)** have enabled flexible credit accumulation, **multiple entry-exit**, and stackable credentials from certificate to four-year degrees.
- The policy has catalysed **international campuses** of Indian institutions—such as **IIT Madras in Zanzibar**, **IIT Delhi in Abu Dhabi**, and **IIM Ahmedabad in Dubai**—and the admission of **foreign universities** into India under **UGC** regulations, with additional proposals at **GIFT City** and elsewhere.
- The push for **Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs)** is expanding holistic and research-oriented programmes. Inclusivity has advanced through **residential schooling** for **SEDG** learners and girls, disability screening via the **PRASHAST** app, and large-scale community engagement under **Vidyanjali** and **ULLAS**.
- **PM POSHAN** continues to provide hot cooked meals to support learning and attendance, although the policy's recommendation to add **breakfast** has not yet been adopted.

What Is in Progress and What Is Stuck?

- The plan to reduce the stakes in board examinations is moving forward, with **CBSE** from **2026** allowing **Class 10** students to take the board examination **twice a year**, while the two-level offering of subjects is still mostly confined to **Class 10 mathematics**.
- The proposed **four-year undergraduate (FYUG)** model with multiple exits has been implemented in several **Central Universities** and in **Kerala**, but many colleges face constraints of **faculty strength** and **infrastructure**.
- The use of **mother tongue** as the medium of instruction till at least **Class 5** is encouraged, with **NCERT** developing textbooks in more Indian languages; implementation remains uneven. The **three-language formula** continues to encounter resistance, most prominently in **Tamil Nadu**, which follows a **Tamil-English** model and views the formula as veiled **Hindi imposition**.
- The long-planned **overhaul of teacher education** is delayed, as the **National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education** is pending and the **Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP)** has faced pushback from colleges running earlier programmes such as **B.El.Ed.** The proposed replacement of **UGC** by the **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)**—envisioned as a four-vertical umbrella for **regulation, funding, accreditation, and academic standards**—awaits the draft Bill.
- Fiscal pressures persist, with public spending below the **6% of GDP** target. At the last mile, **digital infrastructure** gaps are pronounced, with **UDISE+ 2023–24** indicating that only **57.2%** of schools have functional computers and **53.9%** have internet, while several states cite capacity constraints in **Anganwadis** for **Balvatika**-level education.
- Policy federalism remains a live issue: **Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal** have declined to sign **PM-SHRI** MoUs that require full adoption of NEP, leading to **Samagra Shiksha** funds being withheld and prompting **Supreme Court** litigation by Tamil Nadu.

Schemes and Structure Under NEP 2020

Major schemes that operationalise NEP's principles from pre-primary to higher education.

- **PM SHRI Schools** upgrade more than **14,500** institutions into **NEP-aligned model schools** with smart classrooms, experiential pedagogy, and **twenty-first-century skills**. **Samagra Shiksha** acts as the integrative umbrella across **pre-primary to Class 12**, embedding **equity, inclusion, gender sensitisation, and foundational learning**.
- **Prerana** is an immersive, week-long experiential programme for students of **Classes IX–XII**, piloted in **Gujarat**, and designed to braid **cultural heritage, values-based learning, and cutting-edge technology**.
- **ULLAS** focuses on adult education for those aged fifteen years and above, strengthening **basic literacy and digital skills** to widen societal participation. **NIPUN Bharat** anchors **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy**, aiming for every child to attain grade-appropriate skills by the end of **Class 3**.
- The **National Mission for Mentoring (NMM)** and **National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST)** provide career-linked competency standards and systematic mentoring for teachers. **Vidya Pravesh** is the three-month play-based transition module for Grade-1 entrants to ensure **school readiness** and socio-emotional development.
- **Vidyanjali** mobilises **volunteers, NGOs, and corporates** for school improvement—from mentoring to infrastructure support. **DIKSHA** serves as the national digital backbone for **content, teacher training, and**

- **continuous professional development**, while **PM e-Vidya** unifies digital/online/on-air education to enable **multimode access** for nearly **twenty-five crore** schoolchildren.
- **NISHTHA** remains one of the largest teacher training programmes delivered via **DIKSHA** in blended modes. **PM POSHAN** provides **hot cooked meals** to children in government and government-aided schools to improve nutrition and attendance.

The curricular-pedagogical shift to 5+3+3+4

- The **foundational stage** spans **Anganwadi/pre-school/Balvatika** and **Classes 1–2** with **play-based, activity-based, multilevel learning**. The **preparatory stage** comprising **Classes 3–5** prioritises **discovery, play, and interactive classroom learning**.
- The **middle stage** covering **Classes 6–8** emphasises experiential learning across sciences, mathematics, arts, social sciences, and humanities. The secondary stage for **Classes 9–12** introduces multidisciplinary study, greater critical thinking, flexibility, and student choice, aligning with the policy's push for holistic education.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Which anniversary of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was marked by the inauguration of the Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Samagam (ABSS) 2025 in New Delhi?
(a) 2nd anniversary (b) 3rd anniversary
(c) 4th anniversary (d) 5th anniversary
- What structural framework introduced by the National Education Policy emphasizes mother tongue-based early learning and experiential pedagogy?
(a) 5+3+3+4 structure (b) 10+2 system
(c) 6+4+2 model (d) 8+2 framework
- Which digital tool has been scaled up as part of inclusive education efforts to conduct systematic disability screening of schoolchildren across India?
(a) e-Pathshala (b) NISHTHA Portal
(c) Shala Darpan (d) PRASHAST App
- Which organization launched the web-based Local Language Proficiency Test Portal to assess Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing (LSRW) skills?
(a) National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)
(b) National Testing Service-India
(c) University Grants Commission (UGC)
(d) Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL)
- How many Indian languages are covered under the Local Language Proficiency Test Portal launched by the National Testing Service-India (NTS-I)?
(a) ten Indian languages
(b) fifteen Indian languages
(c) twenty-two Indian languages
(d) twenty-five Indian languages
- Which apprenticeship scheme has introduced AI Apprenticeships projected to benefit about one lakh students with government and industry co-funding of ₹500 crore?
(a) Digital Apprenticeship Programme
(b) Skill India Apprenticeship Scheme
(c) Startup Apprenticeship Initiative
(d) National Apprenticeship Training Scheme
- Which institute launched ViBe: Engage. Enjoy. Enlighten., an AI-powered continuous active-learning platform designed to segment lessons, run adaptive challenges, and provide real-time feedback?
(a) IIT Ropar (b) IIT Delhi
(c) IIT Madras (d) IIT Bombay
- Which time span of Sanskrit texts is covered in the Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Sanskrit on Historical Principles tracing linguistic development?
(a) Upanishads to Kalidasa
(b) Ramayana to Panini Sutras
(c) Rigveda to Hāsyaṛṇava
(d) Mahabharata to Banabhatta
- Which university was responsible for establishing the Centre of Indian Knowledge Systems and Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Sanskrit (IKS-ED) at Deccan College with official approval?
(a) Nalanda University
(b) Central Sanskrit University
(c) Jadavpur University
(d) Osmania University
- Which institution partnered under the KoshaSHRI project to digitise all thirty-five volumes and create a public portal with advanced tools for Sanskrit scholarship?
(a) IIT Kanpur
(b) Jawaharlal Nehru University
(c) Banaras Hindu University
(d) C-DAC Pune
- Which foreign university's proposed Greater Noida campus builds on collaborations with AIIA, Ministry of Jal Shakti, ICAR, and IISc?
(a) University of Melbourne
(b) University of Toronto
(c) Western Sydney University
(d) Stanford University
- Which initiative, alongside the Prime Minister's Research Fellows (PMRF) scheme, is aimed at cultivating leadership in academia and industry?
(a) Vigyan Jyoti (b) GIAN Programme
(c) Anusandhan (d) SPARC Scheme

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

13. What is the full form of NCF-SE, notified in 2023 to reorient school learning towards experiential and competency-based outcomes?

- (a) National Curriculum Framework for School Education
- (b) National Curriculum Forum for Standard Education
- (c) National Council Framework for Secondary Education
- (d) National Core Framework for Student Evaluation

14. Which programmes are central to improving foundational literacy and numeracy, covering over 4.2 crore learners but still facing challenges as reflected in recent survey results?

- (a) SWAYAM and NISHTHA
- (b) DIKSHA and e-Pathshala
- (c) PM e-Vidya and Samagra Shiksha
- (d) NIPUN Bharat and Vidya Pravesh

15. Which initiative under NCF-SE focuses on shifting student evaluation from rote-based grading to holistic progress cards with peer and self-assessment?

- (a) NISHTHA
- (b) PARAKH
- (c) Samagra Shiksha
- (d) PM e-Vidya

SOLUTIONS

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

2

INDIA-EFTA FREE TRADE PACT
TO ROLL OUT FROM OCT 1

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

- **Venue and Timing:** On 3 September 2025, Switzerland announced that the India–EFTA **Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)** will come into effect on 1 October 2025.
- **Historic Provision:** The agreement includes **legally binding clauses on trade and sustainable development**, a first for India in any free trade agreement.
- **Significance:** TEPA marks India's deeper engagement with environmental and social standards in global trade, setting a precedent for future negotiations.

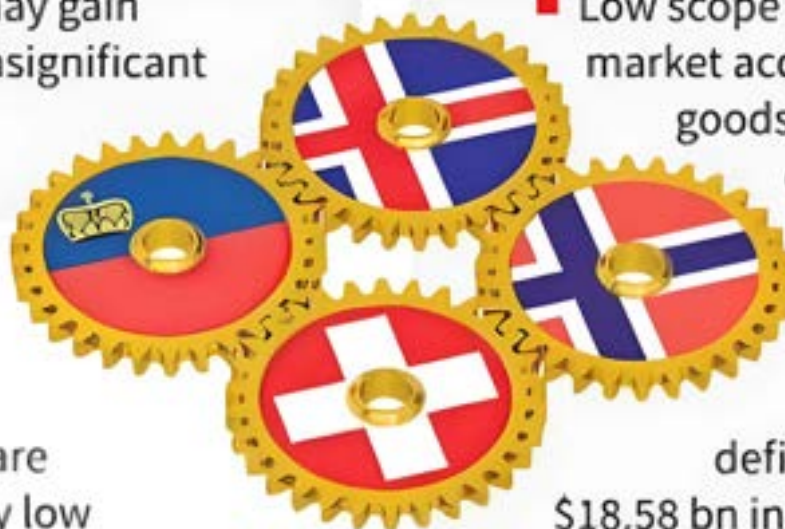
Power of four



India's gains from the proposed FTA with the 4-nation EFTA will mostly flow from the \$100-bn investment promised by the bloc

■ Goods exports may gain minimally due to insignificant existing tariffs, GTRI says

■ Tariffs in Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein are already zero or very low



■ Low scope for raising market access for goods in EFTA could be a concern as India had a trade deficit of \$18.58 bn in CY23

- The agreement is between **India** and the **European Free Trade Association (EFTA)**, whose members are **Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland**.
- The bloc was created in 1960 to promote free trade and economic integration among non-EU European economies and today serves as an advanced, high-income market grouping closely linked to European value chains.
- Talks on an India–EFTA deal began in **2008**, stalled after **2013**, and were revived in **2023**. After **21 rounds** of negotiations, the parties **signed TEPA on 10 March 2024**.
- On **19 July 2025**, **Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal** announced that the pact would be implemented from **1 October 2025**; the date and key features were reiterated by **Switzerland** on **3 September 2025**.

Key Facts and Figures:

Historical Context and Scope

- India and the member states of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)—namely **Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein**—signed the **Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)** on March 10, 2024, after nearly **16 years and 21 rounds of negotiations**.
- The agreement is scheduled to enter into force on October 1, 2025, following necessary domestic ratifications, including recent completion of Switzerland's parliamentary ratification



Investment and Job Creation Commitments

- For the first time in India's trade agreement history, **TEPA includes a legally binding commitment from EFTA states to invest USD 100 billion in India over 15 years**, divided into USD 50 billion in the first 10 years and USD 50 billion over the subsequent five years.
- EFTA states have also pledged to help generate one million direct jobs in India as a result of these investments.
- Importantly, the investment pledges focus exclusively on **foreign direct investment (FDI)** and explicitly exclude foreign portfolio investments (FPI), emphasising the objective of encouraging sustainable, long-term capital flows for capacity-building and employment generation



Trade in Goods: Tariff Reductions and Market Access

- The TEPA commits EFTA countries to eliminate customs duties on most industrial products, including fish and marine goods, that originate in India.
- India, in turn, will reduce or remove tariffs on a wide range of industrial and high-value goods imported from EFTA states. These goods include pharmaceuticals, machinery, optical instruments, watches, precision engineering goods, medical devices, organic chemicals, and processed agricultural products.
- The agreement covers a vast majority of tariff lines: EFTA claims "95.3%" duty-free access to India, whereas India will afford duty-free access on 99.6% of non-agricultural EFTA exports.
- Tariff liberalisation in agricultural products is limited and selectively negotiated, reflecting the sensitivities of both trading partners' domestic sectors



Trade Facilitation and Rules of Origin

- TEPA includes robust provisions to simplify and harmonise customs procedures, aiming for transparent, efficient, and cost-effective trade processes with enhanced cooperation through a dedicated Sub-Committee on Trade Facilitation.
- Rules of origin are standardised under Annex 2A, allowing for bilateral cumulation, use of EUR.1 movement certificates, and self-declarations of origin, subject to compliance with prescribed product-specific criteria.



Trade in Services and Movement of Persons

- TEPA features a comprehensive Services chapter, supported by specific annexes covering Financial Services, Telecommunications, Movement of Natural Persons for supplying services, Recognition of Professional Qualifications, Maritime Personnel, and Schedules of Specific Commitments for each party.
- The agreement grants EFTA service providers expanded market access across a wide array of Indian service sectors and facilitates mobility of skilled professionals, though final details are laid out in sector-specific annexes.



Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

- TEPA mandates adequate, effective, and non-discriminatory protection of intellectual property rights in accordance with **WTO's TRIPS obligations**.
- The agreement guarantees national and **most-favored nation (MFN) treatment** and provides for enforcement mechanisms, including border measures, to combat counterfeiting and piracy.



Trade Remedies and Safeguards

- India and EFTA agreed to adhere to WTO-consistent anti-dumping, countervailing duty, and safeguard disciplines. The agreement includes procedures for consultations, notifications, and the application of bilateral safeguards to address distortions caused by preferential imports. TEPA is the first Indian FTA to include legally binding provisions on trade and sustainable development, covering labor and environmental standards. The agreement reinforces commitments to good corporate governance and corporate social responsibility (CSR) while preserving government autonomy to regulate in the interest of sustainable development



Institutional Framework, Dispute Settlement, and Other Legal Provisions

- TEPA includes a multi-layered institutional architecture with a Joint Committee, sub-committees on specific areas (e.g., investment, trade facilitation), and protocols for transparent rule enforcement.
- The agreement incorporates dispute settlement provisions, including arbitration mechanisms, and covers government procurement, competition policy, and final legal clauses governing modification, transparency, and regional applicability.

**Services, Mobility, and Professional Recognition**

- **India's Offers and EFTA's Commitments:** India has offered 105 services sub-sectors to EFTA, including accounting, business services, computer services, distribution, and health. In return, India has secured commitments in 128 sub-sectors from Switzerland, 114 from Norway, 107 from Liechtenstein, and 110 from Iceland.
- **Pathways for Professionals and Knowledge Industries:** TEPA envisages MRAs in professions such as nursing, chartered accountancy, and architecture, facilitating recognition and market entry for Indian professionals. The agreement is expected to boost exports in IT services, education, audio-visual, cultural and recreational services, and R&D. The pact also creates an indirect pathway into EU markets by leveraging Switzerland as a base, given that over 40% of Switzerland's global services exports are destined for the EU.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which EFTA member nation confirmed that the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) with India will take effect on 1 October 2025?
 - (a) Norway
 - (b) Iceland
 - (c) Switzerland
 - (d) Liechtenstein
2. Which of the following countries does not belong to the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)?
 - (a) Sweden
 - (b) Switzerland
 - (c) Iceland
 - (d) Liechtenstein
3. How many rounds of negotiations were held before India and EFTA signed the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) on 10 March 2024?
 - (a) 18 rounds
 - (b) 21 rounds
 - (c) 20 rounds
 - (d) 19 rounds
4. How many chapters are included in the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) signed on 10 March 2024 between India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)?
 - (a) eleven chapters
 - (b) twelve chapters
 - (c) thirteen chapters
 - (d) fourteen chapters
5. Which agency will host the India–EFTA Desk envisioned as a single-window channel to convert commitments under TEPA into ground-level projects?
 - (a) NITI Aayog
 - (b) Ministry of Commerce
 - (c) Invest India
 - (d) Export Promotion Council
6. Which of the following is not included among the Swiss exports that gain improved market access under TEPA, as noted by Switzerland?
 - (a) Pharmaceuticals
 - (b) Crude oil
 - (c) Optical instruments
 - (d) Watches
7. Which government scheme supports sensitive sectors such as dairy, soya, coal, and processed foods that were excluded from the India–EFTA TEPA commitments?
 - (a) Startup India
 - (b) PLI
 - (c) Make in India
 - (d) PM Gati Shakti
8. Which category of investors is excluded from the FDI obligations under the India–EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)?
 - (a) Sovereign wealth funds
 - (b) Venture capital firms
 - (c) Private equity funds
 - (d) Multinational corporations
9. Which product priced below USD 5 does not receive duty concessions under TEPA in order to protect Indian producers?
 - (a) Cheese
 - (b) Olive oil
 - (c) Chocolates
 - (d) Wine
10. Which of the following products received duty-free access on the export side under TEPA, without requiring reciprocity from EFTA?
 - (a) Dairy products
 - (b) Basmati and non-basmati rice
 - (c) Coal and iron ore
 - (d) Soya and pulses
11. Which of the following products, along with clocks and cut and polished diamonds, are expected to see lower prices in India over the next decade as TEPA tariff phase-outs take effect?
 - (a) Swiss watches, chocolates, biscuits
 - (b) Dairy, coal, and soya
 - (c) Basmati rice, pulses, and wheat
 - (d) Tea, coffee, and spices
12. Which imports from Switzerland were primarily responsible for India's large trade deficit with EFTA in 2024–25, when total two-way trade stood at USD 24.4 billion?
 - (a) Machinery imports
 - (b) Pharmaceutical imports
 - (c) Gold imports
 - (d) Processed food imports
13. Which fields of professional practice are covered under TEPA's proposed MRAs, enabling Indian qualifications to be recognized abroad?
 - (a) Teaching, law, and pharmacy
 - (b) Engineering, management, and economics
 - (c) Dentistry, veterinary science, and civil services
 - (d) Nursing, chartered accountancy, and architecture

SOLUTIONS

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

3 US TARIFF ON INDIAN IMPORTS

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

- **Venue and Timing:** On 27 August 2025, the United States made 50% tariffs on most Indian exports effective, formally doubling the levy imposed earlier in the month.
- **Reason for Escalation:** The White House linked the move to India's continued purchases of discounted Russian crude, arguing that such flows indirectly fund the war in Ukraine.
- **Wider Significance:** With this measure, India, alongside Brazil, became the highest-tariffed country in the US market.

WHAT?
WAS ANNOUNCED

WHY?
IT MATTERS

The Executive Action and Its Stated Rationale

- President Trump issued an emergency executive order titled “Addressing Threats to the US by the Russian Federation.”
- India was singled out for continuing Russian oil imports.
- The order described Russia and its products as an “unusual and extraordinary threat” to US national security and foreign policy.
- A Department of Homeland Security notice confirmed a 50% tariff rate, effective just after midnight on 27 August 2025, replacing the earlier 25% rate.
- The tariff was framed as economic pressure to curb Russian energy revenue.
- Critics in both the US and India labeled it an “own goal,” warning it could damage ties with a strategic partner.

Reasons for the U.S. to Impose High Tariffs on India (2025)

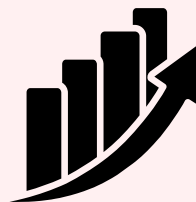
- The stated trigger is India's continued large-scale purchases of discounted Russian crude after the 2022 invasion, which Washington argues helps finance Russia's war; President Trump first levied a broad 25% tariff on Indian goods and then announced a hike to 50%, explicitly linking it to Moscow oil purchases.
- The tariffs are being used as leverage to pressure New Delhi to scale down Russian oil buying and to push Moscow towards a peace deal, per U.S. messaging around the tariff moves.
- Parallel U.S. national-security trade actions raised Section 232 duties on steel and aluminum in 2025 (steel effectively to 50% and aluminum to 25%), signalling a generally tougher tariff stance that also sweeps in Indian shipments.
- Long-running market-access frictions form the backdrop (e.g., termination of India's GSP benefits in 2019 for “failure to provide equitable and reasonable market access”), which U.S. trade officials still cite when arguing India keeps high tariffs and non-tariff barriers.
- U.S. domestic politics and a broader “reciprocal tariffs” push amplify the case for across-the-board hikes, with sectors like seafood already flagged in U.S. media as exposed to new duties.



India's Imports from Russia Since the Russia-Ukraine War

Before the War (2021)

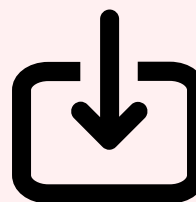
- In 2021, Russia supplied **only about 1% of India's crude oil imports**, making it a marginal player in India's energy mix.
- India-Russia **bilateral trade** stood at around **US\$13 billion**, with energy forming only a small part of this trade.
- India imported approximately **US\$2.3 billion worth of crude oil**, **US\$1.1 billion of coal products**, and **US\$0.48 billion of fertilizers** from Russia in 2021.



During and After the War

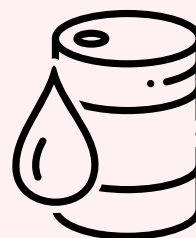
2022

- After Western sanctions on Russia in February 2022, India started purchasing **discounted Russian crude** in large volumes.
- By the end of 2022, Russia had risen to become **one of the top three suppliers** of crude oil to India.
- Bilateral trade almost **doubled to around US\$27 billion** in 2022, compared to 2021 levels.



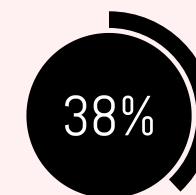
2023

- Russia became India's **largest crude oil supplier**, accounting for **over 40% of total oil imports at its peak in May 2023**.
- India was importing close to **1.9 million barrels per day (bpd)** of Russian crude at its highest point in 2023.
- Russian coal exports to India rose to **26.2 million tonnes**, compared to just around **20 million tonnes in 2022**.
- Russia's share of India's fertilizer imports jumped from **4.4% in 2021 to about 29% in 2023**, making it a key supplier.



2024

- India imported about **1.76 million bpd of Russian crude oil** on average during 2024, which accounted for **around 38% of its total crude imports**.
- In value terms, India bought **US\$52.2 billion worth of Russian crude oil**, compared to just **US\$2.3 billion in 2021**.
- Russian coal exports to India increased to **US\$3.5 billion**, while fertilizer exports rose to **US\$1.67 billion** in 2024.
- The total bilateral trade reached a **record high of around US\$65-69 billion** in 2024, driven overwhelmingly by oil.



How China Was Treated Differently

- Although **China** imported **109 million tonnes** of Russian oil last year compared with **India's 88 million tonnes**, the US chose not to impose the same 50% penalty on China at this time. Reporting and official commentary pointed to several reasons.
- First, **China's dominance in rare earths**—supplying **85-95%** of global demand and temporarily controlling exports of seven rare earths in April—gave Beijing material leverage over high-value global supply chains.
- Second, the US and China entered successive **tariff truces** in **May** and **August**, after tit-for-tat spirals that had earlier seen blanket US tariffs of **145%** on Chinese imports and **125%** Chinese countermeasures.
- Third, Treasury Secretary **Scott Bessent** argued that Chinese oil purchases were a longstanding part of its Russia relationship, while alleging that “some of the richest families” in India had made **USD 16 billion** in “excess profits” by arbitraging Russian crude into refined products.

How Big Are the New US Tariffs in a Global Comparison?

- A contemporaneous table of **adjusted tariff** rates places **India** and **Brazil** at the top with **50%** each. **Syria** follows at **41%**. **Laos** and **Myanmar (Burma)** are both shown at **40%**. **Switzerland** stands at **39%**. **Canada**, **Serbia**, and **Iraq** are listed at **35%** apiece. **China** rounds out the top ten at **30%**. This ranking underscores the exceptional severity of the US levy now applied to Indian shipments.

Scope of Coverage, Exemptions, and Who Gets Hit

What Is Covered and What Is Spared

- **Most Indian exports to the US**—valued at **USD 87.3 billion** last year—now face steep duties. About **30%** of the basket, including **pharmaceuticals**, **electronics**, **raw drug materials**, and **refined fuels**, remains **duty-free**, and certain high-profile items such as **smartphones** are currently **spared**.
- The tariff shock places **India among the most tariffed nations**, with analysts estimating that up to **65%** of Indian exports to the US could be affected when broader sectoral linkages are considered.

Sectoral Exposure and Production Disruption

- The pressure is acute in **low-margin, labour-intensive** industries. **Textiles**, **garments**, **gems and jewellery**, **leather**, **marine products (including shrimps)**, **carpets**, **furniture**, and segments of **engineering goods** face eroded competitiveness at a **50%** duty.
- The **Federation of Indian Export Organisations** reported that apparel clusters in **Tirupur**, **Delhi**, and **Surat** had already **halted production** due to lost cost competitiveness versus suppliers in **China**, **Vietnam**, **Cambodia**, and the **Philippines**. Trade experts warned that **merchandise exports to the US** could drop by **40–45%** in **2025-26** versus the previous year if the rate persists.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- What was the tariff rate enforced by the United States on most Indian exports effective 27 August 2025, after it was doubled earlier in the month?
(a) 45% (b) 50% (c) 30% (d) 20%
- Which commodity, purchased by India at discounted rates, was cited by the White House as justification for doubling tariffs on Indian exports?
(a) Russian crude (b) Venezuelan coal
(c) Iranian steel (d) Saudi petrochemicals
- Which country, alongside India, was identified as facing the highest tariff levels in the U.S. market after Washington doubled duties on Indian exports in 2025?
(a) Indonesia (b) Vietnam (c) Brazil (d) Turkey
- Which country, despite being the top buyer of Russian oil at 109 million tonnes in the last year, was not subjected to the 50% U.S. tariff penalty imposed on India?
(a) Indonesia (b) Saudi Arabia
(c) Turkey (d) China
- Which minerals, accounting for 85–95% of global supply from China, were leveraged by Beijing through temporary export restrictions to assert influence over global supply chains?
(a) Rare earths (b) Iron ore (c) Bauxite (d) Lithium
- What was the blanket tariff rate imposed by the United States on Chinese imports before the tariff truces of May and August?
(a) 125% (b) 145% (c) 100% (d) 75%
- Which countries are recorded at the 35% tariff rate level in the adjusted tariff rate table that also lists India and Brazil at 50% and Switzerland at 39%?
(a) Laos, Myanmar, and Syria
(b) Switzerland, Serbia, and Brazil
(c) Canada, Serbia, and Iraq
(d) India, Iraq, and Canada
- Which of the following does not feature in the basket of India's key exports to the United States, valued at ₹7.35 lakh crore?
(a) Coal (b) Petroleum
(c) Telecom devices (d) Pharmaceuticals
- Which Indian textile hubs have reportedly stopped production as they lost cost competitiveness to rival suppliers in countries such as China, Vietnam, Cambodia, and the Philippines?
(a) Tirupur, Delhi, and Surat
(b) Ahmedabad, Nagpur, and Lucknow
(c) Coimbatore, Ludhiana, and Varanasi
(d) Bhubaneshwar, Ranchi, and Patna
- Who, as Goldman Sachs chief India economist, warned that sustained 50% tariffs could drag India's GDP growth below 6% from a 6.5% baseline?
(a) Raghuram Rajan. (b) Santanu Sengupta
(c) Arvind Subramanian (d) Kaushik Basu
- Which job-intensive export sectors were identified as most at risk from the heavy U.S. tariff dependence, coinciding with a 1% fall in the BSE Sensex ahead of implementation?
(a) Automobiles and steel
(b) Chemicals and electronics
(c) Textiles and jewellery
(d) Leather and pharmaceuticals
- With which city did President Trump emphasize keeping diplomatic channels open, even inviting Vladimir Putin to Alaska while proposing a possible trilateral with Volodymyr Zelenskyy?
(a) Brussels (b) New Delhi
(c) Washington (d) Moscow
- Which partners did the United States sign friend-shoring deals with, while citing a USD 45 billion trade deficit with India and stalling trade negotiations?
(a) Japan and Vietnam
(b) South Korea and Indonesia
(c) Germany and France
(d) Mexico and Brazil
- Which categories of Russian energy did India emphasize that Europe and China had greater dependency, thereby defending its own market-driven crude imports?
(a) Fertilizers, coal, and refined oil products
(b) LNG, pipeline gas, and crude
(c) Uranium, rare earths, and natural gas liquids
(d) Electricity, steel, and petrochemicals

SOLUTIONS

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

4

NATIONAL WATERWAY-57
OPERATIONALISED

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

- **Venue and Timing:** On 2 August 2025 in Assam, **National Waterway-57 (Kopili River)** was operationalised with its first cargo trial since 2014, resuming intrastate waterborne freight after more than a decade.
- **Trial Run Details:** A self-loading vessel, **MV V. V. Giri**, transported 300 metric tonnes of cement from Chandrapur (Kamrup) to Hatsingimari (South Salmara-Mankachar), completing the 300-kilometre route via NW-57 and the Brahmaputra (NW-2) in 12–14 hours.
- **Wider Significance:** Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal hailed the activation of NW-57 as a watershed for inland water transport, noting that Assam now has **1,168 km of National Waterways** across the Brahmaputra, Barak, Dhansiri and Kopili rivers operational for cargo and passenger services. Now, four National Waterways in Assam— Brahmaputra (NW 2), Barak (NW 16), Dhansiri (NW 31), and Kopili (NW 57), are fully operational.

Route, Vessel and Time Parameters

- The flagged-off voyage began at **the Govardhan Bridge stretch in Chandrapur**, about thirty kilometres east of Guwahati, and was **destined for Hatsingimari on the western edge of Assam**. MV V. V. Giri, equipped with self-loading capability, transported 300 metric tonnes of cement produced by a central-Assam plant and navigated a composite route that linked the **46-kilometre navigable stretch of the Kopili, designated as National Waterway-57**, with the **national artery of the Brahmaputra, National Waterway-2**.
- The Ministry stated that this trial run demonstrated a voyage time of twelve to fourteen hours and, in practical logistics terms, substituted approximately twenty-three truckloads of cement that would otherwise have travelled by road.

Policy Alignment and Ministerial Rationale

- Presenting the activation of NW-57 as both symbolic and structural, the Minister framed the movement as part of a deliberate shift from road-heavy logistics to a multimodal network that incorporates cost-effective, fuel-efficient and environmentally responsible inland waterways.
- The revival was linked to **the Maritime India Vision 2030 and PM Gati Shakti**, both of which seek integrated, sustainable and efficient transport infrastructure. By restoring the Kopili corridor, the government asserted that it has revived a lost artery of intrastate trade, reduced the burden on highways, and opened scale opportunities for riverine communities.
- The Minister characterised the **Kopili cargo movement as a symbol of a “new Assam”** that is connected, empowered and aligned with India's growth story, while underlining that revitalising waterways is central to the national vision for a thriving and self-reliant Northeast.

Inland Waterways and IWT

Definitions and Technical Thresholds: Inland waterways comprise navigable rivers, canals, lakes and backwaters that are used to move goods and people, excluding seas and open oceans. For a stretch to qualify as an inland waterway, it must be able to support a fully loaded vessel with a **minimum carrying capacity of fifty tonnes**, and it should ordinarily satisfy channel characteristics recommended by **the National Transport Policy Committee in 1980**, notably a channel width of forty-five metres, a minimum depth of 1.5 metres and a

continuous navigable length of at least fifty kilometres, with limited exceptions in urban or intra-port settings.

Governance and Statutory Architecture

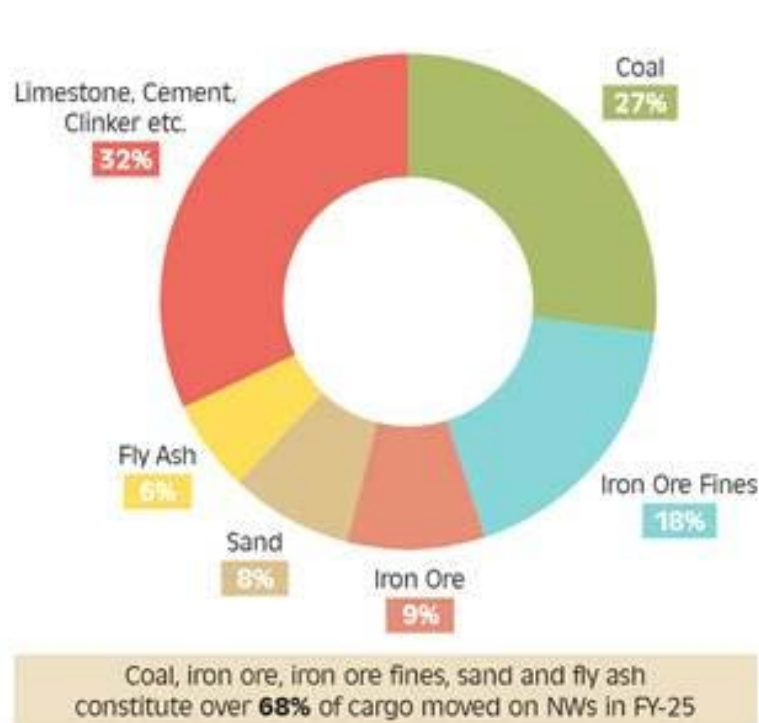
- The Inland Waterways Authority of India, created **in October 1986 under the Inland Waterways Authority of India Act, 1985**, is the nodal agency responsible for development and regulation of inland shipping and navigation.
- National waterways fall under the Union's domain, while non-notified waterways are overseen by States. **The National Waterways Act, 2016 declared one hundred and eleven waterways as national waterways**, thereby enabling central planning and investment.
- Regulation of vessel safety, registration and operations has been modernised through **the Inland Vessels Act, 2021**, and terminal creation has been streamlined under the National Waterways (Construction of Jetties/Terminals) Regulations, 2025 to catalyse private participation.



Scale-Up Since 2014 and Freight Growth Trajectory

Expansion of the Network and Traffic

- The number of operational national waterways expanded from **three in 2014-15 to twenty-nine in 2024-25**. The total operational length rose from 2,716 kilometres in 2014-15 to 4,894 kilometres in 2023-24.
- Cargo carried on inland waterways surged from 18.07 million metric tonnes in 2013-14 to 145 million metric tonnes in 2024-25, a compound annual growth rate of 22.10 per cent.
- The Inland Waterways Authority of India has set forward targets to lift the freight share of IWT in India's modal mix from about two per cent to five per cent by 2030, with a throughput ambition of 200-plus million metric tonnes; by 2047 under the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision, the target is to exceed 500 million metric tonnes.



Why the Kopili Activation Matters for MIV 2030 and PM Gati Shakti

Multimodal Logistics Efficiency and Climate Co-Benefits

- Inland Water Transport emits **only thirty-two to thirty-six grams of carbon dioxide per tonne-kilometre, well below road's fifty-one to ninety-one grams and rail's intermediate profile.**
- It generates minimal noise and water pollution and therefore aligns with both **Maritime India Vision 2030 and India's Panchamrit climate pledges.**
- Cost metrics are equally persuasive: IWT typically moves a tonne-kilometre of freight for around ₹0.25-₹0.30, compared with roughly ₹1.00 by rail and ₹1.50 by road, and it delivers about 105 tonne-kilometres per litre of fuel, compared with eighty-five by rail and twenty-four by road.
- By easing highway congestion, lowering logistics costs and linking river ports to railheads and highways under PM Gati Shakti, the mode can compress economy-wide logistics costs from fourteen per cent of GDP toward nine per cent, a change estimated to save around fifty billion US dollars annually and to move India closer to a top-twenty-five global logistics performance ranking.

Strategic Connectivity and Regional Inclusion

- Because waterways require minimal land acquisition relative to greenfield roads, they avoid large-scale displacement and ecological fragmentation.
- They provide dependable last-mile access to remote geographies, particularly **the Northeast and deltaic regions such as the Sundarbans**, and they enhance national security and disaster resilience by moving goods and personnel efficiently during emergencies.
- The Kopili link adds redundancy and reach to **Assam's existing Brahmaputra and Barak axes** while reconnecting industrial clusters to low-cost, seasonal river transport.

Maritime India Vision 2030

- The Maritime India Vision 2030 sets quantifiable targets that contextualise why inland waterways and coastal shipping are being prioritised. By 2030, India targets three major ports with cargo-handling capacity above 300 million tonnes per annum, a step up from the absence of such mega-ports in 2020.
- The share of Indian cargo transshipment handled by Indian ports is to rise from twenty-five per cent in 2020 to more than seventy-five per cent by 2030, thereby retaining value within the domestic port ecosystem.
- The proportion of cargo handled at major ports by public-private partnerships or other operators is expected to increase from fifty-one per cent to above eighty-five per cent, reflecting a deeper role for private efficiency and investment.
- Average vessel turnaround time for container ships is to be reduced from twenty-five hours to under twenty hours, and average container dwell time is to fall from fifty-five hours to under forty hours.
- Average ship daily output measured in gross tonnage is to rise from 16,500 to above 30,000, indicating more productive port stays. In global league tables, India aims to improve its ranking in shipbuilding and ship repair from beyond twentieth to the top ten and to shift ship-recycling leadership from rank two to rank one.
- Cruise tourism is expected to grow annual passengers from 4,68,000 to more than 15,00,000. The Indian seafarer share in the global workforce is to climb from twelve per cent to beyond twenty per cent. Renewable energy's share at major ports is to rise from less than ten per cent to more than sixty per cent.
- These targets outline a port-led growth template within which inland waterways like the Kopili provide reliable hinterland evacuation and feeder services that raise port performance against each metric.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Which Indian state is the Kopili River, designated as National Waterway-57, where cargo trials restarted after a long gap?
(a) Kerala (b) Jharkhand
(c) Assam (d) Chhattisgarh
- Which vessel transported 300 metric tonnes of cement from Chandrapur (Kamrup) to Hatsingimari (South Salmara-Mankachar) via NW-57 and the Brahmaputra (NW-2), covering 300 km in 12-14 hours?
(a) MV V. V. Giri
(b) MV Rabindranath Tagore
(c) MV Subhas Chandra Bose
(d) MV Sardar Patel
- Which connected waterways enabled the MV V. V. Giri to successfully complete its cement cargo trial, marking a revival of river-based freight in Assam?
(a) NW-57 and the Brahmaputra (NW-2)
(b) NW-1 and the Hooghly
(c) NW-3 and the Champakara Canal
(d) NW-5 and the Mahanadi Delta
- Which of the following is not among the rivers across which Assam now has 1,168 km of National Waterways operational for cargo and passenger services?
(a) Brahmaputra (b) Barak (c) Dhansiri (d) Krishna
- At which point, situated about thirty kilometres east of Guwahati, did the inaugural inland waterway voyage set off for Hatsingimari on Assam's western edge?
(a) Chandrapur (b) Dibrugarh
(c) Tinsukia (d) Silchar
- Which other initiative along with Maritime India Vision 2030 were cited as frameworks guiding the revival of NW-57, with a focus on sustainable and efficient transport infrastructure?
(a) Make in India (b) Sagarmala
(c) PM Gati Shakti (d) Digital India
- Which corridor's reactivation was celebrated as a symbol of a "new Assam," demonstrating connectivity, empowerment, and integration with India's growth story?
(a) Barak corridor (b) Kopili corridor
(c) Subansiri corridor (d) Dhubri corridor
- Which of the following correctly describes inland waterways as recognised for commercial transport in India?
(a) Navigable rivers, canals, lakes and backwaters used to move goods and people, excluding seas and open oceans
(b) Any water body connected to fishing harbours
(c) Exclusive shipping lanes in oceans
(d) Artificial ponds built for irrigation purposes
- Which committee laid down the benchmark characteristics—such as 45-metre channel width, 1.5-metre minimum depth, and at least 50 km continuous navigable length—for qualifying inland waterways?
(a) Finance Commission in 1983
(b) National Transport Policy Committee in 1980
(c) National Shipping Board in 1992
(d) Logistics Development Council in 2005
- Which level of government has the exclusive responsibility for legislation and regulation of national waterways in India?
(a) State governments
(b) Panchayati Raj Institutions
(c) Concurrent jurisdiction
(d) Union's domain
- Which vision framework sets the long-term target for inland waterways to exceed 500 million metric tonnes of freight throughput by 2047?
(a) Maritime India Vision 2030
(b) Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision
(c) PM Gati Shakti
(d) Sagarmala Programme
- Which scheme, notified in 2024, provides reimbursement of 35% of operational costs to cargo owners who shift loads from road or rail to inland waterways?
(a) Jalvahak-Cargo Promotion Scheme
(b) Sagarmala Logistics Incentive Scheme
(c) Riverine Freight Subsidy Scheme
(d) Inland Transport Modernisation Scheme
- Which of the following is not among the projects linked with port integration and multimodal terminals being connected to riverine logistics nodes?
(a) Sagarmala
(b) Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor
(c) Northern Dedicated Freight Corridor
(d) Jal Marg Vikas Project

SOLUTIONS

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

5

ISRO ORGANIZES SPACE ANALOG
MISSION IN LADAKH

LEGAL UPDATES

IN FOCUS

On **31 July 2025**, the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** inaugurated the **Himalayan Outpost for Planetary Exploration (HOPE)** space analog mission at **Tso Kar Valley, Ladakh**. This ten-day mission (1–10 August 2025) is designed to simulate **space-like conditions** and study the physiological, psychological, and operational challenges linked to **long-duration human space missions**, marking a milestone in India's preparations for crewed exploration of the **Moon and Mars**.

The **Indian Human Spaceflight Programme**, led by ISRO, seeks to extend human presence across the **solar system**, starting with missions to **Low Earth Orbit (LEO)** and an **Indian crewed lunar landing by 2040**. To achieve this, ISRO conducts **ground-based analog missions** in extreme Earth environments that mirror extraterrestrial conditions. These missions generate critical Indian subject data for assessing human health, performance risks, and mission protocols.

The **HOPE mission** aims to:

Examine **epigenetic, genomic, physiological, and psychological responses** of crew members. Validate **health-monitoring protocols**, planetary surface operations, and microbial analysis techniques. Refine **sample collection methods**, space habitat technology, and operational workflows. Support research on **in-situ resource utilization (ISRU)** and **astrobiology**.

Infrastructure and Habitat

The HOPE analog facility includes: A **Habitat Module** (8 metres in diameter) for crew living. A **Utility Module** (5 metres in diameter) for operations and support systems. These modules are interconnected for **seamless workflow** and mimic space habitat configurations.

Site Selection: Tso Kar Valley

The **Tso Kar Valley** (4,530 metres above sea level) was chosen for its striking **Mars-like environment**.

The valley has **high UV radiation, low air pressure, and oxygen levels only 40% of sea level**.

It experiences extreme cold (from -10°C to 15°C) and contains **saline permafrost** resembling Martian soil.

These features make it ideal to test **life-support systems, rover movement, and crew endurance** in simulated extraterrestrial conditions.



Collaboration and Experiments: Institutional and Industry Partnerships: The mission reflects **public-private synergy** in India's space sector, aligning with the government's vision of greater **industry participation**. Alongside ISRO, experiments are being conducted by:

- **Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST)**, Thiruvananthapuram
- **Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology (RGCB)**, Thiruvananthapuram
- **IIT Hyderabad**
- **IIT Bombay**
- **Institute of Aerospace Medicine**, Bengaluru

These institutions are investigating genomic, epigenetic, and psychological impacts on crew, while validating operational and health protocols for future **human exploration missions**.

Significance of the Mission

- The mission is **more than a simulation**, described by ISRO Chairman **Dr. V. Narayanan** as a **"rehearsal for the future."** It provides **vital data** for designing protocols, infrastructure, and technologies for **Gaganyaan**, future **LEO missions**, and an **Indian lunar landing by 2040**.
- It strengthens India's **technological readiness** for interplanetary missions while contributing to **Atmanirbhar Bharat** in space research. The analog studies also advance understanding of **crew workflows**, **environmental adaptation**, and **human resilience** in extreme conditions.

Earlier Analog Missions

- **In India: Ladakh Human Analog Mission (LHAM), November 2024** – ISRO's first Mars/Moon analog mission, testing habitat technologies under simulated conditions. **Anugami (July 2025)** – A ten-day isolation study under the **Gaganyaan Analog Experiment (GANEX)** with "Gaganyatris," focused on human spaceflight readiness.
- **Global Analog Missions: Desert RATS (NASA, Arizona)** – Testing rovers and extravehicular activity (EVA) for Moon/Mars missions. **NEEMO (NASA)** – Astronauts live in **Aquarius**, the world's only undersea research station, to simulate mission isolation. **HI-SEAS (Hawai'i)** – A Mars and Moon analog facility supporting research in **lunar exploration** and **long-term human settlement**.

Evolution of ISRO

1. Foundational Vision and Institutional Setup

- India's space journey began with the establishment of the **Indian National Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR)** in 1962, under the leadership of Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, who had a clear vision of harnessing space technology for societal advancement and national development.
- This institutional initiative led to the creation of the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** on **August 15, 1969**, marking a pivotal moment as India committed to cultivating its own space research and technological capabilities.

2. Early Experiments and Indigenous Launch Capabilities

- ISRO's early years were characterized by experimental launches. In 1963, India launched its first sounding rocket from THumba (TERLS), pushing the frontiers of upper atmospheric studies despite modest beginnings.
- By 1967, the Rohini sounding rocket series was underway, reflecting early strides in developing indigenous launch platforms.
- A landmark was achieved in 1975, with the launch of Aryabhata, India's first satellite, via a Soviet launch vehicle demonstrating a significant step in satellite technology.



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- A landmark was achieved in **1975, with the launch of Aryabhata, India's first satellite**, via a Soviet launch vehicle demonstrating a significant step in satellite technology.
- India's first domestically built satellite **launcher, SLV-3, successfully placed RS-1 into orbit in 1980**, making India the seventh country capable of such an orbital launch

3. Expansion of Satellite Systems and Infrastructure

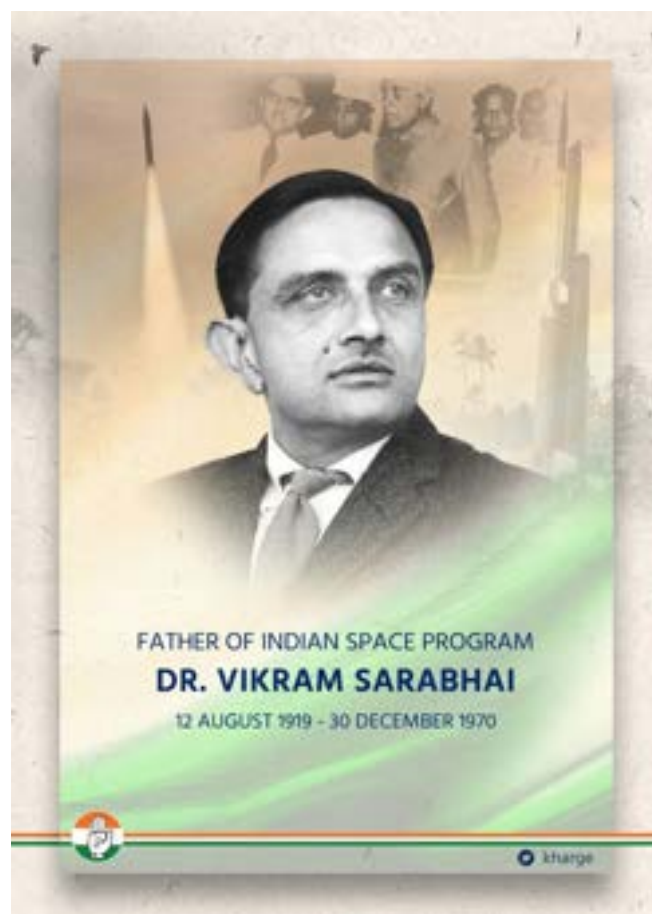
- Following the first steps in satellite launches, ISRO launched its experimental communication satellite APPLE in 1981, signifying its entry into operational communications technology.
- The INSAT series began in the early 1980s, with the deployment of INSAT-1A in 1982, laying the foundation for a multipurpose geostationary satellite system used in telecommunications, meteorology, and broadcasting.

4. Launch Vehicle Advancements: PSLV and GSLV

- ISRO entered a transformative phase with the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) project, aiming to place remote sensing satellites into sun-synchronous orbit. The maiden PSLV launch occurred in 1993, ushering in a reliable medium-lift capability.
- The evolution continued with the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV), enhanced by the development of indigenous cryogenic engine technology that became operational following a successful test in 2007—a decisive step towards robust heavy-lift and geostationary launch ability.

5. Flagship Deep Space and Planetary Missions

- One of ISRO's most celebrated accomplishments is the Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan), launched in 2013. It became the first successful interplanetary mission by India—and notably, it reached Mars orbit on its first attempt at minimal cost



- India's efforts in lunar exploration began with Chandrayaan-1 in 2008, which made critical discoveries such as the presence of water molecules on the Moon. It was followed by Chandrayaan-2 in 2019, which was partially successful and reflected growing technical capacity.
- Finally, Chandrayaan-3 in 2023 achieved a historic soft landing near the Moon's south pole, marking one of ISRO's most ambitious and successful missions to date.

6. Emerging Strategic Technologies and Future Initiatives

- In modern times, ISRO's aims include cutting-edge efforts such as SpaDeX—the Space Docking Experiment—designed to dock satellites in orbit. The success of this experiment would make India the fourth country to demonstrate such capability, essential for future space station assembly and on-orbit servicing.
- Looking ahead to 2040, ISRO plans to establish India's first space station, further cementing its place as a spacefaring nation with long-duration orbital infrastructure

7. International Collaboration and Earth Observation Advancements

- ISRO's cooperative ventures include NISAR, a joint mission with NASA launched in July 2025. NISAR is equipped with dual-frequency synthetic aperture radar for Earth observation, and represents a high point in international collaboration and technology sharing.
- Domestically, ISRO has pioneered indigenous solar observation missions, notably Aditya-L1, India's first solar observatory stationed at the L1 Lagrangian point, providing continuous observations across multiple electromagnetic spectra.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. What is the full form of HOPE, the newly inaugurated facility by ISRO?
(a) High Orbit Planetary Experiment
(b) Human Operations for Planetary Exploration
(c) Habitat Observatory for Planetary Experiments
(d) Himalayan Outpost for Planetary Exploration
2. What is the location where ISRO inaugurated the Himalayan Outpost for Planetary Exploration (HOPE) space analog mission?
(a) Tso Kar Valley, Ladakh
(b) Pangong Lake, Ladakh
(c) Spiti Valley, Himachal Pradesh
(d) Zaskar Valley, Ladakh
3. Which celestial bodies are the focus of India's preparations through the HOPE space analog mission conducted in August 2025?
(a) Venus and Jupiter (b) Moon and Mars
(c) Saturn and Titan (d) Europa and Ganymede
4. Which region of space will serve as the first destination for Indian astronauts under ISRO's Human Spaceflight Programme?
(a) Geostationary Orbit (b) Medium Earth Orbit
(c) Low Earth Orbit (d) Sun-Synchronous Orbit
5. Which year has been identified as the milestone for India's goal of sending astronauts to the Moon under ISRO's Human Spaceflight Programme?
(a) 2030 (b) 2035 (c) 2038 (d) 2040
6. Which type of missions does ISRO conduct in extreme Earth environments to simulate extraterrestrial conditions for human spaceflight research?
(a) ground-based analog missions
(b) orbital reconnaissance missions
(c) deep-space robotic missions
(d) suborbital test flights
7. Which research area supported by the HOPE mission focuses on using locally available materials on planetary surfaces for sustaining human missions?
(a) Astrobiology
(b) Space habitat design
(c) in-situ resource utilization
(d) Microbial genome sequencing
8. Which area of research, alongside astrobiology, is a major focus of the HOPE mission for enabling sustainable human exploration by using local planetary resources?
(a) Space habitat technology
(b) Psychological response analysis
(c) in-situ resource utilization
(d) Microbial analysis techniques
9. Which component of the HOPE analog facility serves as the primary living space for crew members during simulated space missions?
(a) Control Centre (b) Science Laboratory
(c) Communication Hub (d) Habitat Module
10. Which of the following institutions is not part of the HOPE mission's collaborative experiments?
(a) IIT Hyderabad
(b) IIT Bombay
(c) Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
(d) Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology, Thiruvananthapuram
11. Which Indian space mission, focused on sending astronauts into space, is one of the key programmes supported by research from the HOPE analog facility?
(a) Shukrayaan-1 (b) Chandrayaan-2
(c) Gaganyaan (d) Astrosat
12. Which mission, conducted in November 2024, was ISRO's first Mars/Moon analog mission aimed at testing habitat technologies under simulated conditions?
(a) Ladakh Human Analog Mission
(b) Himalayan Outpost for Planetary Exploration
(c) Desert Terrain Simulation Mission
(d) Polar Environment Training Mission
13. Which ISRO initiative included the Anugami (July 2025) isolation study to evaluate crew preparedness for future human space missions?
(a) Space Habitat Demonstration Programme
(b) Astronaut Performance Simulation Project
(c) Lunar Analog Research Exercise

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

(d) Gaganyaan Analog Experiment

14. Which NASA analog mission places astronauts in Aquarius, the world's only undersea research station, to simulate isolation during space missions?

- (a) HI-SEAS (b) NEEMO
(c) SIRIUS (d) Mars500

15. Which region of Ladakh is home to the Tso Kar Basin, a high-altitude wetland complex recognized as a Ramsar site?

- (a) Changthang (b) Kargil
(c) Suru Valley (d) Leh Valley

SOLUTIONS

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

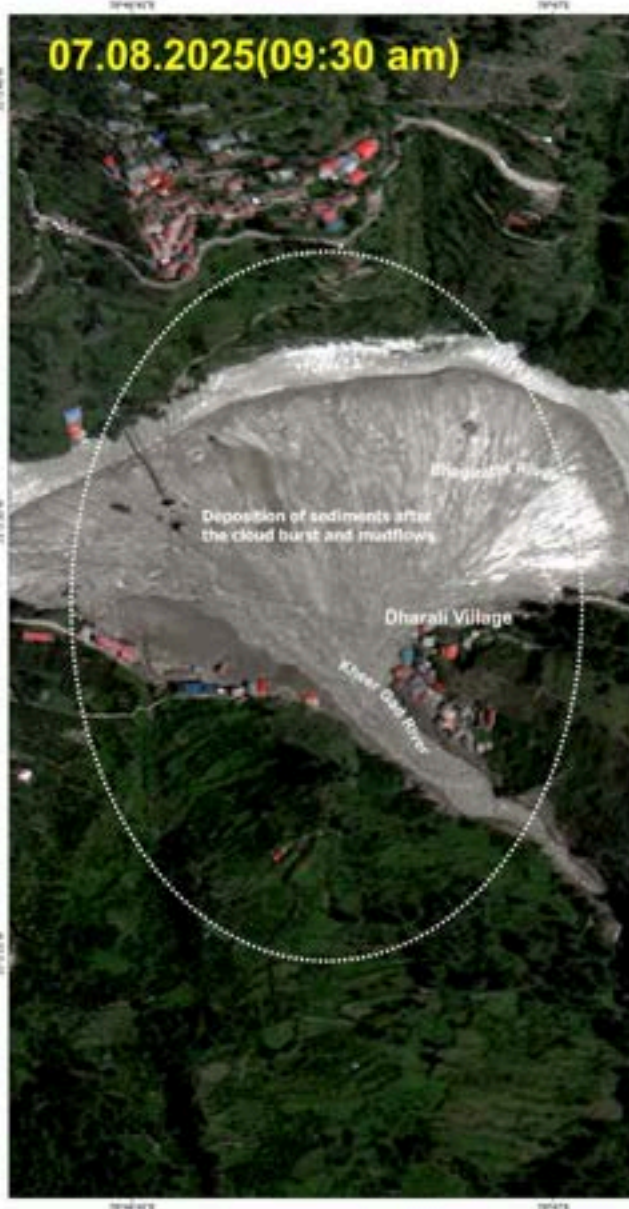
6

FLASH FLOOD STRUCK DHARALI VILLAGE IN UTTARKASHI

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

On 5 August 2025, a devastating **flash flood** struck **Dharali village** in **Uttarkashi district, Uttarakhand**, situated along the **Kheer Ganga river** at an altitude of 8,600 feet. The event caused the loss of at least four lives, left many missing, and resulted in large-scale destruction of homes, bridges, and roads. The disaster highlights the increasing vulnerability of Himalayan settlements to **climate-induced extreme events** such as flash floods, landslides, and glacial lake outbursts.



The Dharali Flash Flood

Rapid assessments using **Cartosat-2S satellite images** by the **National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC)** revealed:

- **Fan-shaped sediment deposits** covering ~20 hectares at Dharali, at the confluence of the **Kheer Gad and Bhagirathi rivers**.
- Widened stream channels and altered river morphology.
- Several buildings completely washed away or buried under mud and debris.

Immediate Impact: The sudden floodwaters swept through Dharali and Harsil villages, submerging or destroying several buildings, shops, and hotels. Hundreds of residents were left homeless or stranded, with infrastructure and connectivity severely disrupted.

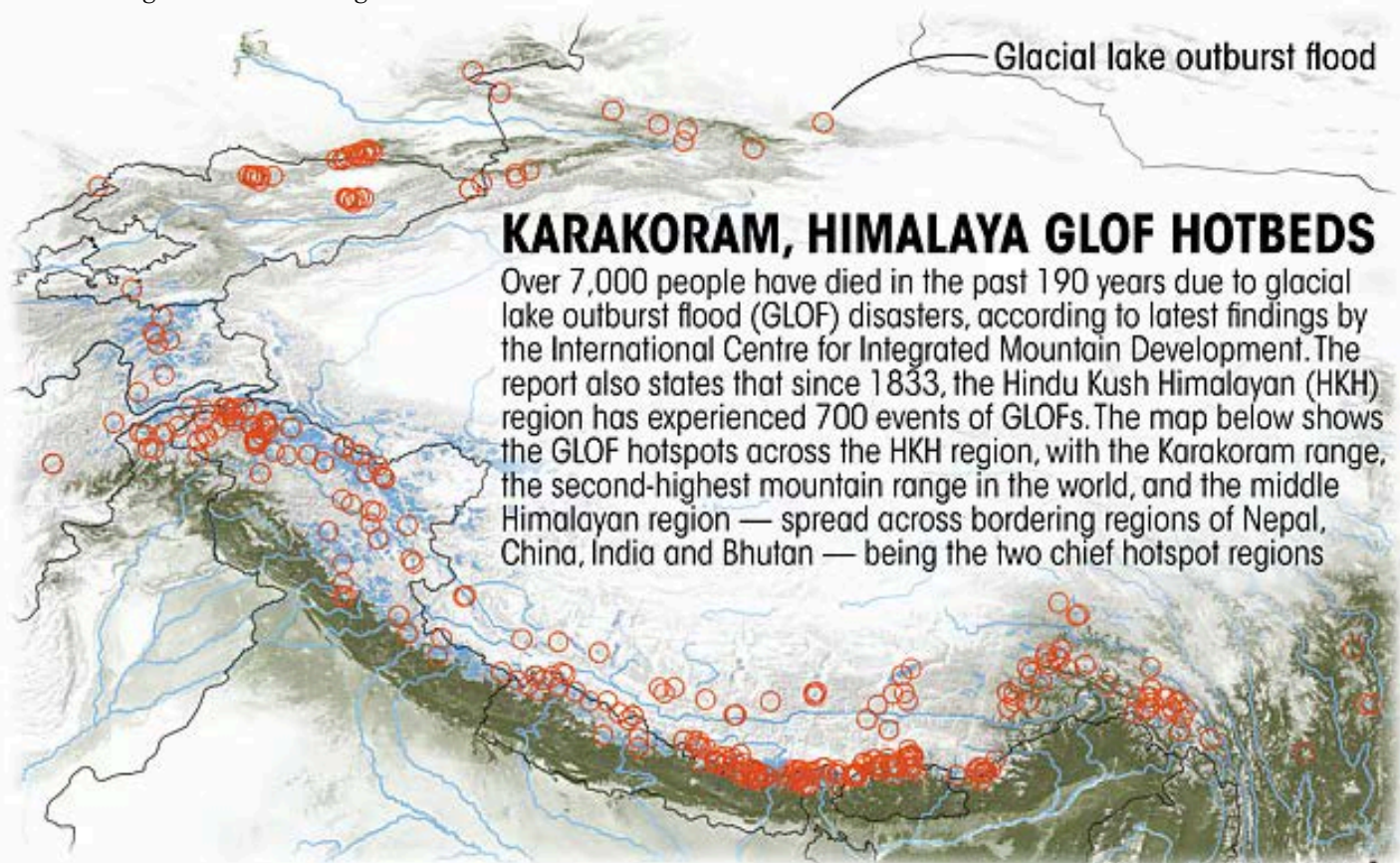
Causes and Scientific Explanations

Rainfall and Meteorological Factors: The **India Meteorological Department (IMD)** reported that Uttarkashi district received **32 mm rainfall on August 5**—double the daily normal, but still far below cloudburst thresholds

- A **cloudburst**, as per IMD definition, requires at least **100 mm of rain within one hour** over a 10×10 km area. No such readings were observed in Uttarkashi, though southern districts like Haridwar recorded heavy downpours.
- Continuous but moderate rainfall over several days may have saturated the fragile mountain slopes, predisposing the region to debris flows and flash flooding.

Understanding Flash Floods

- **Definition and Characteristics:** Flash floods are sudden, intense floods that occur within a short time (minutes to 6 hours) after heavy rainfall, dam breaches, or glacial bursts. They differ from regular floods by their **rapid onset, high intensity, and localized impact**. They often become **raging torrents**, sweeping away infrastructure, vegetation, and entire settlements.
- **Causes:** Intense rainfall beyond soil absorption capacity; Glacial Lake Outbursts (GLOFs) due to melting glaciers or weakened moraine dams; Rapid snowmelt caused by sudden temperature rises; Landslides or ice-debris jams obstructing and then releasing river water.



Source: Integrated Mountain Development, Natural Earth, ESRI

Down To Earth

Complex Relationship of Factors

- Not all cloudburst-like events result in flash floods, and not all flash floods are caused by intense rainfall. Conditions that may combine to cause such disasters include:
 - Heavy rainfall triggering landslides or mudslides, with debris entering rivers.
 - Glacier or ice breaks releasing sudden torrents of water.
 - Weak geological formations in the Himalayas, which are young and tectonically active.
 - Human activities such as construction, deforestation, and high vehicular traffic, which increase slope instability.
 - Even low-intensity rainfall can trigger floods in already fragile, eroded, and saturated mountain slopes.

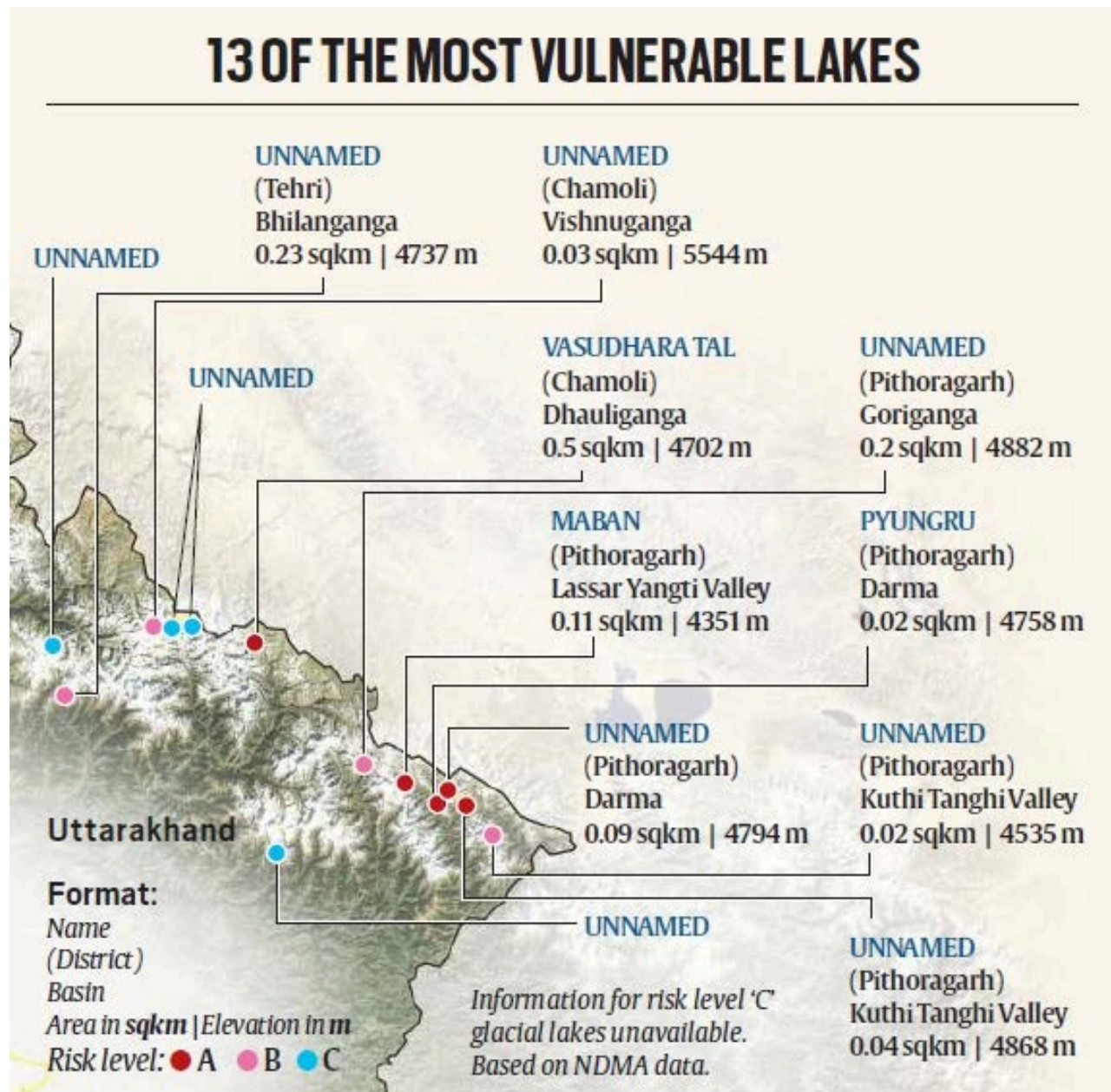


- **Topography of Uttarkashi:** Elevation ranges from **800 to 6,900 metres** above sea level, with snow-covered peaks, glaciers, narrow valleys, and deep gorges. It is home to the source regions of the **Ganga (Gangotri)** and **Yamuna (Yamunotri)** rivers. Slopes drop sharply by up to **800 metres**, creating conditions for rapid runoff and debris flows.
- **Rainfall Pattern:** The district receives an average annual rainfall of **1,289 mm**, with the **southwest monsoon** (June–September) contributing most of it. July is the wettest month, averaging **312 mm**, with thunderstorms common in hilly areas. Though the August 5 rainfall was not extreme, its impact was magnified by saturated soils and fragile slopes.

What are GLOFs?

GLOFs are disaster events caused by the abrupt discharge of water from glacial lakes — large bodies of water that sit in front of, on top of, or beneath a melting glacier. As a glacier withdraws, it leaves behind a depression that gets filled with meltwater, thereby forming a lake.

The more the glacier recedes, the bigger and more dangerous the lake becomes. Such lakes are mostly dammed by unstable ice or sediment composed of loose rock and debris. In case the boundary around them breaks, huge amounts of water rush down the side of the mountains, which could cause flooding in the downstream areas — this is referred to as a GLOF event.



- The Uttarakhand government has constituted **two teams of experts to evaluate the risk posed by five potentially hazardous glacial lakes in the region**. These lakes are prone to Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), the kind of events that have resulted in several disasters in the Himalayan states in recent years.
- The goal of the risk assessment exercise is **to minimise the possibility of a GLOF incident** and provide more time for relief and evacuation in case of a breach.
- The **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)**, which operates **under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs**, has identified 188 glacial lakes in the Himalayan states that can potentially be breached because of heavy rainfall. **Thirteen of them are in Uttarakhand.**

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which village in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand was hit by a flash flood on August 2025?
(a) Sukhi village (b) Dharali village
(c) Bhatwari village (d) Dayara village
2. Which river, flowing near Dharali village at 8,600 feet altitude, was associated with the flash flood in Uttarkashi in August 2025?
(a) Kheer Ganga river (b) Yamuna river
(c) Saraswati river (d) Tons river
3. Which of the following defines a cloudburst as per the India Meteorological Department (IMD)?
(a) 50 mm of rain within two hours over a 5×5 km area
(b) 80 mm of rain within one hour over a 20×20 km area
(c) 100 mm of rain within one hour over a 10×10 km area
(d) 120 mm of rain within three hours over a 15×15 km area
4. Which authority has identified 13 out of Uttarakhand's 1,266 glacial lakes as high-risk?
(a) Geological Survey of India
(b) Indian Space Research Organisation
(c) Central Water Commission
(d) National Disaster Management Authority
5. How many glacial lakes in Uttarakhand have been identified by NDMA as extremely dangerous out of the total 1,266?
(a) five (b) seven (c) eleven (d) thirteen
6. Which district of Uttarakhand experienced a rock-ice avalanche in 2021 that unleashed millions of cubic metres of water into the Rishiganga and Dhauliganga valleys?
(a) Tehri Garhwal (b) Chamoli
(c) Almora (d) Dehradun
7. Which two major rivers have their source regions in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand?
(a) Indus and Sutlej
(b) Alaknanda and Mandakini
(c) Ganga and Yamuna (d) Chenab and Beas
8. Which monsoon system accounts for the bulk of Uttarkashi's rainfall, especially between June and September?
(a) southwest monsoon (b) northeast monsoon
(c) pre-monsoon showers (d) retreating monsoon
9. Which of the following best defines flash floods?
(a) Sudden, intense floods occurring within minutes to 6 hours after heavy rainfall, dam breaches, or glacial bursts
(b) Seasonal floods caused by prolonged monsoon rains over large river basins
(c) Floods occurring only due to melting glaciers over several weeks
(d) Long-duration floods that gradually submerge plains and agricultural lands
10. Which region, highly vulnerable to climate change, is witnessing an increase in unstable glacial lakes due to accelerated glacier retreat?
(a) Karakoram Range (b) Hindu Kush Himalayas
(c) Nilgiri Hills (d) Satpura Range
11. Which institute's studies have highlighted the increasing risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) in Uttarakhand?
(a) Geological Survey of India
(b) Indian Institute of Remote Sensing
(c) Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology
(d) National Institute of Hydrology
12. Which rivers meet at Dharali, where fan-shaped sediment deposits covering about 20 hectares were observed?
(a) Alaknanda and Mandakini rivers
(b) Saraswati and Yamuna rivers
(c) Ganga and Tons rivers
(d) Kheer Gad and Bhagirathi rivers

SOLUTIONS

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

7

INDIA'S 3RD VOLUNTARY
NATIONAL REVIEW ON SDGS

LEGAL UPDATES

IN FOCUS

- the **Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog, Suman Bery**, presented **India's Third Voluntary National Review (VNR 2025)** on the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** at the **High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)** convened under **ECOSOC**.
- India reaffirmed a **whole-of-government and whole-of-society** approach to Agenda 2030, showcased a decade of policy action, and underlined alignment with **Viksit Bharat @2047**. This is India's **third VNR** after 2017 and 2020.

Institutional Anchoring and Preparation

- NITI Aayog** serves as the nodal authority for SDG implementation and for VNR preparation in India. The 2025 review was prepared through a structured, consultative process involving States, Union Territories, civil society, development partners, and the private sector, guided by a clear national roadmap anchored in **data and evidence**.
- UNDP** support has enabled the establishment of **SDG Coordination and Acceleration Centres** across States/UTs to deepen **SDG localisation** and accelerate outcomes.

VNR 2025
INDIA'S
PROGRESS

Strategy and Tools for Implementation

- India employs robust, periodic measurement through the **SDG India Index**, the **North-Eastern Region District SDG Index**, and the **National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)** to identify gaps, target interventions, and monitor progress
- Flagship convergence platforms such as the **Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP)** and the **Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP)** drive last-mile saturation of public services, reinforce cooperative federalism, and institutionalise problem-solving at sub-district levels.

MAJOR
OUTCOMES AND
PROGRESS
HIGHLIGHTS

Poverty, Food Security, Health and Nutrition

- SDG 1 (No Poverty)**: An estimated **248 million people** exited **multidimensional poverty** between 2013-14 and 2022-23, reflecting targeted delivery and asset creation across rural and urban segments.
- SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)**: **PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)** continues to provide nutritional support to about **81.35 crore beneficiaries**, with an extension from **2024 for five years**, strengthening household food security.

SDG 3 (Good Health & Well-being): **POSHAN Abhiyaan** and **Ayushman Bharat** expanded access to quality nutrition and healthcare; **out-of-pocket health expenditure** declined from **62.6% (2014-15)** to **39.4% (2020-21)**, indicating improved financial protection.

Clean Energy Transition and Infrastructure

- **SDG 7 (Affordable & Clean Energy):** The **National Green Hydrogen Mission**, **PM-KUSUM**, and **PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana** are accelerating clean-energy uptake while advancing energy access, affordability, and resilience.
- **Infrastructure & Industry:** **PM Gati Shakti**, **Make in India**, and the **National Industrial Corridor Development Programme** are enabling next-generation multimodal infrastructure, manufacturing ecosystems, and logistics efficiency.

Digital Public Infrastructure and Inclusive Growth

- India's **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** grounded in the **Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile (JAM)** trinity is a global model for inclusive, transparent, and efficient service delivery. In **FY 2025**, India accounted for **48.5% of global real-time payment volume**, supported by a **41.7%** increase in **UPI** transaction volume.
- India's innovation landscape has matured, with the country now hosting the **world's third-largest startup ecosystem**, complementing skills, entrepreneurship, and job creation initiatives.

South–South Cooperation and Global Partnerships

- India's VNR 2025 underscores growing **South–South cooperation**, including capacity-building and institutional support for fellow developing countries, alongside global initiatives such as the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** and the **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)**.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD



Global Context: SDG Performance, HLPF Mechanism, and SDR 2025 Findings

- The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025, compiled by the **United Nations Statistics Division**, indicates that **only 35 percent of SDG targets are currently on track** or making moderate progress, while almost half are moving too slowly to meet the 2030 deadline.
- The report highlights six priority areas requiring urgent action, namely sustainable food systems, energy access, digital transformation, education, jobs and social protection, and climate and biodiversity, stressing that coordinated global efforts can still yield accelerated progress.
- Complementing the UN report, the **Sustainable Development Report (SDR) 2025**, produced by the **SDG Transformation Center and SDSN**, tracks global and regional performance using a refined index and finds that East and South Asia have outperformed all other regions in overall SDG advancement since 2015, driven largely by strong socio-economic gains.
- The SDR also notes that **190 out of 193 UN member** states have presented Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), demonstrating robust global commitment to the SDGs. Only **Haiti, Myanmar, and the United States** have not participated. Additionally, **249 Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)** have been listed as of March 2025, signifying growing subnational engagement.

**HLPF
Mechanism
(High-Level
Political
Forum on
Sustainable
Development)**

- The **High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)**, established following the **2012 Rio+20 summit and formalised under UN General Assembly Resolution 67/290**, serves as the main UN platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It meets annually under the auspices of **ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council)** **for eight days**—including a ministerial segment—and every four years under the General Assembly at the heads-of-state level.
- Its core functions include providing political leadership, offering guidance and recommendations on sustainable development, enhancing integration of economic, social, and environmental dimensions, and promoting system-wide policy coherence. The HLPF also serves as a dynamic platform for dialogue, stocktaking, and agenda-setting for SDG implementation.

- A key procedural tool is the **Voluntary National Review (VNR)**, through which countries present their SDG progress in a country-led, inclusive manner. These reviews foster peer learning and collaboration with civil society and stakeholders.
- The HLPF's outcomes include the adoption of an intergovernmental ministerial declaration, which reflects shared perspectives on progress, challenges, and commitments, and is informed by reports such as the Secretary-General's annual SDG Progress Report, thematic reviews, and the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR).
- At the 2025 HLPF, 37 countries presented VNRs: 10 for the second time, 23 for the third time, and 4 for the fourth time. The preparation process involved regional forums organized by UN regional commissions.
- The HLPF 2025 highlighted the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions as a tangible mechanism to advance SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). The Ministerial Declaration explicitly acknowledged this initiative and encouraged countries to support its implementation. The initiative focuses on linking employment, social protection, and just transitions through integrated policy and financing solutions.

- A review of local governance revealed that around **40 percent of reporting countries at HLPF 2025 actively engaged Local and Regional Governments (LRGs)** in sustainable development decision-making, whereas one third had not involved LRGs at all—highlighting an ongoing governance gap.

SDR 2025 Findings (Sustainable Development Report 2025)

- The SDR 2025, published as the 10th anniversary edition, uses over 200,000 data points and offers country and regional SDG profiles through an index and dashboard system, effectively tracking progress toward the 17 Goals.
- It demonstrates that East and South Asia has achieved the fastest regional progress in moving toward the SDGs since 2015, largely due to socio-economic advancement.
- Participation in national and subnational review processes is high, featuring nearly universal engagement in VNRs—190 out of 193 UN member states—and wide deployment of VLRs to assess sustainability at local levels.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which Voluntary National Review on SDGs did India present at the UN High-Level Political Forum in 2025 under the leadership of NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman Suman Bery?

- (a) First Voluntary National Review
- (b) Fifth Voluntary National Review
- (c) Third Voluntary National Review
- (d) Second Voluntary National Review

2. Which United Nations council oversees the High-Level Political Forum where India's 2025 VNR on Sustainable Development Goals was presented?

- (a) ECOSOC
- (b) UN Security Council
- (c) UNESCO
- (d) UN Human Rights Council

3. Which long-term national vision was highlighted in India's Third VNR 2025 as being aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

- (a) Viksit Bharat @2047
- (b) India@100
- (c) New India 2030
- (d) Swachh Bharat 2040

4. Which international organisation has supported the establishment of SDG Coordination and Acceleration Centres across States and UTs in India?

- (a) UNEP
- (b) UNESCO
- (c) UNICEF
- (d) UNDP

5. Which of the following is not a recognised instrument used by India for periodic measurement and monitoring of SDGs?

- (a) Inclusive Growth Performance Index
- (b) SDG India Index
- (c) North-Eastern Region District SDG Index
- (d) National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)

6. Which SDG is directly associated with India's achievement of lifting about 248 million people out of multidimensional poverty during 2013-14 to 2022-23?

- (a) SDG 5 (Gender Equality)
- (b) SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)
- (c) SDG 1 (No Poverty)
- (d) SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)

7. Which scheme, aligned with SDG 2, is central to India's effort in strengthening household food security by providing free food grains to over 81 crore people?

- (a) Antyodaya Anna Yojana
- (b) PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana
- (c) National Nutrition Mission
- (d) Integrated Child Development Scheme

8. Which two initiatives helped reduce India's out-of-pocket health expenditure by improving nutrition and healthcare access between 2014-15 and 2020-21?

- (a) POSHAN Abhiyaan and Ayushman Bharat
- (b) PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana and Ujjwala Yojana

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

(c) National Food Security Act and Mid-Day Meal Scheme

(d) Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana and Swachh Bharat Mission

9. Which SDG is linked through clean-energy programmes like the National Green Hydrogen Mission, PM-KUSUM, and PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana?

- (a) SDG 6 (Clean Water & Sanitation)
- (b) SDG 7 (Affordable & Clean Energy)
- (c) SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities)
- (d) SDG 15 (Life on Land)

10. Which of the following is not among the initiatives enabling next-generation multimodal infrastructure, manufacturing ecosystems, and logistics efficiency in India?

- (a) PM Gati Shakti
- (b) Make in India
- (c) National Industrial Corridor Development Programme
- (d) Digital India Mission

11. Which trinity underpins India's Digital Public Infrastructure, making it a benchmark for financial inclusion and transparent service delivery worldwide?

- (a) RuPay-FASTag-UPI
- (b) Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile
- (c) BharatNet-ONDC-DigiLocker
- (d) BHIM-GeM-CoWIN

12. Which initiative, mentioned with the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) in India's VNR 2025, represents a global effort co-led by India to promote solar energy adoption?

- (a) International Solar Alliance
- (b) Global Wind Energy Council
- (c) Mission LiFE Network
- (d) Paris Agreement Implementation Forum

13. Which body is recognized as the UN's primary mechanism for reviewing global progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under Agenda 2030?

- (a) UNESCO
- (b) UNEP
- (c) HLPF
- (d) WHO

14. Which UN body convenes the HLPF every four years to review Agenda 2030 and adopt negotiated declarations on the SDGs?

- (a) UN Economic Commission for Europe
- (b) UN Environment Programme
- (c) UN Security Council
- (d) the UN General Assembly

15. Which initiative, along with the CDRI and the Quad Cancer Moonshot on cervical cancer prevention and treatment, was highlighted by India under SDG 17 partnerships?

- (a) Global Biofuels Alliance
- (b) International Big Cat Alliance
- (c) Mission Innovation on Clean Energy
- (d) Global Water Action Partnership

SOLUTIONS

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

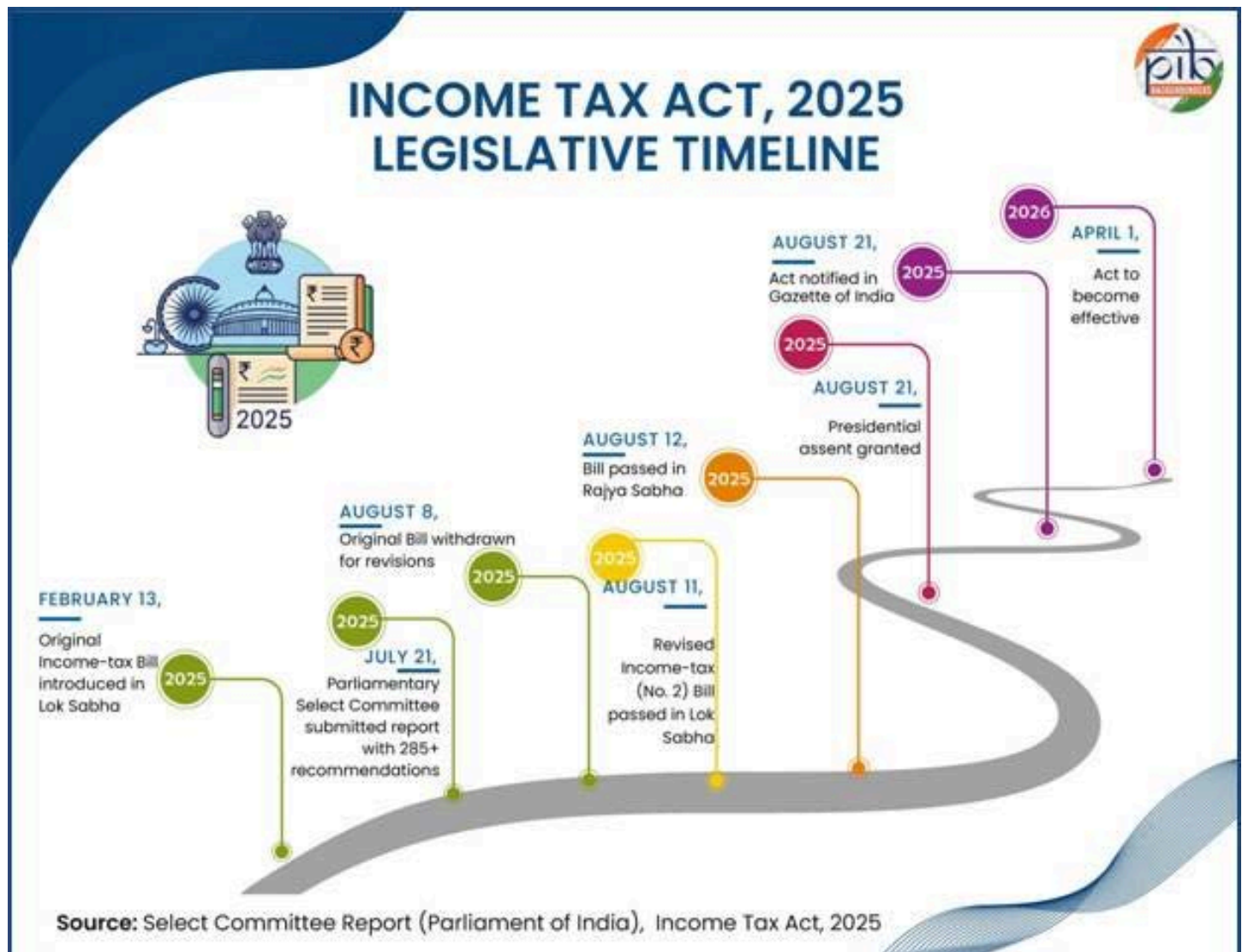
8

NEW INCOME TAX BILL 2025 PASSED IN PARLIAMENT

ACTS AND BILLS

IN FOCUS

- On **August 11, 2025**, the government introduced **The Income-Tax (No. 2) Bill, 2025** in the **Lok Sabha** to replace the **Income-tax Act, 1961**, incorporating the recommendations of the **Select Committee of Lok Sabha (Chair: Baijayant Panda)**.
- A revised draft was subsequently passed by both Houses during the Monsoon Session, forming the **Income Tax Act, 2025**, with **commencement proposed from April 1, 2026**.
- The reform retains existing **tax rates, regimes, definitions, offences and penalties**, and the **administrative structure**, while aiming to **simplify language, remove redundant provisions**, and reorganise the law for clarity and ease of use.



Legislative Trajectory and Rationale

- **Timeline and Process:** The government tabled an initial **Income-tax Bill, 2025** in February 2025, which was referred to a **Select Committee** for extensive stakeholder consultation and drafting improvements. Based on these recommendations, the government withdrew the earlier draft and introduced the **Income-Tax (No. 2) Bill, 2025** on **August 11, 2025**, which was passed in the Monsoon Session, culminating in the **Income Tax Act, 2025**. The **Act** reflects a **whole-of-government** effort to modernise tax legislation without altering core policy parameters or rates, thereby preserving predictability for taxpayers.
- **Why a New Law was Needed:** The **1961 Act** had undergone nearly seven decades of piecemeal amendments, accumulating thousands of changes, proliferating exemptions and provisos, and creating a fragmented, hard-to-navigate statute. The reform set three guiding principles: **textual and structural simplification**, **no major tax-policy changes**, and **no changes in tax rates**, coupled with a digital-first orientation to reduce disputes and compliance burdens.

Structural Simplification and Layout

- The statute has been **reorganised and condensed**: the number of **Chapters** is reduced from **47** to **23**; the number of **Sections** is brought down from **819** (1961 Act) to **536**; and total words are pruned from **5.12 lakh** to **2.6 lakh**
- The Act introduces **39 tables** and **40 formulae** to improve navigability and interpretation, and consolidates scattered provisions (for example, **TDS rules** are grouped under **Section 393**) to aid professionals and taxpayers.
- The law uses **plain, contemporary drafting** to reduce litigation arising from long sentences, layered provisos, and outdated phrases.



Core Substantive Features

- **Unified Time Concept: “Tax Year”:** The Act replaces the dual notions of **“Assessment Year”** and **“Previous Year”** with a single **“Tax Year”**, defined as the **twelve-month period beginning 1 April**, to eliminate ambiguity in filing, assessment, and interpretation.
- **General Power to Frame Schemes (Faceless and Digital):** Beyond retaining faceless assessment, the Act confers a **general enabling power** on the **Central Government** to design schemes for **efficiency, transparency, and accountability**.
- **Schemes may:** **eliminate interface** with assessees using technology; and **optimise resource use** through economies of scale and **functional specialisation**. Such schemes must be **laid before Parliament**, ensuring oversight and accountability.

Searches in Virtual Digital Space

- Search and seizure powers now explicitly extend to **“virtual digital space”**—defined as any digital environment experienced through computer technology—including **email servers, social media accounts, online investment/trading/banking accounts, cloud/remote servers, and websites storing asset details**
- Authorities may **gain access by overriding access codes** during authorised actions, with the government to issue a **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)** for handling **personal digital data** obtained in searches to

ensure due-process safeguards.

- **Virtual Digital Assets (VDA):** The Act clarifies and broadens **VDA** coverage to assets holding value in digital form and operating through **cryptographic ledger systems** (e.g., **cryptocurrencies** and **tokenised assets**), aligning the law with contemporary digital-economy realities.
- **Treaty Interpretation Clarification:** Where a term in a **tax treaty** is **not defined** in the treaty, the **Act**, or a **central government notification**, the meaning assigned in **any other central law** will apply, providing a clearer statutory fallback and reducing interpretive disputes.
- **Dispute Resolution Panel (DRP): Reasoned Directions: Eligible assesseees** (including non-residents, foreign companies, and **transfer pricing** cases) may continue to refer **draft assessment orders** to the **DRP**. The **DRP must now issue directions along with points for determination and reasons**, strengthening procedural fairness and improving the quality of adjudication.

Compliance and Taxpayer-Centric Clarifications

- **Refunds and Return Filing:** A restrictive draft clause that would have allowed **refunds only if returns were filed by the due date** has been **removed**, restoring the ability to claim refunds even on **belated returns**, in line with long-standing practice.
- **TCS on LRS (Education):** The Act clarifies **nil TCS** on **Liberalised Remittance Scheme** remittances for **education** when financed by a **financial institution**, addressing a gap in the earlier draft.
- **Nil-TDS Certificates:** **Taxpayers with no tax liability** may obtain an **advance nil-TDS certificate**, reducing cash-flow frictions and unnecessary withholding.

Corporate and Structural Corrections

- Drafting anomalies have been rectified for **inter-corporate dividend deductions** where concessional corporate tax regimes apply.
- **Alternate Minimum Tax (AMT) for LLPs** is aligned with the existing law by **removing** an expanded scope that would have drawn in LLPs not claiming specific tax benefits.
- **Transfer pricing** and **carry-forward/set-off of losses** provisions are clarified to reduce ambiguity.
- The reference to **“beneficial owner”** is **omitted** to align with **Section 79** principles on shareholding changes and loss carry-forward.
- For **income from house property**, the **30% standard deduction** is affirmed **after deduction of municipal taxes**, eliminating computational uncertainty.
- **Not-for-profit organisations (NPOs)** receive an **exemption for 5% of total donations** (not just **anonymous** donations), aligning with the Select Committee’s recommendation.

Commencement, Transition, and Impact

- **Effective Date and Non-Disruption:** The **Income Tax Act, 2025** is slated to **come into force on April 1, 2026**. **Rates and regimes** remain unchanged, ensuring a **non-disruptive transition** while taxpayers and administrators adapt to the statute’s simplified layout and terminology.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which legislation, introduced in the Lok Sabha on August 11, 2025, seeks to replace the Income-tax Act, 1961, by integrating the recommendations of a Select Committee chaired by Bajajant Panda?

(a) National Taxation Reform Bill, 2025
(b) Direct Tax Code (Revised) Bill, 2025
(c) Fiscal Policy Alignment Bill, 2025
(d) Income-Tax (No. 2) Bill, 2025

2. Which body reviewed the initial Income-tax Bill, 2025 through extensive consultations to refine its provisions before the final draft was introduced in Parliament?

(a) Select Committee
(b) Finance Ministry’s Expert Panel
(c) NITI Aayog Advisory Board
(d) Economic Advisory Council

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

3. Which Act, in force for nearly seven decades with thousands of amendments and exemptions, is being replaced by the new Income-Tax (No. 2) Bill, 2025?

- (a) Income Tax Act, 1956 (b) Income Tax Act, 1961
(c) Income Tax Act, 1965 (d) Income Tax Act, 1985

4. How many tables are part of the redesigned Income-Tax framework aimed at consolidating scattered provisions and aiding interpretation?

- (a) 20 tables (b) 35 tables
(c) 39 tables (d) 50 tables

5. What new term in the Income-Tax Act refers to the twelve-month period beginning 1 April, designed to simplify compliance and interpretation?

- (a) Financial Cycle (b) Revenue Year
(c) Filing Year (d) Tax Year

6. Which of the following best defines “virtual digital space” under the new Income-Tax Act provisions?

- (a) A digital environment accessed through computers, including email, social media, banking, trading, cloud servers, and websites with asset details
(b) A digital environment used for cryptocurrency exchanges and related online financial transactions only
(c) A digital environment created for e-governance services, including official portals and restricted state platforms
(d) A digital environment storing offline records through scanned archives, hard drives, and external backup devices

7. What framework is planned by the government to regulate the handling of personal digital data obtained through access-code overrides during authorised searches?

- (a) Digital Evidence Protocol
(b) Privacy Assurance Framework
(c) Standard Operating Procedure
(d) Data Security Manual

8. Which category under the Act now explicitly includes cryptocurrencies and tokenised assets that function through cryptographic ledger systems and hold digital value?

- (a) Digital Commodities (b) Virtual Digital Assets
(c) Blockchain Utilities (d) Electronic Securities

9. Which body, tasked with strengthening procedural fairness in tax adjudication, must now issue draft assessment order directions accompanied by reasons and points for determination?

- (a) Income Tax Appellate Tribunal
(b) Central Board of Direct Taxes
(c) Authority for Advance Rulings
(d) Dispute Resolution Panel

10. Which certificate, issued to taxpayers in advance, prevents tax deduction at source in cases where no tax liability exists, thereby avoiding blocked funds and refund delays?

- (a) Advance Tax Waiver (b) Zero-Liability Token
(c) Nil-TDS Certificates
(d) Non-Deduction Approval

11. Which section’s principles on shareholding changes and loss carry-forward guided the omission of the term “beneficial owner” from the Act?

- (a) Section 40A (b) Section 115BBE
(c) Section 79 (d) Section 54F

12. Which country’s sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund (PIF), has been granted exemption from income tax on dividends, interest, and capital gains under the amendment?

- (a) Saudi Arabia (b) Kuwait
(c) Bahrain (d) Jordan

13. Which pension scheme has been granted NPS-style tax benefits, including the provision of tax-free withdrawal of up to 60% of the corpus at the time of retirement?

- (a) Public Provident Fund (b) State Pension Fund
(c) Atal Pension Yojana (d) Unified Pension Scheme

SOLUTIONS

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

9

LINGUISTIC REORGANISATION
OF STATES IN INDIA

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

- A public debate has re-opened on India's **linguistic reorganisation of states** after **Tamil Nadu Governor R. N. Ravi** criticised post-Independence state formation as having created “second-class citizens”.
- Speaking at **Rashtriya Raksha University, Gandhinagar (30 July 2025)**, he argued that “ethnicity-based” and language-based states weakened national cohesion, cited a period when “the entire Northeast was burning” until 2014, and praised **Operation Sindoor** as an example of achieving political objectives “through military means” swiftly.
- The remarks have been contested by scholarship and historical experience that see linguistic states as instruments of accommodation and unity within India's federal framework.

India's State Reorganisation

1

Pre-1956 Classification (1950–1956)

At the commencement of the Constitution (26 January 1950), India was a “Union of States” grouped into four categories for administrative transition:

- **Part A** comprised former Governors' provinces under elected legislatures; **Andhra Pradesh** was later created in 1953 as the **first state on linguistic lines**.
- **Part B** comprised **former princely states** (or their unions) with elected legislatures and a **Rajpramukh**.
- **Part C** comprised **former Chief Commissioners' Provinces** and some princely states administered by **Chief Commissioners**.
- **Part D** consisted solely of the **Andaman & Nicobar Islands** under a **Lieutenant Governor**.



Dhar Commission (1948) rejected language as the sole basis of new states. JVP Committee (1949)—**Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Pattabhi Sitaramayya**—warned against disintegrative effects of linguistic reorganisation. A surge of popular mobilisation (notably **Potti Sreeramulu's fast and death in 1952**) led to the creation of Andhra State (1953), catalysing a comprehensive review.

2

- **States Reorganisation Commission (SRC, 1953)** chaired by **Justice Fazl Ali** (with **H. N. Kunzru** and **K. M. Panikkar**) accepted language as a key factor but rejected “one language—one state”, urging a **balanced approach** that prioritised **unity, security, and administrative-economic viability**.

3

The States Reorganisation Act, 1956 and the Seventh Constitutional Amendment, 1956: The legal architecture **abolished the Part A/B/C/D scheme**, reorganised India into **14 states** and **6 Union Territories**, and **removed the A-B distinction** while **abolishing Part C states**. This recast provincial boundaries along pragmatic lines with strong linguistic elements, inaugurating India's long-term federal settlement.

4

States Carved Out of Other States

- In 1960, the bilingual Bombay State was reorganised under **the Bombay Reorganisation Act, 1960**, leading to the creation of two separate states, **Gujarat and Maharashtra**, to meet the aspirations of **Gujarati and Marathi-speaking populations**.
- In 1962, the **State of Nagaland Act, 1962** was enacted, carving out Nagaland from Assam and granting it full statehood due to distinct ethnic identity and demands for autonomy.
- In 1966, the **Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966** **divided Punjab**, leading to the creation of the **new state of Haryana**, while the **Union Territory of Chandigarh** was established to serve as the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana.
- In 1971, the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971 led to the separation of **Meghalaya from Assam**, granting it statehood to preserve its tribal and cultural identity.
- In 2000, three new states were formed: **Chhattisgarh** was created from Madhya Pradesh, **Uttarakhand** (then called Uttaranchal) was carved out of Uttar Pradesh, and **Jharkhand** was separated from Bihar, all reflecting strong regional demands for self-governance and development.
- In 2014, after years of agitation, the State of **Telangana** was carved out of Andhra Pradesh, becoming the 29th state of India.

5

States Formed by Granting Statehood

- In 1970, Himachal Pradesh was granted full statehood after initially functioning as a Union Territory.
- In 1971, Manipur and Tripura were upgraded from Union Territories to full-fledged states under the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971.
- In 1975, Sikkim was formally integrated into India and granted statehood through the 36th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1975, after a referendum abolished the monarchy.
- In 1986, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh attained statehood following the Mizoram Accord and reorganisation measures for the North-East.
- In 1987, Goa was granted full statehood, while Daman and Diu remained as Union Territories, following the Goa, Daman, and Diu Reorganisation Act.

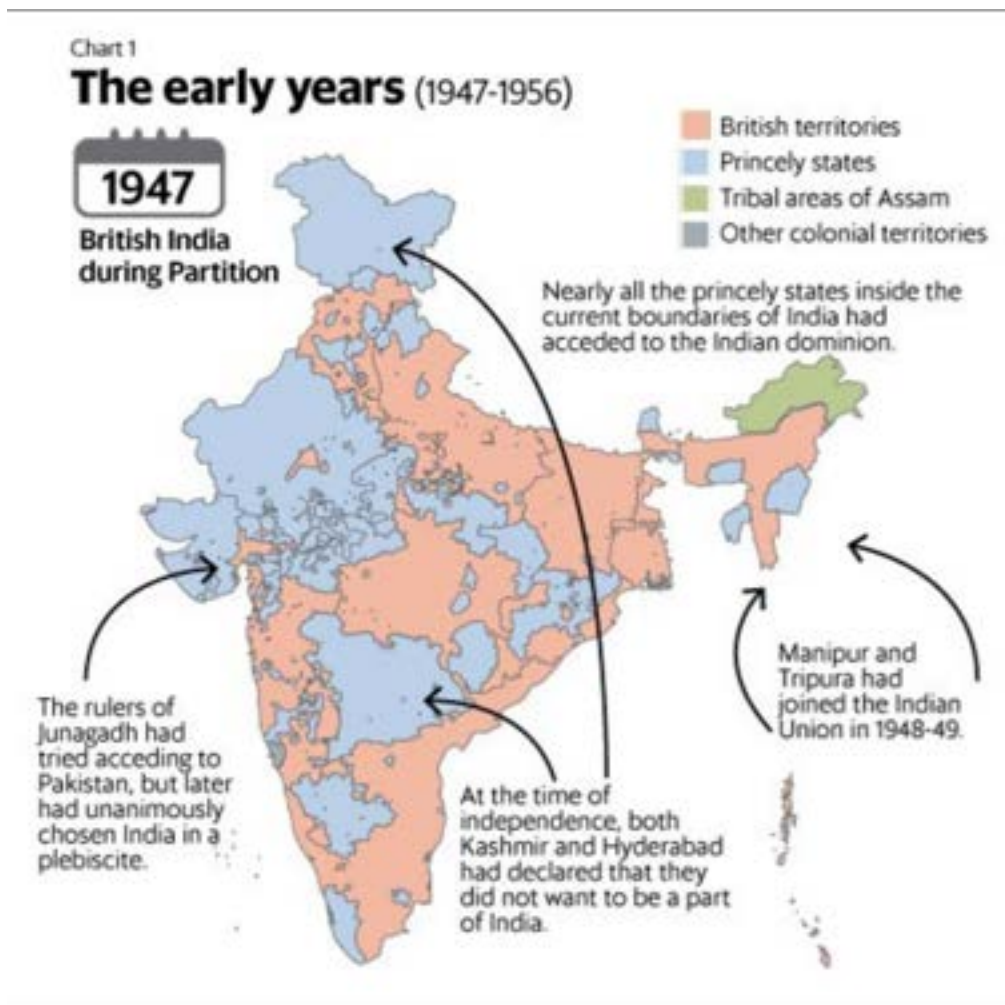


As of today, India has 28 states and 8 Union Territories, reflecting a complex history of reorganisations, cultural assertions, and political demands since the enactment of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956.

3

Formation and Changes of Union Territories

- In 1956, under the **States Reorganisation Act**, the Union Territories of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Delhi, and Lakshadweep were created.
- In 1962, **Puducherry** became a Union Territory following the de jure transfer of French territories to India.
- In 1966, the **Union Territory of Chandigarh** was created to serve as a centrally administered territory and capital for Punjab and Haryana.
- In 2019, the **special status of Jammu and Kashmir** under Article 370 was abrogated, and the state was bifurcated into the two Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.
- In 2020, the **Union Territories of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu were merged** into a single Union Territory called Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu for administrative efficiency.

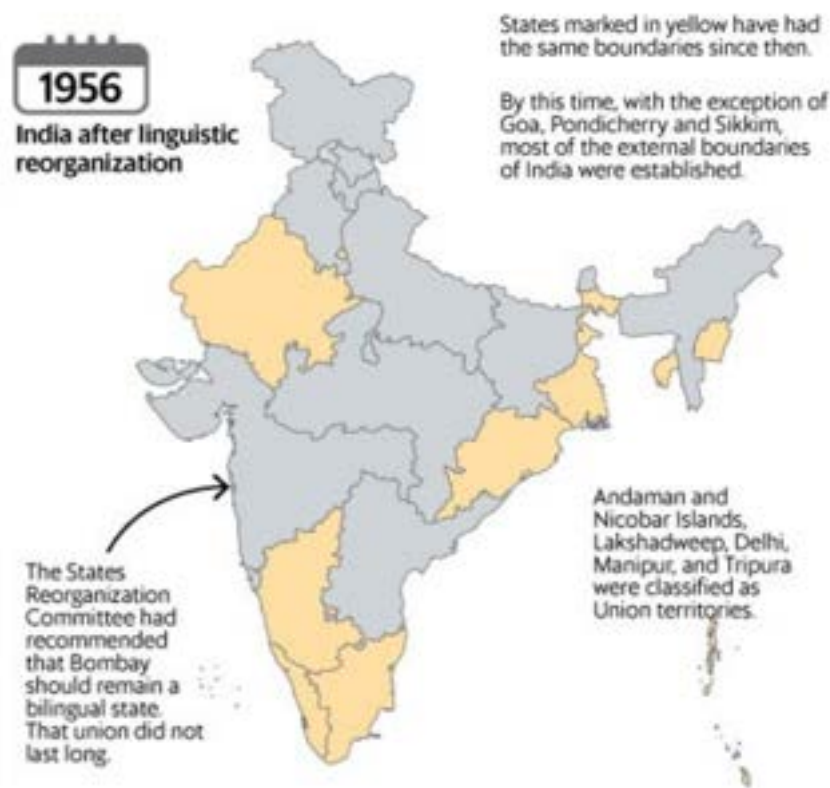
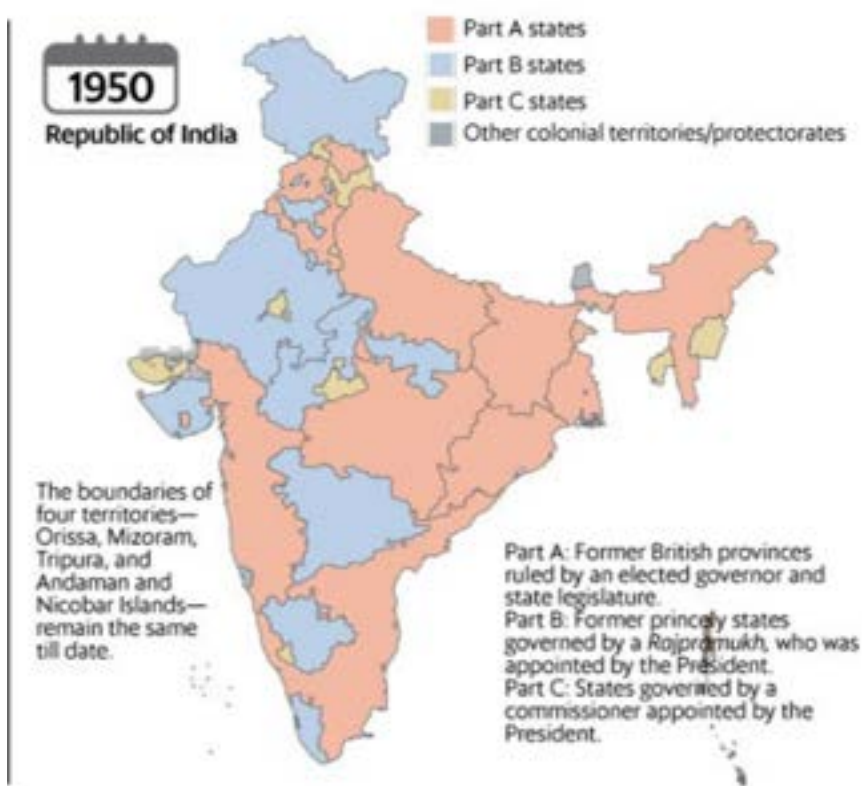
India's State formation in Charts

- This map shows the political situation of India between 1947 and 1956, right after independence.
- At the time of Partition, India consisted of British territories (in pink), Princely states (in blue), tribal areas of Assam (in green), and a few other colonial enclaves (in grey).
- Nearly all princely states acceded to India, though some—like Junagadh, Kashmir, and Hyderabad—posed challenges, with Junagadh choosing India after a plebiscite, while Kashmir and Hyderabad initially resisted accession.
- Additionally, Manipur and Tripura joined the Indian Union in 1948-49, strengthening the integration process.

This map shows how India was reorganised in 1950, when the Constitution came into effect and the country became a Republic. The states were divided into three categories:

- Part A states (in pink) were former British provinces ruled by an elected governor and legislature.
- Part B states (in blue) were former princely states or groups of states governed by a Rajpramukh appointed by the President.
- Part C states (in yellow) were smaller states and chief commissioners' provinces, directly governed by a commissioner appointed by the President.
- Some regions still remained as other colonial territories or protectorates (in grey), which were integrated later.

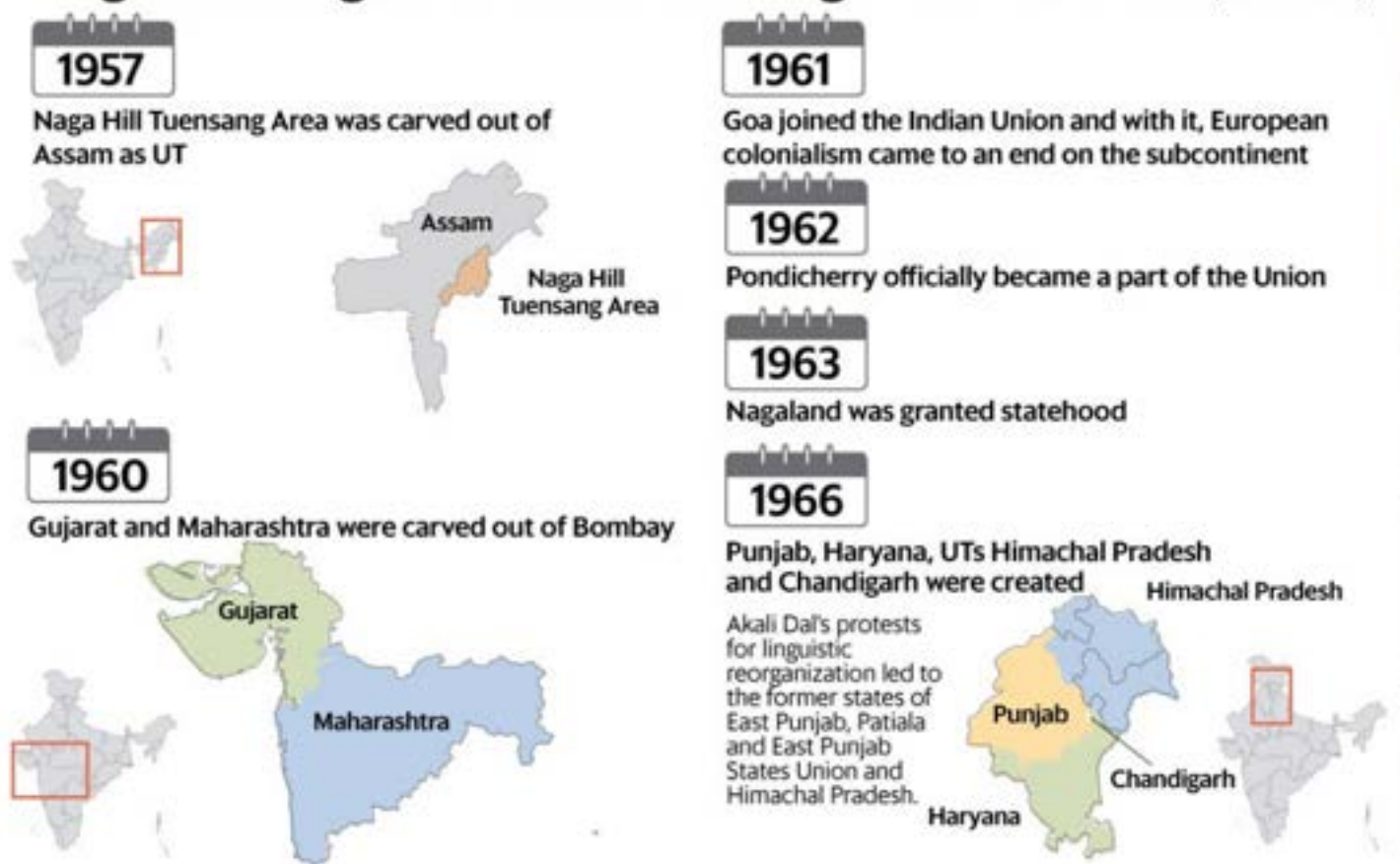
This arrangement laid the groundwork for the eventual States Reorganisation Act of 1956, which reorganised states largely on linguistic lines.



- This map shows India's situation after the States Reorganisation Act of 1956, which reorganised states primarily on linguistic lines. States marked in yellow retained their boundaries since then, while many others were newly restructured. By this time, with the exception of Goa, Puducherry, and Sikkim, most of India's external boundaries had been fixed.
- The States Reorganisation Committee had suggested that Bombay remain a bilingual state, but that arrangement did not last long. Additionally, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Delhi, Manipur, and Tripura were classified as Union Territories.

Chart 2

Linguistic reorganization continues right after 1956 SRC (1956-1966)



- The above chart explains how India continued reorganising states after the States Reorganisation Commission of 1956. In 1957, the Naga Hill Tuensang Area was carved out of Assam as a Union Territory.
- In 1960, Gujarat and Maharashtra were formed from the old Bombay State on linguistic lines. In 1961, Goa joined India, marking the end of European colonial rule on the subcontinent. In 1962, Puducherry officially became part of the Union, and in 1963, Nagaland was granted statehood.
- Finally, in 1966, Punjab was divided to create Haryana and Chandigarh, while Himachal Pradesh became a Union Territory, following strong demands for linguistic reorganisation.
- The chart on the next page shows how India reorganised its North-Eastern states and nearby regions between 1971 and 1991. In 1971, Himachal Pradesh became a state, and in 1972, Manipur and Tripura were given statehood while Mizoram, Meghalaya, and the North-East Frontier Agency (later Arunachal Pradesh) were carved out of Assam as Union Territories. In 1975, Sikkim joined India as a state after a referendum.
- In 1987, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh were upgraded to states, while Goa became a state and Daman and Diu remained a Union Territory.
- Finally, in 1991, Delhi was designated as the National Capital Territory with its own legislative assembly, though power was shared with the central government.

Chart 3

Fixing the North-East jigsaw (1971-1991)

1971

UT Himachal Pradesh was granted statehood

1972

Manipur and Tripura were granted statehood. Mizoram, Meghalaya and North Eastern Frontier Agency were carved out of Assam as UTs

1975

A protectorate of India until then, Sikkim joined the Indian Union after a referendum

1987

UTs Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh became states. The state of Goa, Daman and Diu was split into two: the state of Goa and UT of Daman and Diu

1991

Delhi was deemed National Capital Territory and given a legislative assembly, with power jointly shared with the central government

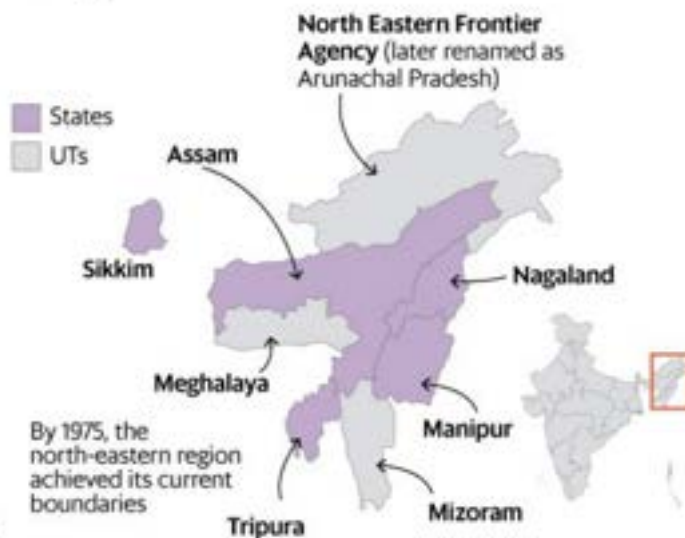


Chart 4

Old faultlines make a return in new millennium (2000-Present)

2000

Uttaranchal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh were created

Following long-standing regional demands, these three states were carved out of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh

2014

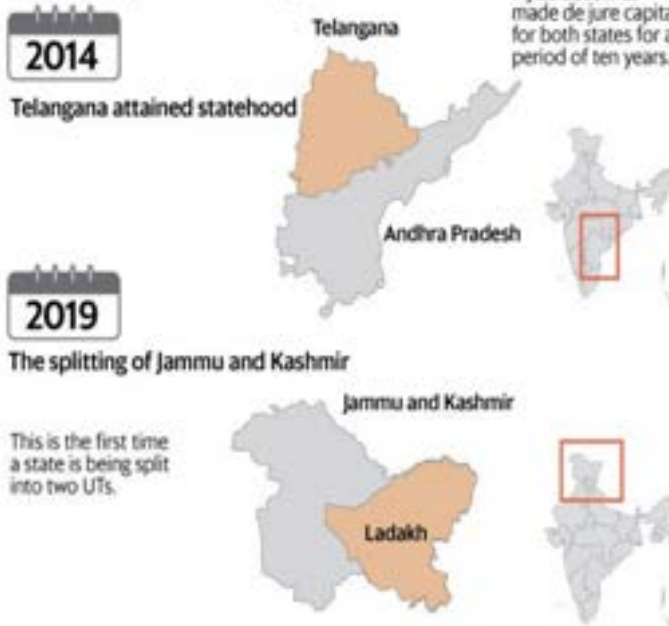
Telangana attained statehood

Despite being within Telangana entirely, Hyderabad was made de jure capital for both states for a period of ten years.

2019

The splitting of Jammu and Kashmir

This is the first time a state is being split into two UTs.



The chart 4 shows the state reorganisation in India during the 2000s and beyond. In 2000, three new states—Uttaranchal (later renamed Uttarakhand), Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh—were created out of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh respectively, following strong regional demands. In 2014, Telangana was carved out of Andhra Pradesh, with Hyderabad serving as the joint capital for both states for ten years. In 2019, Jammu and Kashmir was bifurcated into two Union Territories: Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, marking the first time a state in India was split into two UTs.

The Governor's Critique: Claims and Illustrations

- **Core Assertions:** Linguistic division allegedly produced “**second-class citizens**” within states; in his illustration, **Tamil Nadu** became a “linguistic state” where “one-third of the population became second-class citizens”. Post-Independence policy allegedly **created divisions** by accepting linguistic/ethnic templates, reflected in later administrative and internal security assessments.
- **Diagnosis of Internal Security:** The Northeast “**burned until 2014**” but has moved “near normal” due to **infrastructure expansion** (airports, four-lane roads, rail, digital connectivity) and a **principled national approach** to internal security that “resolves, not multiplies, problems”.

What the Historical Record and Scholarship Emphasise

- **Language Was Important—but Not Exclusive:** Parliament's 1953 resolution setting up the SRC explicitly stated that **language and culture matter**, but **unity, security, and financial-administrative viability** were equally central. The **SRC Report (1955)** concluded it was “**neither possible nor desirable**” to reorganise only on language, recommending a **balanced, multi-factor** approach.
- **A Safety Valve within Federalism:** Scholars and historians argue that recognising **linguistic pluralism** within state boundaries **defused secessionist pressures** by **accommodating regional aspirations** inside the constitutional order. In contrast to **Pakistan** (language conflict culminating in Bangladesh's secession) and **Sri Lanka** (Sinhala–Tamil strife), India's model **tempered separatism** by aligning identity with democratic representation and administration.
- **Administrative and Democratic Gains:** Linguistic homogeneity **improved local governance**, education, justice delivery, and administration in the **regional language**, while empowering **regional parties** to participate constructively in national coalitions. The **Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2008)** called the resolution of linguistic conflicts **one of independent India's major achievements**.
- **Ongoing Caveats and Frictions:** The model has not eliminated **regionalism, majoritarian chauvinism, or inter-state border disputes** (e.g., **Belagavi**). Demands for new identity-based states (e.g., **Vidarbha, Tulu Nadu**) show that **administrative efficiency, developmental balance, and minority protections** within states remain active governance tasks.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which group did Tamil Nadu Governor R. N. Ravi claim was created as a result of post-Independence linguistic state formation?

- (a) Cultural outliers
- (b) Second-class citizens
- (c) Disadvantaged taxpayers
- (d) Peripheral stakeholders

2. How many categories of states and territories existed in India on 26 January 1950 for administrative transition under the newly adopted Constitution?

- (a) One category
- (b) Three categories
- (c) Four categories
- (d) Six categories

3. Which authority administered the Andaman & Nicobar Islands when they were placed under Part D at the commencement of the Constitution in 1950?

- (a) Governor
- (b) Chief Commissioner
- (c) Lieutenant Governor
- (d) Rajpramukh

4. Which type of states formed Part B under the 1950 constitutional classification, governed by Rajpramukhs with elected legislatures?

- (a) Part A provinces of British India
- (b) Centrally administered areas
- (c) Small commissioner's provinces
- (d) Princely states

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

5. Which state, formed in 1953 from the Madras Presidency, became the first Indian state to be created on a linguistic basis under the constitutional framework?

- (a) Karnataka (b) Tamil Nadu
(c) Rajasthan (d) Andhra Pradesh

6. Which prominent leader joined Jawaharlal Nehru and Pattabhi Sitaramayya on the JVP Committee of 1949, which opposed the creation of states solely on linguistic grounds?

- (a) Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (b) B. N. Rau
(c) K. M. Munshi (d) Vallabhbhai Patel

7. Which leader's fast-unto-death in 1952 became the immediate catalyst for the formation of Andhra State, India's first linguistic state, in 1953?

- (a) Potti Sreeramulu (b) C. Rajagopalachari
(c) Jawaharlal Nehru (d) B. R. Ambedkar

8. Which scheme of classifying Indian states and territories was abolished by the States Reorganisation Act, 1956 along with the Seventh Constitutional Amendment?

- (a) Federal-Provincial scheme
(b) Part A/B/C/D scheme
(c) Governor-Rajpramukh scheme
(d) Dominion-Province scheme

9. Which state did critics highlight as an example in which linguistic division turned it into a "linguistic state" with one-third of its population allegedly relegated to "second-class citizens"?

- (a) Karnataka (b) Andhra Pradesh
(c) Tamil Nadu (d) West Bengal

10. Which commission, reporting in 2008, commended India's approach to linguistic reorganisation by calling it a major achievement in resolving conflicts?

- (a) Second Administrative Reforms Commission
(b) Punchhi Commission

- (c) States Reorganisation Commission
(d) Sarkaria Commission

11. Which year did Himachal Pradesh attain full statehood after functioning as a Union Territory?

- (a) 1967 (b) 1970 (c) 1971 (d) 1972

12. The North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971 granted statehood to which two Union Territories?

- (a) Nagaland and Mizoram
(b) Meghalaya and Tripura
(c) Manipur and Tripura
(d) Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh

13. Which state was integrated into India in 1975 after a referendum abolished its monarchy?

- (a) Goa (b) Mizoram
(c) Arunachal Pradesh (d) Sikkim

14. The Mizoram Accord led to the creation of which Indian state in 1986?

- (a) Meghalaya (b) Mizoram
(c) Tripura (d) Nagaland

15. Under the Goa, Daman and Diu Reorganisation Act, 1987, which region was granted statehood while the other parts remained Union Territories?

- (a) Goa became a state; Daman and Diu remained Union Territories.
(b) Daman became a state; Goa and Diu remained Union Territories.
(c) Diu became a state; Goa and Daman remained Union Territories.
(d) All three regions became states.

SOLUTIONS

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

10 TAMIL NADU'S STATE EDUCATION POLICY 2025

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

- On **August 8, 2025**, **Tamil Nadu** unveiled its **State Education Policy (SEP) 2025** in Chennai, with Chief Minister **M. K. Stalin** describing it as a “vision document for the future” tailored to the state’s unique context.
- The policy affirms the state’s **two-language formula** (Tamil + English) in explicit departure from **NEP 2020**, **scraps Class 11 public examinations with immediate effect**, and sets a clear target that every student should complete school and progress to higher education—building on the current figure that **72%** of students who passed Class 12 this year have already enrolled in higher education.
- The rollout also showcased **901** students from government schools admitted to premier institutions such as IITs and NITs.

Synopsis of the Policy

Policy Genesis and Vision

- **Committee, Consultations, and Structure:** The **230-page** SEP was prepared by a **14-member expert committee** chaired by retired Delhi High Court Chief Justice **D. Murugesan**, following wide consultations with educators, students, civil society, and subject experts. The policy is organized around core themes that include foundational literacy and numeracy, curriculum reform, teacher development, safe and inclusive schools, **digital learning**, and sustainable infrastructure.
- **Vision Statement:** The policy’s vision is to build an **inclusive, equitable, resilient, and future-ready** school education system that nurtures every child’s potential, upholds **social justice**, and equips learners with **21st-century skills and values** rooted in Tamil Nadu’s cultural heritage—preparing compassionate, confident, and responsible citizens. At the launch, the Chief Minister emphasized “**samathuva kalvi**” (education for equality) and “**pagutharivu kalvi**” (education with rational thought), underlining that the policy rejects “reactionary thinking.”



Justice D. Murugesan

Language Policy and Autonomy

Two-Language Formula: Reaffirming Tamil Nadu’s longstanding position, the SEP 2025 adopts a **two-language formula—Tamil and English**—and **rejects the three-language policy** of NEP 2020. Tamil is to be **compulsory up to Class 10**, including in schools affiliated to national boards, strengthening mother-tongue-based learning in early years while preserving bilingual proficiency

Educational Federalism: The state reiterates its commitment to **educational autonomy**. Deputy Chief Minister **Udhayanidhi Stalin** renewed the demand to **return education to the State List**, while School Education Minister **Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozi** contrasted the frameworks—“**NEP is vidhi (fate); SEP is madhi (intellect)**.” In May 2025, Tamil Nadu also moved the **Supreme Court** alleging the Union government **withheld ₹2,291.30 crore** in education funds (including Samagra Shiksha), terming it unconstitutional and seeking **6% annual interest** on the withheld amount.

Curriculum and Pedagogical Reform

Competency-Based, Inquiry-Driven Learning

The curriculum will be **redesigned to be competency-based, experiential, and inquiry-driven**, reducing rote learning while deepening conceptual understanding. It integrates **Tamil heritage, environmental literacy, social-emotional learning**, and **bilingual** pedagogies. Stage-specific approaches are outlined:

- **Foundational** years emphasise play-oriented learning and early literacy-numeracy.
- **Middle** grades focus on inquiry-based methods and interdisciplinary exposure.
- **Secondary** stages stress critical dialogue, problem-solving, and career readiness.
- Arts-integrated projects, sports-based activities, and experiential learning are promoted across school levels.



Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN/BLN): BLN is the **top priority**. Through the flagship **Ennum Ezhuthum Mission**, the state will operationalize a mission-mode programme to ensure **age-appropriate reading, writing, and numeracy by Class 3**, with early assessments, remedial teaching, and community involvement—especially in rural and tribal geographies.

Assessment, Examinations, and Student Well-Being

- **Lighter High-Stakes Load, Stronger Formative Assessment:** The SEP **eliminates Class 11 public examinations** (reversing a 2017 decision) to reduce stress from consecutive Class 10–11–12 boards. It shifts toward **formative and diagnostic assessments** (projects, portfolios, peer evaluation) and upholds **no-detention** for Classes 1–8 with bridge courses for learners who need support.
- **Safe, Inclusive, and Holistic Schools:** The policy commits to safe, inclusive campuses with **barrier-free infrastructure**, mental-health helplines, **Magizh Mandram** student clubs, and robust programmes in physical education, arts, and life skills. To maintain focus, **mobile phones are banned in schools**.
- **Vocational Education and Employability:** Vocational education is strengthened in **higher secondary** with industry internships, **ITI attachments**, and **career guidance from Class IX** under programmes such as **Naan Mudhalvan**. The state will collaborate with industries and MSMEs to update vocational curricula and expand apprenticeships, while introducing **skill-based courses**—including AI, robotics, agritech, and entrepreneurship—into the secondary stage for employment-readiness.

Governance, Infrastructure, and Monitoring

- **Decentralized Governance and Community Partnerships:** The SEP emphasizes **School Management Committees**, the **Namma School** initiative, CSR and alumni partnerships, and localized planning and accountability mechanisms that reflect district-level needs and diversity.
- **Smart and Sustainable Infrastructure:** Schools will be modernized with **smart classrooms**, science and computer labs, **green campuses**, and **solar power**. The policy scales **Model Schools** and **Vetri Palligal** as hubs of excellence that diffuse best practices across clusters.
- **Data-Driven Improvement:** The state will use **EMIS** for disaggregated data, conduct annual **State Learning Achievement Surveys (SLAS)**, and commission third-party evaluations. Health, arts, and sports indicators will be integrated to enable **holistic tracking** of student development and school performance.

Current Status and Targets**Enrolment, Dropouts, and Funding**

- Tamil Nadu reports **near-universal enrolment (GER >95%)** and **zero dropout** at primary and upper-primary levels, with **secondary dropout at 7.7%** identified for targeted reduction through equity-driven interventions.
- For 2024–25, the education outlay stands at **₹44,042 crore**, supporting welfare schemes (including the breakfast programme) and digital upgrades. The policy's immediate action point—**abolition of Class 11 board exams**—is in force, aligning with the student-well-being thrust.

How SEP 2025 Deviates from NEP 2020 (School Education)

- **Structural Design vs. NEP's 5+3+3+4:** Tamil Nadu retains its **traditional class-based stages** and does not explicitly adopt the **5+3+3+4** restructuring or mandate ECCE integration within schools, instead collaborating with anganwadis while focusing foundational reforms in primary grades.
- **Language Policy vs. Three-Language Formula:** The SEP formalizes a **two-language** approach with **Tamil compulsory up to Class 10**, including across national boards, directly **rejecting** NEP's **three-language** framework to preserve linguistic identity and mother-tongue primacy.
- **Vocational Education Entry Point:** Where NEP proposes exposure from **Class 6**, Tamil Nadu **front-loads** academic fundamentals and introduces **strong vocational pathways in higher secondary**, with career guidance from Class 9 and deep industry linkages.
- **Assessments and Class 11 Boards:** While NEP envisages national assessment reforms (e.g., **PARAKH**) and modularity in board exams, Tamil Nadu emphasizes **state-specific SLAS**, **formative assessment**, **no detention in Classes 1–8**, and **abolishes Class 11 public exams** to reduce exam load.
- **Governance Orientation:** NEP promotes school complexes/clusters and national standards frameworks; Tamil Nadu strengthens **community-based governance**, localized accountability through **SMCs/EMIS**, and state-branded digital ecosystems (**Kalvi TV**, **Manarkeni**, **TN-SPARK**).

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which state's Chief Minister, M. K. Stalin, introduced the State Education Policy (SEP) 2025 as a document tailored to its unique social and cultural context?

- (a) Telangana (b) Maharashtra
(c) Tamil Nadu (d) Odisha

2. Which public examinations has Tamil Nadu's State Education Policy (SEP) 2025 decided to scrap with immediate effect?

- (a) Class 11 (b) Class 10
(c) Class 12 (d) Class 9

3. Which individual chaired the 14-member expert committee that drafted Tamil Nadu's 230-page State Education Policy (SEP) 2025?

- (a) R. Banumathi (b) D. Murugesan
(c) A. K. Sikri (d) S. Ravindra Bhat

4. Which term, highlighted alongside "pagutharivu kalvi" during the launch of Tamil Nadu's SEP 2025, translates to "education for equality"?

- (a) anmeega kalvi (b) panpattu kalvi
(c) nilai kalvi (d) samathuva kalvi

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

5. Which class has Tamil Nadu's SEP 2025 made Tamil compulsory up to, even in schools affiliated with national boards?

- (a) Class 8 (b) Class 10
(c) Class 11 (d) Class 12

6. Which constitutional list does Tamil Nadu's State Education Policy (SEP) 2025 reaffirm as the proper place for education, as emphasised by Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin?

- (a) State List (b) Union List
(c) Concurrent List (d) Residual List

7. Which mission, identified as Tamil Nadu's flagship initiative for Basic Literacy and Numeracy (BLN), aims to ensure Class 3 children achieve age-appropriate foundational skills?

- (a) Nipun Bharat Mission
(b) Padhe Bharat Programme
(c) Ennum Ezhuthum Mission
(d) School Readiness Mission

8. Which student clubs are being introduced under Tamil Nadu's SEP 2025 to promote safe, inclusive campuses alongside programmes in arts, physical education, and life skills?

- (a) Magizh Mandram (b) Kalvi Kendra
(c) Arivu Sangam (d) Vidya Mandal

9. Which initiative, alongside School Management Committees, CSR support, and alumni partnerships, is highlighted in SEP 2025 to strengthen localized planning and accountability in schools?

- (a) Vidya Shakti (b) Kalvi Sangam
(c) Arivu Palli (d) Namma School

10. Which tool will Tamil Nadu use annually, along with EMIS and third-party evaluations, to measure and improve student learning under its SEP 2025?

- (a) Regional Academic Review
(b) State Learning Achievement Surveys
(c) Institutional Performance Audit
(d) Integrated Learning Appraisal

11. Which structural framework introduced by the NEP 2020—comprising foundational, preparatory, middle, and secondary stages—was not explicitly adopted by Tamil Nadu's SEP 2025?

- (a) 5+3+3+4 (b) 10+2
(c) 8+4 (d) 4+4+4

12. Which level of schooling has been identified in NEP 2020 for the introduction of vocational exposure, unlike Tamil Nadu's SEP 2025 that delays this until higher secondary?

- (a) Class 3 (b) Class 5
(c) Class 6 (d) Class 8

SOLUTIONS

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

11

NATIONAL SPORTS GOVERNANCE
AND ANTI-DOPING BILLS

ACTS AND BILLS

IN FOCUS

- **Date and Operation:** On May 21, 2025, Nambala Keshava Rao, alias Basavaraju, the General Secretary of the banned CPI (Maoist), was killed in an anti-Naxal operation in Narayanpur district, Chhattisgarh.
- **Scale and Impact:** The operation led to the neutralization of 27 Maoists, making it one of the most decisive blows to the Maoist insurgency in decades.
- **Location and Strategy:** The encounter occurred in Abujhmad, a known Maoist stronghold, as part of a broader offensive aimed at eliminating left-wing extremism ahead of the March 2026 deadline set by the government.
- **Official Statement:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah hailed the operation and the death of Basavaraju as a “landmark achievement” in India's ongoing battle against Naxalism.

Background and Policy Context

Reform Moment in Indian Sport

- The governance and anti-doping overhaul aligns with the government's push to professionalise federations, de-politicise decisions, and protect athlete rights through rules-based institutions.
- In parallel, the Union Cabinet has approved the National Sports Policy (NSP) 2025 / Khelo Bharat Niti 2025, which provides a national roadmap from grassroots to elite sport, integrates sports with NEP 2020, and sets KPIs with time-bound targets to monitor progress toward global excellence and the 2036 Olympic ambition.

Long Arc of Policy Evolution (Post-Independence to Present)

- From the 1951 Asian Games and the creation of the All-India Council of Sports (1954), through the formation and later bifurcation of the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (1982-2000), India's sport policy has oscillated between mass participation and elite performance.
- The National Sports Policy (1984; revised 2001), the National Sports Development Code (2011), and flagship schemes—TOPS (2014), Khelo India (2017), and Fit India (2019)—laid the groundwork for today's institutional reforms, even as uneven implementation persisted because sport is a State subject under the Constitution.

National Sports Governance Act, 2025

- 1 **Transparency:** Bringing transparency and accountability in sports federations through the digitization process.
- 2 **More Players' Representation:** Athletes will be included in national federations through an athlete committee.
- 3 **Reduction in Conflicts:** There will be clear guidelines, dispute resolving mechanisms, and a court-based system to resolve cases.
- 4 **Fair Selection:** Selection will be done based on merit and transparency; the entire process will be visible to everyone.
- 5 **Financial Independence:** Sports federations will have more autonomy in financial matters.
- 6 **Dispute Resolution Channel:** Athletes, teams, and associations will have a dedicated board for complaint resolution.
- 7 **Quick Resolution of Disputes:** Fast-track tribunal system will resolve disputes quickly.
- 8 **End of Age Fraud and Doping:** No more favoritism or biased decisions; athletes won't have to go to court for their rights.
- 9 **Code of Conduct:** Strict code of conduct for all federations.
- 10 **Common Code:** All federations will come under a common code.

The National Sports Governance Bill, 2025

- **Core Architecture and New Bodies:** The law empowers the Centre to establish a **National Sports Board (NSB)** to recognise and regulate national sports bodies and to register their affiliated units. It provides for the **National Olympic Committee**, the **National Paralympic Committee**, and **National/Regional Sports Federations** for each designated sport, with affiliation to the respective international bodies to ensure **global compliance**.
- **Governance Norms for Sports Bodies:** Every recognised national body must have a **General Body** with equal representation from each affiliate member and relevant ex-officio members. An **Executive Committee of up to 15 members** is mandated, including **at least two outstanding sportspersons** and **four women**, embedding athlete voice and gender diversity.
- Federations must constitute **Ethics, Dispute Resolution**, and **Athletes'** committees, adopt a **Code of Ethics** and a **Safe Sports Policy**, and conduct **free and fair elections** overseen through a **National Sports Election Panel**.
- **Transparency, Financial Discipline, and Public Accountability:** Recognised bodies fall under the **RTI Act, 2005** only when they **receive government grants or financial assistance**. Accounts must be **CAG-audited**, and prior approval is required for the use of **"India"** or **national insignia** to protect national representation standards.
- While the **BCCI** is brought within the monitoring sweep of the NSB for recognition and compliance, it **remains outside RTI** unless



NATIONAL SPORTS GOVERNANCE BILL

Timeline at a Glance

- **2011** – Draft National Sports Development Bill placed before Cabinet; faces opposition over strict age & tenure caps.
- **July 2013** – Revised draft released for public feedback; later dropped. Sports Code 2011 upheld by Delhi HC in 2014.
- **2015** – Working Group formed to re-draft code; faces conflict-of-interest challenge in Delhi HC.
- **2017** – Committee led by Injeti Srinivas drafts National Code for Good Governance in Sports.
- **2019** – Justice (Retd.) Mukundakam Sharma heads Expert Committee to review 2017 draft; Delhi HC stays its constitution.
- **Oct 2024** – Draft National Sports Governance Bill released; 700+ stakeholder responses, including IOC, FIFA, World Athletics.
- **23 Jul 2025** – Bill introduced in Lok Sabha.
- **11 Aug 2025** – Bill reintroduced with amendments in Lok Sabha; passed.
- **12 Aug 2025** – Rajya Sabha passes bill after 2+ hours of debate.
- **Pending** – Presidential assent will make it law, placing India alongside USA, UK, China, Japan in sports governance legislation.

- **substantially funded** by the government.
- **Regulatory and Enforcement Powers:** The NSB may **recognise, suspend, or cancel** sports bodies, order **inquiries**, and **de-recognise** federations for failure to hold fair elections, mismanagement of funds, or serious irregularities. For reasons of **security, public order, or safety**, the Centre may **restrict national teams' participation abroad**, ensuring sovereign oversight in exceptional circumstances.
- Leadership provisions allow administrators aged **70–75** to contest elections **where international federation rules permit**, a calibrated relaxation from the earlier 70-year cap to respect **global sport statute books**.

Dispute Resolution: The National Sports Tribunal

- A **three-member National Sports Tribunal**, chaired by a **sitting/former Supreme Court Judge or Chief Justice of a High Court**, receives **civil-court powers** to adjudicate disputes on **selection, elections, and federation governance** for time-bound, expert resolution.
- **Doping matters** continue under the specialised **anti-doping mechanism** (see next section). Tribunal decisions are **appealable only to the Supreme Court**, ensuring finality and uniformity.

The National Sports Governance Bill, 2025

- **Purpose and Global Alignment:** The amendment strengthens India's compliance with **WADA** and the **UNESCO Convention against Doping in Sport**, reinforcing a **zero-tolerance** approach while protecting **due process** and **athlete rights**.
- **Institutional Independence and Roles:** The **National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)** is granted enhanced operational independence over testing, investigations, and enforcement, addressing autonomy concerns raised internationally.

Strengthening India's Anti-Doping Framework



- The **National Anti-Doping Appeal Panel** and related adjudicatory structures are insulated to ensure **impartial** decision-making.
- The role of the **National Board for Anti-Doping in Sports** is **recalibrated**: it **advises** the government and may **obtain information** from **Disciplinary and Appeal Panels**, but **cannot direct or interfere in NADA's operations**, preserving regulatory integrity while enabling system-level oversight and policy coherence.

Testing, Enforcement, and Violations: The law specifies a **clear catalogue of anti-doping rule violations**, codifies **testing protocols**, and streamlines **results management** and **appeals**, ensuring predictable, WADA-consistent processes from sample collection to final adjudication.

National Sports Policy (NSP) 2025: Strategic Scaffold for the Reforms

Four Pillars for a Sporting Nation

- **Excellence on the Global Stage:** Early talent identification, competitive leagues, **world-class coaching and sports science**, and stronger **NSF governance**.
- **Sports for Economic Development:** Growth of **sports tourism, start-ups**, and **private investment** to expand India's **sports economy**.
- **Sports for Social Development:** Inclusion of **marginalised groups**, revival of **traditional/indigenous games**, diaspora engagement, and community **volunteering**.
- **Sports as a People's Movement:** Mass participation, institutional **fitness indices**, and wider public access to **facilities**.

Strategic Enablers

- **Governance:** A legal-regulatory backbone to ensure **transparency** and **accountability**.
- **Private Sector Participation:** Expanded **PPP, CSR**, and **innovative financing** for infrastructure and programs.
- **Technology & Innovation:** Use of **AI and data analytics** for performance tracking and targeted delivery.
- **Monitoring & Evaluation:** National **KPI** framework with time-bound targets and public reporting.
- **Model Policy for States:** A template for **States/UTs** to align their policies with national goals while respecting federal realities
- **Constitutional and Federal Considerations:** **Sport is a State subject** (Entry 33, List II, Seventh Schedule). The new central laws therefore focus on **recognition standards, institutional architecture, dispute resolution**, and **international compliance**, while leaving **programmatic execution** and **grassroots delivery** to coordinated State and Central action under the NSP 2025 umbrella.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which Union Minister piloted both the National Sports Governance Bill, 2025 and the National Anti-Doping (Amendment) Bill, 2025 through the Lok Sabha during the Monsoon Session?

- (a) Kiren Rijiju (b) Piyush Goyal
(c) Mansukh Mandaviya (d) Amit Shah

2. Which policy, branded as Khelo Bharat Niti 2025, was cleared by the Union Cabinet to set time-bound targets for sporting excellence and contribute to India's 2036 Olympic dream?

- (a) Sports Vision 2025
(b) National Fitness and Sports Strategy 2025
(c) Indian Athletes Mission 2025
(d) National Sports Policy (NSP) 2025

3. Which institution, created in 1954, became one of the first national-level advisory bodies for sports in India after the 1951 Asian Games?

- (a) All-India Council of Sports
(b) Sports Development Board of India
(c) National Sports Committee
(d) Indian Sports Authority

4. Which of the following is NOT among the flagship sports schemes launched in India, though it contributed to governance reforms?

- (a) Target Olympic Podium Scheme (2014)
(b) National Sports Development Code (2011)
(c) Khelo India (2017)
(d) Fit India (2019)

5. Which of the following does not qualify as a flagship scheme but is a statutory body proposed under the new sports governance law?

- (a) TOPS – Target Olympic Podium Scheme
(b) Fit India Movement
(c) Khelo India Programme
(d) National Sports Board

6. How many members are allowed at maximum in the Executive Committee of a national sports body as per the updated governance framework?

- (a) 8 members
(b) 12 members
(c) 15 members
(d) 18 members

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

7. Which legislation applies to recognised sports bodies receiving government grants, requiring them to share information with the public in the interest of transparency?

- (a) Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996
- (b) RTI Act, 2005
- (c) National Sports Development Code, 2011
- (d) Audit and Accountability Act, 2009

8. Which law applies to recognised sports federations receiving government funding, complementing new dispute resolution mechanisms like the National Sports Tribunal?

- (a) Sports Authority Act, 1984
- (b) RTI Act, 2005
- (c) National Sports Code, 2011
- (d) Audit and Accountability Act, 2009

9. Which international frameworks does India's amended anti-doping law align with, underscoring its zero-tolerance stance while safeguarding athlete rights?

- (a) WADA and the UNESCO Convention
- (b) WHO and the Montreal Protocol
- (c) ICC and the Vienna Convention
- (d) IOC and the BRICS Sports Charter

10. Which body, central to India's anti-doping framework, now enjoys expanded powers over enforcement and investigations as per the latest amendment?

- (a) National Sports Tribunal
- (b) National Anti-Doping Agency
- (c) Sports Integrity Council
- (d) Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports

11. Which model under NSP 2025 is highlighted for mobilising private sector involvement in infrastructure building and programme support?

- (a) Philanthropy-only model
- (b) Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)
- (c) Expanded PPP, CSR
- (d) Volunteer-based funding

12. Which category in the Constitution of India includes sport under Entry 33 of List II in the Seventh Schedule?

- (a) Union subject
- (b) State subject
- (c) Concurrent subject
- (d) Residuary subject

SOLUTIONS

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

12 SUPREME COURT ORDERS PERMANENT REMOVAL OF STRAY DOGS

LEGAL UPDATES

IN FOCUS

- On **August 22, 2025**, the **Supreme Court** modified its earlier *suo motu* directive on Delhi-NCR's stray dogs and permitted their **release back to original localities** after **sterilisation, deworming, and vaccination** in line with the **Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2023**.
- The Court simultaneously barred the release of **rabid or aggressive dogs**, mandated **designated feeding zones** in every municipal ward, and widened the proceedings pan-India to work toward a uniform **national policy**.
- The modification followed widespread protests and urgent pleas against the August 11 order that had directed permanent confinement in shelters.

Procedural Background and Timeline

Trigger and Suo Motu Intervention (August 11, 2025)

- A two-judge Bench (Justices J. B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan), acting *suo motu* amid rising dog-bite incidents and rabies fatalities, directed civic bodies in **Delhi-NCR** to **capture all stray dogs within 6–8 weeks** and confine them in **dedicated shelters** under **CCTV surveillance**, with **no re-release to the streets**. Authorities were told to establish shelters with capacity for **at least 5,000 dogs** in the initial phase, set up a **rapid-response helpline** to act on bite reports within four hours, and ensure immediate medical support and data maintenance on anti-rabies vaccines. The order warned of **contempt action** against individuals or NGOs obstructing implementation.

Public Response and Interim Developments (August 12–21, 2025)

The directive sparked **citywide protests** and legal challenges from animal-welfare groups and caregivers; images from **Connaught Place (August 16)** and gatherings at **Jantar Mantar** captured citizen mobilisation. During hearings, the Court noted **25,201 dog-bite cases** reported in **Delhi (2024)** and took on record submissions by the Solicitor General that **children** constitute a large share of rabies fatalities. Meanwhile, the **MCD** began identifying sites for large shelters, including land at **Dwarka, Bela Road, and Ghazipur** to house about **6,000 dogs** in phase two; a 2.5-acre plot in Dwarka alone was planned for **~1,500 dogs**, against a citywide stray population estimated at **8–10 lakh**.



Modified Interim Order

A three-judge Bench (Justices **Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta, N. V. Anjaria**) termed the blanket confinement “too harsh” given **infrastructure constraints**, kept the earlier **no-release** direction **in abeyance**, and **allowed release post sterilisation, deworming, and vaccination** to the **same locality**. Dogs **infected with rabies** or **displaying aggressive behaviour** must **not** be released and should be **segregated in shelters** after immunisation. The Bench required municipal bodies to **create feeding zones** in every ward, install **notice boards**, prohibit **street-feeding**, and **act against violators**. It directed **helplines** for reporting violations and ordered compliance affidavits detailing **pounds, veterinarians, dog-catching staff, vehicles, and cages**. To develop a **national framework**, the Court **impleaded all States/UTs and their Chief Secretaries** and indicated transfer of related High Court cases to itself.

What the Court Ordered: Current Position

- **Release and Non-Release Criteria:** Dogs may be **returned to the exact area** of capture **only after sterilisation, deworming, and vaccination**, consistent with **ABC Rule 11(19)**. **Rabid dogs** or those **suspected of rabies**, and dogs **with aggressive behaviour**, must be **immunised but retained in separate pounds/shelters**; they **cannot** be released to public spaces.
- **Feeding Governance and Public Order Measures:** **Feeding on streets is prohibited**. Municipal bodies must **create and mark designated feeding areas**, factoring in local stray densities; **gantries/notice boards** must clearly state that feeding is permitted **only** in these zones. Persons feeding dogs **on streets** will face **legal proceedings** under applicable frameworks. **Helplines** must be operational for citizens to report violations, with prompt enforcement action.
- **Logistics, Compliance, and Non-Obstruction:** Recognising the **gargantuan logistics** of mass confinement, the Bench required **practical compliance** rather than blanket capture. **No individual or organisation** may obstruct officials; obstruction invites **prosecution**. Petitioners who sought modification must deposit **₹25,000 (individuals)** or **₹2,00,000 (NGOs)** with the **SC Registry** within a week; sums will fund **stray-care infrastructure**. The Court also permitted **adoption** of street dogs through municipal applications, with **tagging** and a condition that **adopted dogs do not return** to streets. The matter is **listed after eight weeks** for further directions.

India's Stray and Pet Dog Populations:

India hosts **~62–80 million** strays. **Dog bites** are estimated to occur **every 10 seconds**, with **~3 million** annual cases and **~5,000** deaths—**~35–36% of global rabies fatalities**—with **~97%** of human rabies cases linked to **dog bites**. Parallely, the **pet-dog population** was **~30 million (2024)** and growing at **10–15% annually**, alongside an expanding pet-care market.

Public Health and Environment:

Unregulated packs cause **territorial aggression, road accidents**, and heightened risk for **children, elderly, delivery workers, and pedestrians**. Environmental load estimates note **~15,000 tonnes of feces** and **~8 million gallons of urine** discharged daily on public surfaces, aggravating sanitation challenges.

Why Control Efforts Have Struggled:

Historically, culling methods (electrocution, poisoning, shooting, clubbing) **failed**, as partial elimination reduces intra-pack competition and **triggers rebound breeding**. The **ABC regime**, in place since 2001 and updated in 2023, relies on **sterilise-vaccinate-release**. However, without **rapidly sterilising ≥ two-thirds** of dogs **within 6–12 months**, numbers **do not decline**. Weak **municipal/NGO capacity**, **abundant food sources**, **irresponsible pet ownership** (abandonment, unregulated breeding), and **unregulated street-feeding** undermine outcomes.

- The Court's interventions rest on **Article 21** (life and safe environment), with powers under **Articles 32/226** to protect fundamental rights and **Article 142** to craft binding remedial orders.
- The **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960** prevents **unnecessary suffering** but **does not** elevate animal interests **above** human rights.
- In **Animal Welfare Board v. A. Nagaraja (2014)**, the Court clarified that **animals are not constitutional rights-bearers**, necessitating **balancing** tests in human-animal conflicts.
- The Court's interventions rest on **Article 21** (life and safe environment), with powers under **Articles 32/226** to protect fundamental rights and **Article 142** to craft binding remedial orders.
- The **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960** prevents **unnecessary suffering** but **does not** elevate animal interests **above** human rights.

- In **Animal Welfare Board v. A. Nagaraja (2014)**, the Court clarified that **animals are not constitutional rights-bearers**, necessitating **balancing** tests in human-animal conflicts.

The ABC Rules, 2023: Core Controversies

The ABC design—**catch, sterilise, vaccinate, and release** to the **same locality**—aims to stabilise populations and sustain **herd immunity**. Critics contend that blanket permissiveness toward **public feeding** and limits on euthanasia—even for serious biters—**privilege animal rights** over **human safety**. Proponents argue that **targeted vaccination + sterilisation**, paired with **waste management** and **public education**, is the most **feasible and humane** route to reduce bites and rabies.

Ethical and Philosophical Notes

Mahatma Gandhi (1926) warned that “**roving dogs** do not indicate compassion but ignorance,” urging **responsible ownership** and a priority on **preventing suffering** for both humans and animals—an approach consistent with **ahimsa**. **Rukmini Devi Arundale** envisaged laws to **prevent cruelty**, not to confer **greater-than-human** rights on animals. The present case spotlights the dilemma between **animal welfare** and **public safety**, pushing toward a **One Health** framing that integrates human, animal, and environmental health.

SALIENT POINTS OF ANIMAL BIRTH CONTROL RULES

➤ Local authority is responsible for **deworming, vaccination, and sterilization of stray dogs**

➤ Local authority to ensure adequate facilities at each animal birth control centre

➤ Resident welfare associations/Apartment owner association or local body representatives are responsible for providing necessary arrangements for feeding community animals and establishing methods for conflict resolution between animal caregivers and RWAs/AOAs or other residents

➤ Reasons for capturing stray dogs and guidelines for their sterilization, immunization and release using humane methods



➤ **Sterilization and immunization of domestic or feral cats**

➤ Guidelines for resolving complaints related to **dog bites or rabid dogs**

➤ Progress reports on capturing, sterilization and vaccination of stray dogs to be submitted on a monthly and annual basis

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which regulatory framework guided the Supreme Court's August 2025 decision permitting sterilised, dewormed, and vaccinated stray dogs to be returned to their original areas?
 - (a) Stray Dog Control Guidelines, 2020
 - (b) Public Health and Safety Rules, 2018
 - (c) Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2023
 - (d) Companion Animal Protection Rules, 2024
2. Which type of action did the Supreme Court's two-judge Bench take amid rising dog-bite incidents and rabies fatalities in Delhi-NCR, leading to strict directions on stray dog confinement?
 - (a) Suo motu amid
 - (b) Review petition
 - (c) Public Interest Litigation (PIL)
 - (d) Special Leave Petition (SLP)
3. Which location, along with Connaught Place, became a focal point of citizen protests against the no-release directive for stray dogs issued by the Supreme Court?
 - (a) Ramlila Maidan
 - (b) Jantar Mantar
 - (c) Pragati Maidan
 - (d) Lodhi Gardens
4. Which Bench of the Supreme Court described the blanket confinement of stray dogs as "too harsh" and allowed their return to original localities after sterilisation and vaccination?
 - (a) Two-judge Bench
 - (b) Three-judge Bench
 - (c) Five-judge Bench
 - (d) Constitution Bench
5. Which category of dogs, as specified by the Supreme Court, must be kept in shelters after vaccination instead of being re-released to the streets?
 - (a) Puppies below six months
 - (b) Dogs with physical disabilities
 - (c) Senior community dogs
 - (d) Dogs with rabies or displaying aggressive behaviour
6. Which provision of the Animal Birth Control Rules specifies that dogs may only be returned to their original locality after sterilisation, deworming, and vaccination?
 - (a) ABC Rule 7(5)
 - (b) ABC Rule 9(12)
 - (c) ABC Rule 11(19)
 - (d) ABC Rule 15(3)
7. Which deposit amount was specified by the Supreme Court for NGOs that approached it to modify the stray-dog directive, with funds directed toward animal welfare facilities?
 - (a) ₹1,50,000
 - (b) ₹2,00,000
 - (c) ₹1,00,000
 - (d) ₹50,000
8. At what annual growth rate is India's pet-dog population expanding, alongside the rise of the pet-care market?
 - (a) 10–15% annually
 - (b) 5–7% annually
 - (c) 18–20% annually
 - (d) 25% annually
9. Which time interval best reflects how often dog-bite incidents are estimated to occur in India, leading to millions of annual cases and thousands of rabies deaths?
 - (a) Every 30 seconds
 - (b) Every 20 seconds
 - (c) Every 15 seconds
 - (d) Every 10 seconds
10. Which Article of the Indian Constitution did the Supreme Court invoke to justify its interventions on stray-dog management, linking it to life and a safe environment?
 - (a) Article 14
 - (b) Article 19
 - (c) Article 32
 - (d) Article 21
11. Which purpose underlies the Supreme Court's use of Article 32 and the High Courts' use of Article 226 in stray-dog related cases?
 - (a) Enforce statutory duties
 - (b) Protect fundamental rights
 - (c) Oversee municipal governance
 - (d) Implement international conventions
12. Which Indian law forms the basis of animal welfare by criminalising unnecessary cruelty, while maintaining that human rights cannot be subordinated to animal interests?
 - (a) Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960
 - (b) Forest Rights Act, 2006
 - (c) Water (Prevention & Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
 - (d) National Green Tribunal Act, 2010
13. Which animals did Mahatma Gandhi describe in 1926 as representing social ignorance, stressing the need for responsible care and humane management instead of neglect?
 - (a) Wandering bulls
 - (b) Street cats
 - (c) Roving dogs
 - (d) Circus horses

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

14. Which Indian reformer linked to both culture and animal welfare stressed compassion through legal protection against cruelty, while rejecting the idea of greater-than-human rights for animals?

- (a) Pandita Ramabai (b) Hansa Mehta
(c) Indira Gandhi (d) Rukmini Devi Arundale

15. Which regions are known for policies that impound free-roaming dogs and euthanise them if they remain unclaimed, differing from India's sterilise-and-release model?

- (a) Latin American (b) U.S./European
(c) South-East Asian (d) Pacific Island

SOLUTIONS

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

13 79TH INDEPENDENCE DAY

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

- On **15 August 2025**, the Prime Minister delivered a **103-minute** Independence Day address from the Red Fort—the longest by any Indian PM—setting out a time-bound roadmap for **Viksit Bharat 2047**.
- The speech announced major initiatives across **national security, next-generation economic reforms, jobs and skilling, energy and critical minerals, technology and semiconductors, space, agriculture, and demography**, anchored in the principle of **Atmanirbhar Bharat** (self-reliance).

Strategic Autonomy and National Security**“No Blackmail, No Compromise”—Doctrine and Operations**

- The Prime Minister cited **Operation Sindoor**, conducted after the Pahalgam attack using **Made-in-India** platforms, as evidence of India’s capacity for swift, decisive counter-terror action based entirely on indigenous capability. He stated that India would not succumb to nuclear blackmail or external pressures and would act strictly on its own terms.
- On the **Indus Waters Treaty**, he asserted, **“blood and water will not flow together,”** calling past

arrangements **unjust** to Indian farmers and reiterating that India would no longer compromise its interests.

**Mission Sudarshan Chakra: Nationwide Security Shield**

- The PM announced **Mission Sudarshan Chakra** to develop a **powerful weapon system** and deploy an **expanded nationwide security shield** covering **all public places by 2035**. The mission is designed to enable **rapid, precise, and deterrent** responses to threats against strategic, civilian, and religious sites.
- Internal security gains—such as anti-Naxal operations turning “terror corridors into **green corridors**”—were highlighted as markers of a strengthened security framework.

High-Powered Demography Mission

- A **High-Powered Demography Mission** will address challenges of **illegal infiltration** and demographic stress in border and sensitive districts. The mission will adopt time-bound measures to safeguard **unity, integrity, and livelihoods**, with a focus on vulnerable communities.

Next-Generation Economic Reforms and Governance

- A **Task Force for Next-Generation Economic Reforms** will review and overhaul laws, rules, and procedures to make the economy **simpler, faster, and more competitive**.
- The government reports **40,000+ compliances** already scrapped and **1,500** outdated laws repealed; in the latest session, **280+ provisions** were removed to reduce friction for citizens and businesses.
- **GST 2.0: Rationalisation and Relief: Next-generation GST reforms**—to be rolled out by **Diwali**—aim to **simplify** the indirect tax regime, **cut compliance costs**, and **lower taxes on daily-use items**, providing relief to **MSMEs**, local vendors, and consumers while supporting formalisation and growth.



Employment, Skills, and Human Capital

PM Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PM-VBRY): The PM launched **PM-VBRY**, a **₹1 lakh crore** employment initiative. Newly employed youth in the private sector will receive a **one-time ₹15,000** support, targeting **3 crore** young Indians.

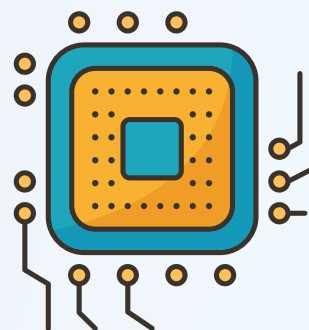
- The scheme will **incentivise registered employers** to create net new jobs across sectors, with a special emphasis on **manufacturing**, thereby converting India's demographic potential into measurable **employment gains**.



Technology, Semiconductors, and Digital Leadership

India Semiconductor Mission and Domestic Chip Roll-Out: The PM announced that **Made-in-India semiconductor chips** will enter the market by **end-2025**, with **six units** already being set up and additional plants in progress under the **India Semiconductor Mission (launched 2021, under MeitY)**.

- Citizens—especially youth—were urged to innovate in **AI, cyber security, deep-tech, operating systems, jet engines, fertilisers, and digital platforms**, to ensure technology sovereignty.



Energy Security, Nuclear Expansion, and Critical Resources

- India has **reached its 50% clean-energy target in 2025**, ahead of schedule, according to the PM's address, and will **increase nuclear capacity tenfold by 2047**.
- **Ten new nuclear reactors** are underway, with a **Nuclear Energy Mission for Viksit Bharat** to build **domestic capabilities** and ensure round-the-clock, **reliable baseload power**.
- The PM announced the **opening of the nuclear sector to private participation**, creating opportunities across the value chain from components to services.



Strategic Minerals and Offshore Exploration

- Under the **National Critical Minerals Mission**, India is **exploring 1,200 sites** to secure minerals essential for **energy, electronics, and defence**, strengthening **strategic autonomy**.
- The **National Deepwater Exploration Mission** will harness **offshore energy resources** to **reduce import dependence** and bolster energy self-reliance.

Agriculture and Rural Prosperity

Reiterating that “India will not compromise” on farmer and livestock interests, the PM positioned himself as a **wall** against policies detrimental to primary producers. India ranks **No. 1** in **milk, pulses, and jute**, and **No. 2** in **rice, wheat, cotton, fruits, and vegetables**; **agricultural exports** have crossed **₹4 lakh crore**, reflecting global competitiveness.

- The PM announced **PM Dhanya Dhanya Krishi Yojana** for **100 backward farming districts**, complementing **PM-Kisan**, irrigation expansion, and **livestock protection** programmes.

**Key Records from PM Modi's Independence Day Speeches**

- **Longest Ever Independence Day Speech:** On August 15, 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered the longest Independence Day speech in India's history, clocking in at 103 minutes, thereby surpassing his own 98-minute address from the previous year.
- **Most Consecutive Speeches from Red Fort:** With this 2025 address, **PM Modi completed his 12th consecutive Independence Day speech** from the Red Fort, surpassing the previous record held by Indira Gandhi (11 Consecutive) and following only Nehru—who delivered 17 in a row.
- **Rising Duration Trend:** Since first delivering an Independence Day speech in 2014 (lasting 65 minutes), Modi's speech durations generally increased over the years—88 minutes in 2015, 92 minutes in 2019, 90 minutes in 2020, 74 minutes in 2022, and 98 minutes in 2024—culminating in the 2025 record of 103 minutes.
- **Surpassing Historical Speeches:** Before Modi, India's longest Independence Day speeches were Nehru's 72-minute speech in 1947 and I. K. Gujral's 71-minute speech in 1997—both now eclipsed by Modi's addresses

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Which duration did the Prime Minister's Independence Day speech on 15 August 2025 last, making it the longest ever delivered by an Indian PM?
(a) 90-minute (b) 103-minute
(c) 95-minute (d) 100-minute
- Which treaty did the Prime Minister refer to as having disadvantaged Indian farmers, while vowing that India would not compromise its water rights?
(a) Indus Waters Treaty
(b) Sutlej-Yamuna Link Accord
(c) Mahakali Treaty
(d) Kosi Agreement
- Which initiative, announced by the PM, envisions a powerful weapon system and an expanded all-India security shield for public spaces by 2035?
(a) Mission Raksha Kavach
(b) Mission Suraksha Jyoti
(c) Mission Trinetra
(d) Mission Sudarshan Chakra
- Which phrase did the Prime Minister use to describe the transformation brought about by anti-Naxal operations, showcasing internal security improvements?
(a) red zones into peace zones
(b) danger belts into safe belts
(c) terror corridors into green corridors
(d) conflict lands into harmony lands
- Which reform initiative, set to be rolled out by Diwali, focuses on simplifying the indirect tax system, cutting compliance costs, and easing the burden on MSMEs and consumers?
(a) GST 2.0 (b) Digital Tax Code
(c) Indirect Tax Relief Act (d) Unified Market Scheme
- Which scheme, recently launched by the Prime Minister, aims to generate employment with a ₹1 lakh crore outlay and provide direct monetary support to newly employed youth?
(a) PM Shram Shakti Mission
(b) PM Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana
(c) National Skill Development Programme
(d) Bharat Udyog Yojana
- Which number of semiconductor units did the Prime Minister announce as already being set up under the India Semiconductor Mission during his Independence Day 2025 address?
(a) four units (b) five units
(c) seven units (d) six units
- Which milestone did the Prime Minister announce India had achieved ahead of schedule in 2025 as part of its energy transition?
(a) 50% clean-energy (b) 40% clean-energy
(c) 60% clean-energy (d) 55% clean-energy
- Which major development under the Nuclear Energy Mission for Viksit Bharat involves building domestic capacity for round-the-clock baseload power?
(a) Five fast breeder reactors
(b) Eight thorium test reactors
(c) Ten new nuclear reactors
(d) Twelve modular reactors
- Which initiative was mentioned by the PM as part of India's pandemic response that now serves as a template for scaling into a global medical innovation hub?
(a) e-Sanjeevani (b) Digital Health Mission
(c) Swasthya Sathi Portal (d) CoWIN
- Which target year was set for the completion of Mission Sudarshan Chakra's objective to provide an expanded national security shield for public spaces?
(a) 2032 (b) 2035
(c) 2042 (d) 2050
- Which initiative did the Prime Minister describe as the bedrock of Viksit Bharat 2047, urging citizens to adopt India-made products and promote indigenous innovation?
(a) Atmanirbhar Bharat
(b) Make in India 2.0
(c) Digital India Mission
(d) Startup India Programme

SOLUTIONS

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

14

130TH CONSTITUTIONAL
AMENDMENT BILL, 2025

ACTS & BILLS

IN FOCUS

On **20 August 2025**, the Union Home Minister introduced the **Constitution (One Hundred and Thirtieth Amendment) Bill, 2025** in the **Lok Sabha**, alongside amendments for **Union Territories**. The proposal seeks to provide a constitutional mechanism to **remove a Prime Minister, Chief Minister, or any Minister** who remains in **custody for 30 consecutive days** on allegations of a **serious offence**. The Bills have been **referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC)** for detailed scrutiny. The initiative is presented as a step to uphold **constitutional morality** and public trust in governance, amid a wider political debate on due process, federal balance, and the criminalisation of politics.

The 130th Constitutional Amendment Bill, 2025

- **Constitutional Provisions Sought to be Amended:** The Bill proposes amendments to **Articles 75, 164, and 239AA** of the Constitution, covering the **Union Council of Ministers, State Councils of Ministers, and the Government of NCT of Delhi** respectively. It is a constitutional change that will require a **two-thirds majority** in both Houses of Parliament.



Home Minister Amit Shah brought the Constitution 130th Amendment Bill to the Lok Sabha

- **Core Removal Trigger and Threshold:** A Minister comes within the ambit of removal when two conditions are jointly met: the individual is **accused of an offence**
- **punishable with imprisonment of five years or more**, and has been **arrested and detained in custody for 30 consecutive days**.
- This threshold extends to **all Ministers**, including the **Prime Minister** and **Chief Ministers**.

Procedure and Timelines for Removal

- **Union level:** The **President** shall remove a Minister **on the advice of the Prime Minister**, and this advice must be tendered **by the 31st consecutive day** of custody. If the Prime Minister does not advise by then, the Minister **automatically ceases** to hold office **from the next day**.
- **State level:** The **Governor** acts **on the advice of the Chief Minister** on the same timeline and with the same automatic cessation consequence.
- **NCT of Delhi:** The **President** acts **on the advice of the Chief Minister of Delhi** within the prescribed timeline.

Prime Minister and Chief Ministers: Resignation Rule

- If the Prime Minister or a Chief Minister (including Delhi) is in custody for 30 consecutive days, he or she must resign by the 31st day; failing which, the officeholder automatically ceases to hold office from the following day.

- **Re-appointment After Release:** The Bill explicitly clarifies that **removal is reversible**: a Minister **may be re-appointed** after being **released from custody**.
- **Coverage Extended to Union Territories:** Two accompanying statutory amendments extend parallel provisions to **Puducherry** and **Jammu & Kashmir**, ensuring a **uniform ministerial removal framework** across the Union and the States/UTs.

Rationale, Political Context, and Government Position

- **Objectives Cited by the Government:** The Statement of Objects and Reasons stresses the need for a legal framework to prevent those arrested on serious criminal charges from continuing in office, as their continuation may undermine good governance, constitutional morality, and public trust.
- **Public Messaging and Political Debate:** The Union Home Minister framed the amendment as ensuring that no PM/CM/Minister governs from jail, positioning it as a corrective to recent instances where leaders allegedly continued to influence governance while incarcerated.
- He underlined that the Bill will be subjected to JPC examination, and contrasted the proposal with past constitutional changes (e.g., the 39th Amendment during the Emergency), presenting the current move as bringing the highest offices within the discipline of law rather than above it.

Existing Legal Position

Disqualification Under the Representation of the People Act, 1951

- **Section 8** of the RPA, 1951 disqualifies legislators **upon conviction** for specified offences (typically **two years or more** of imprisonment).
- **Section 8(4)**, which had deferred disqualification for sitting members upon filing an appeal, was struck down by the Supreme Court in *Lily Thomas (2013)*.
- The **current framework does not automatically remove a Minister upon arrest** or during pre-trial custody; the **presumption of innocence** remains until conviction.

Investigative Milestones and Due Process

- In ordinary course, the police may **file a chargesheet within 90 days** of arrest (subject to statute and facts), after which a **court frames charges**. Trial begins only thereafter and may culminate in acquittal or conviction.
- The Bill's **30-day custody** trigger therefore **precedes** judicial findings such as **framing of charge**, raising questions about **due process** and **timing** of consequences.

Judicial and Expert Trajectory on Criminalisation of Politics

Law Commission and Election Commission Recommendations

- **Law Commission (170th Report, 1999)** proposed disqualification upon framing of charges for offences punishable with up to five years.
- **The Election Commission (2004), and later the Law Commission (244th Report, 2014)**, reiterated that disqualification at the charge-framing stage is more appropriate than at FIR/chargesheet stages, as it reflects prima facie judicial satisfaction.
- In **2016**, the Election Commission urged amending the RPA to bar candidates from contesting if charges are framed for offences punishable with five years or more.

Supreme Court on Disqualification and Ministerial Appointments

- *Public Interest Foundation (2018)* (five-judge Bench) held that courts cannot add new disqualification grounds beyond what Parliament provides, but urged a “strong law” for parties to deny tickets and revoke memberships for those charged with heinous offences.
- *Manoj Narula v. Union of India (2014)* stated there is no legal bar to appointing persons with criminal antecedents as Ministers, yet advised the Prime Minister (as “repository of constitutional trust”) to avoid appointing those charged with serious offences or corruption.

Recent practice notes from litigation:

- **V. Senthil Balaji** (money-laundering case): bail was granted; upon re-appointment, the Court questioned continuation, eventually prompting a **choice between office or liberty**, following which he **resigned** and **bail continued**.
- **Arvind Kejriwal** (2024 bail in alleged money-laundering case): the Court **restricted official functions** during bail but clarified it **could not compel resignation**; a **voluntary resignation** followed later.

Key Policy Questions and Points of Contention

- **Due Process and Presumption of Innocence:** The **30-day custody** yardstick operates **before trial** and even before **framing of charge**, prompting concerns that **mere police action** may trigger **loss of office**. Critics argue this risks **weaponisation** and may chill legitimate political activity, especially where **investigations** themselves become contested.
- **Cabinet Choice and Parliamentary Democracy:** In Westminster systems, the **PM/CM** enjoys wide latitude in **choosing the Council of Ministers**. An automatic removal rule potentially **constrains executive discretion**, raising questions on the balance between morality enforcement and democratic choice.
- **Federalism and Potential for Misuse:** Because investigation and arrest can be initiated by various agencies, there is concern that the framework could be used disproportionately against opposition-ruled States. Proponents counter that a uniform constitutional rule enhances integrity, with re-appointment available after release.
- **Addressing the Cause vs. the Effect:** Data frequently cited in public debate (e.g., analyses showing a **high share of MPs/MLAs with pending cases**, and **higher win-rates** for candidates with criminal records) suggest that party-level candidate selection is a structural driver. Measures such as pre-selection vetting, party self-discipline, and time-bound trials may address root causes more directly.

Administrative Mechanics and Safeguards

- **Timelines and Responsibilities:** The 31-day decision point imposes a hard deadline on the PM/CM to advise removal. Failure to act triggers automatic cessation the next day, which reduces discretionary delay but raises questions on edge cases (e.g., bail hearings pending on day 30).
- **Reversibility and Continuity:** The re-appointment clause aims to balance integrity with fairness, allowing a Minister cleared on bail or later acquitted to return. Managing portfolio continuity and administrative handover during interim periods will require clear rules of business and succession planning.
- **Interface with the RPA and Future Statutes:** The Bill does not alter RPA conviction-based disqualification; rather, it creates a separate constitutional ground for ministerial removal upon custody. Parliament may still consider RPA reforms on charge-framing-based bars for candidature/continuance to create a coherent ladder of consequences across offices and stages of the criminal process.

Comparative Lens: What the Bill Is—and Is Not

- It is a **ministerial-office discipline** mechanism tied to **custody duration** for **serious offences**. It is **not** a **determination of guilt** or a **legislator disqualification** regime; **membership** of the legislature is governed by the RPA and the Constitution. It **adds** a **constitutional removal rule** for the **executive office**; it **does not** bar **future re-appointment** post-release.

Legislative Path and Next Steps

- As a **Constitutional Amendment**, passage requires **special majority** support in both Houses. The Bill is before a **JPC**, which will examine **text, comparative options** (e.g., anchoring to **charge-framing** rather than **arrest**), federal implications, and safeguards against misuse. Parliamentary debate may also explore sunset reviews, periodic reporting, and judicial review contours to ensure a balanced, durable framework.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which Constitutional Amendment Bill, tabled by the Union Home Minister in August 2025, dealt with constitutional reforms and Union Territories?
 - (a) One Hundred and Twenty-Seventh Amendment
 - (b) One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment
 - (c) One Hundred and Thirty-Second Amendment
 - (d) One Hundred and Thirtieth Amendment
2. Which duration of custody would lead to the removal of a Prime Minister, Chief Minister, or Minister under the proposed constitutional mechanism?
 - (a) 15 consecutive days
 - (b) 20 consecutive days
 - (c) 25 consecutive days
 - (d) 30 consecutive days
3. Which parliamentary mechanism has been tasked with examining the new Bills in detail, amid political debates on due process and federal balance?
 - (a) Joint Parliamentary Committee
 - (b) Estimates Committee
 - (c) Committee on Petitions
 - (d) Committee on Privileges
4. Which of the following is not among the Articles proposed to be amended by the Bill covering the Union Council of Ministers, State Councils of Ministers, and the Government of NCT of Delhi?
 - (a) Article 75
 - (b) Article 370
 - (c) Article 164
 - (d) Article 239AA
5. Whose recommendation is binding on the President for removing a Union Minister who has completed 31 consecutive days in custody?
 - (a) Prime Minister
 - (b) Chief Election Commissioner
 - (c) Rajya Sabha Chairman
 - (d) Cabinet Secretary
6. Who at the state level, carries out the removal of a Minister on the advice of the Chief Minister under the 31-day custody rule?
 - (a) President
 - (b) Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
 - (c) Advocate General
 - (d) Governor
7. Which territories were specifically included through statutory amendments to align them with the proposed constitutional provisions on ministerial removal after extended custody?
 - (a) Delhi and Ladakh
 - (b) Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu
 - (c) Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Chandigarh
 - (d) Puducherry and Jammu & Kashmir
8. Which provision of the RPA, 1951 mandates that a legislator is disqualified after conviction for certain crimes, generally involving a minimum of two years' imprisonment?
 - (a) Section 5
 - (b) Section 7
 - (c) Section 8
 - (d) Section 10
9. Which Supreme Court case struck down Section 8(4) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, which had deferred disqualification of convicted legislators upon filing an appeal?
 - (a) Lily Thomas v Union of India
 - (b) Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala
 - (c) Indira Nehru Gandhi v. Raj Narain
 - (d) S.R. Bommai v. Union of India
10. Which body, in its 170th Report (1999), proposed disqualification of legislators upon framing of charges for offences punishable with up to five years?
 - (a) Election Commission
 - (b) Supreme Court
 - (c) Law Commission
 - (d) Parliament
11. Which authority first suggested in 2004 that disqualification at the charge-framing stage is more appropriate, later reiterated by the Law Commission in its 244th Report (2014)?
 - (a) National Human Rights Commission
 - (b) Union Cabinet
 - (c) Parliamentary Standing Committee
 - (d) Election Commission
12. Which Supreme Court case in 2014 held that there is no legal bar to appointing persons with criminal antecedents as Ministers, but advised the Prime Minister to avoid appointing those facing serious charges?
 - (a) Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala
 - (b) Manoj Narula v. Union of India
 - (c) S.R. Bommai v. Union of India
 - (d) Indira Nehru Gandhi v. Raj Narain
13. Which leader's 2024 bail order in an alleged money-laundering case clarified that while the Court could impose restrictions on official functions, it could not direct a resignation from office?
 - (a) Arvind Kejriwal
 - (b) Sharad Pawar
 - (c) D.K. Shivakumar
 - (d) Tejashwi Yadav

SOLUTIONS

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

15 ONLINE GAMING BILL 2025 PASSED

ACTS & BILLS

IN FOCUS

- On **21-22 August 2025**, Parliament passed—and the President assented to—the **Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025**, introducing a **blanket ban on “online money gaming”** (real-money games) and associated **advertising** and **financial transactions**, while creating a supportive framework for **e-sports** and **online social games**.
- The measure has sent shockwaves through India’s digital economy, with industry stakeholders warning of policy uncertainty and investment chill, even as the government frames the law as a public-interest response to addiction, fraud, and money-laundering risks.
- The Act aims to shield youth and vulnerable populations from harms caused by online money games—such as addiction, financial distress, mental health issues, and erosion of public health and financial integrity.
- Simultaneously, it promotes e-sports, educational, and social gaming as safe, constructive avenues to spur innovation, digital skills, and job creation in India’s digital economy.

The New Law at a Glance

- **Legislative Design and Policy Pivot:** The **Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025** marks a decisive shift from the earlier **light-touch, SRB-based** (self-regulatory body) approach under the **IT Rules, 2021 (amended 2023)** to a **prohibition-plus-promotion** model: **prohibit** real-money games; **promote** e-sports and **permit** non-monetary social games within a regulated architecture.

Categorization of Games: Three Tiers

- **E-sports** – Officially recognized as competitive sports eligible for government promotion through policy support, national-level tournaments, infrastructure, and research.
- **Online Social/Educational Games** – Meant for recreation, learning, or skill-building, with no wagering involved. A one-time subscription or access fee without stakes is permissible.
- **Online Money Games** – Defined broadly as any game (regardless of skill or chance) involving money deposits or entry fees with the expectation of monetary or other gains. This category is completely banned, with no scope for licensing or exceptions.

Prohibitions and Enforcement Mechanisms

- Offering, operating, facilitating, or participating in any online money game is strictly prohibited, applying equally to domestic and offshore services available to Indian users.
- Advertising of such games in any media—print, digital, TV, social, or via influencers—is also banned under Section 6. Violations may result in imprisonment up to 2 years or fines up to ₹50 lakh.
- Financial intermediaries including banks, payment gateways, and digital wallets are barred from processing transactions related to money gaming.
- Enforcement includes the power to block platforms offering prohibited games, potentially even overriding access mechanisms or passwords in virtual spaces—raising concerns over expansive surveillance authority.

Creation of a Regulatory Authority

- The Act mandates setting up a dedicated regulatory authority—referred to in sources as the Online Gaming Authority or National Online Gaming Commission (NOGC)—tasked with:
 - Classifying games
 - Registering platforms (excluding money games)
 - Issuing operational and compliance guidelines
 - Managing grievances and oversight
- Rule-making power is vested in the central government to issue regulations related to classification, promotion, registration, and operational details.
- Estimated initial capital expenditure for the Authority is about ₹50 crore, with recurring annual costs at ₹20 crore, although final budgets depend on the Authority's structure.

Penalties, Liability, and Grievance Mechanisms

- Violations of the ban on money games can result in penalties of up to 3 years imprisonment and ₹1 crore fine, escalating to 5 years and ₹2 crore for repeat offenses.
- Advertising or facilitating money games may attract imprisonment up to 2 years and fines up to ₹50 lakh.
- The Authority may also suspend or revoke registrations and impose administrative fines—e.g., up to ₹10 lakh—for non-compliance. Entities can defend actions by proving due diligence.
- A mechanism for cybercrime reporting (e.g., via cybercrime.gov.in and toll-free helplines) is included to assist with fraud complaints, though this may link with broader cyber regulations

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Constitutional & Federalism Angle

The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025 raises important constitutional and federal questions. These questions deal with the fundamental right to trade, the power of the State to impose restrictions, and the division of powers between the Union and the States.

1. Fundamental Right under Article 19(1)(g):

- The Constitution of India guarantees every citizen the right to practise **any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade, or business under Article 19(1)(g)**. Companies and entrepreneurs in the online gaming industry can argue that their business is protected under this fundamental right. However, this right is not absolute. **Article 19(6) allows the State to impose reasonable restrictions on the freedom of trade in the interest of the general public, morality, public health, and safety.**
- The government has justified the ban on online money games by arguing that such games create addiction, financial distress, and social harm. By relying on Article 19(6), the State claims that it is acting to protect the welfare of the people. Courts will therefore have to examine whether the restrictions imposed are reasonable and proportionate to the harms identified.

2. Skill versus Chance Debate:

- The law in India has traditionally drawn a line between games of skill and games of chance. A game of skill

- is one where the outcome depends mainly on a player's knowledge, training, judgment, or mental and physical abilities, such as chess or rummy. Courts, including the Supreme Court in **K.R. Lakshmanan v. State of Tamil Nadu (1996)**, have held that such games are not “**gambling**” and are considered **legitimate activities protected under the right to trade under Article 19(1)(g) of the Constitution**. By contrast, a game of chance is one where the outcome is determined mainly by luck, accident, or randomness, such as lottery or dice games. These are treated as gambling and fall within the power of the States to regulate or prohibit under **Entry 34 of the State List in the Constitution**.
- This distinction has shaped the legal framework for online and offline gaming in India. Under the Public Gambling Act, 1867, and various State laws, games of chance for stakes are prohibited, while games of skill may be permitted even when played for money.
- However, the 2025 law takes a new approach. It does not distinguish between games of skill and games of chance when real money is involved. Instead, it bans all money-stake games, regardless of whether they require skill or not. This is likely to be a major point of contention in constitutional challenges because it departs from earlier judicial reasoning.

3. Federal Division of Powers

- The Constitution divides powers between the Union and the States through the Seventh Schedule. Under Entry 34 of List II (State List), the States have the power to make laws on “betting and gambling.” This means that States are traditionally responsible for regulating gambling activities within their territories. Several States such as Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Telangana have already passed laws restricting or banning online gambling and money games.
- The new 2025 Bill is a central law. It derives its authority from the Information Technology Act, 2000 and the Allocation of Business Rules, which give the Union power over digital platforms and online intermediaries. The government argues that because online money games are played on digital platforms that operate across State borders and are often run by foreign companies, a uniform national law is necessary. This sets up a possible federalism conflict. States may argue that the Union has encroached on their exclusive power under Entry 34 of the State List. The Union will counter that digital platforms fall under its jurisdiction and that regulation at the central level is essential for effective enforcement.

Why This Matters: Size, Spillovers, and the Investment Chill

Economic Footprint and User Base

- India had **488 million** online gamers in 2024 (largest globally after China), with **mobile** contributing the overwhelming share. Within this, **online money gaming** accounted for a substantial revenue slice and rapid user growth.
- Sectoral linkages are wide: advertising, data centres, cybersecurity, events, and creator economies have depended on real-money gaming spends, with reported indirect job creation and ancillary revenues running into tens of thousands of crores.

Policy Credibility and “Whiplash Risk”

- Stakeholders flag that a **rapid legislative U-turn**—from 2023 **SRB-verification** and central harmonisation to a **blanket prohibition**—can dent confidence in **new-economy sectors** (e.g., **AVGC-XR, AI, drones, e-commerce**) that rely on predictable, consultative rule-making.
- Early market reactions include **workforce downsizing** at leading platforms and **sports sponsorship resets** (e.g., RMG exits impacting title sponsorship eligibility), signalling **real-economy ripple effects** beyond gaming.

Regulatory Backdrop and Growth Drivers (Pre-Act)

Technology and Access: 5G rollout, BharatNet/National Broadband Mission, and **affordable smartphones/data** catalysed mass adoption of online games across socio-economic groups, with India's market expanding rapidly through 2023–25 on mobile-first usage.

- **Policy and Industry Enablement:** The 2023 amendments to **IT Rules, 2021** envisaged **SRBs** to verify **permissible online real-money games**, aiming for **co-regulation** and due-diligence by gaming intermediaries; **MIB advisories** also cautioned against betting ads.
- Government task forces (e.g., **AVGC-XR**) and **Start-up India** initiatives cultivated talent, IP creation, and investor interest, with e-sports gaining formal recognition and mainstream exposure.

How the New Framework Interacts with Existing Laws

- **IT Act, 2000 and Rules (as amended 2023):** The Act sits atop existing **due-diligence** and **takedown** levers for intermediaries and empowers stricter blocking/enforcement against prohibited services, while shifting **real-money** oversight from **SRB-verification** to **outright prohibition**.
- **IGST and Tax Enforcement:** Offshore/illegal suppliers can be pursued under **IGST** and **simplified registration** norms; tax intelligence units may coordinate to **block access** to non-compliant platforms. (This complements the Act's operator-centric penalties.)
- **Consumer Protection:** The **CCPA** can proceed against **misleading/surrogate advertising**; the Act's ad-ban closes promotional loopholes that previously normalised gambling-like offerings to minors and vulnerable users.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which categories of online activities did the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025 create a supportive framework for, while banning online money gaming and related advertisements?

- (a) Fantasy sports and betting platforms
- (b) E-sports and online social games
- (c) Lottery and prize contests
- (d) Stock market prediction platforms

2. Which regulatory framework, later amended in 2023, had earlier adopted a light-touch, self-regulatory body (SRB)-based approach to online gaming, before being replaced by the stricter Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025?

- (a) IT Rules, 2021
- (b) Digital India Code, 2019
- (c) Data Protection Act, 2023
- (d) Cyber Security Guidelines, 2020

3. Which is the maximum term of imprisonment prescribed under the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025 for offering prohibited online money gaming services?

- (a) One year
- (b) One and a half years
- (c) Two years
- (d) Three years

4. Which financial penalty can be imposed, in addition to imprisonment, for providing prohibited online money gaming services under the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025?

- (a) ₹25 lakh
- (b) ₹50 lakh
- (c) ₹1 crore
- (d) ₹2 crore

5. Which legislation provides the central government with powers under Section 69A to issue blocking orders, forming the backbone for takedowns in the context of online gaming regulation?

- (a) IT Act, 2000
- (b) Digital India Code, 2019
- (c) Cybersecurity Guidelines, 2020
- (d) Data Protection Act, 2023

6. Which digital infrastructure initiative, along with the

5G rollout and affordable smartphones, has significantly boosted access to online gaming across India's socio-economic groups?

- (a) Digital India Code
- (b) BharatNet
- (c) National Data Governance Framework
- (d) Cyber Surakshit Bharat Programme

7. Which form of government intervention, in addition to the IT Rules, 2021 amendments on self-regulatory bodies, specifically cautioned media and online platforms against publishing or broadcasting betting advertisements?

- (a) RBI guidelines on digital payments
- (b) SEBI notifications on investor safety
- (c) MeitY circulars on online gaming
- (d) MIB advisories

8. Which constitutional provision on the freedom to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade, or business is potentially implicated by the law's

9. Which constitutional list includes betting and gambling, thereby giving states exclusive power to legislate on this subject?

- (a) Union List
- (b) Concurrent List
- (c) State List
- (d) Residuary List

10. Which law continues to serve as the umbrella statute for digital intermediaries, enabling blocking orders and enforcement actions, and was adapted in 2023 to include SRB-based verification of online games?

- (a) Cybersecurity Guidelines, 2020
- (b) National Broadband Mission, 2021
- (c) Telecom Regulatory Authority Act, 1997
- (d) IT Act, 2000

11. Which statutory tax mechanism enables action against non-compliant offshore gaming platforms by requiring simplified registration and empowering tax authorities to coordinate blocking measures?

- (a) Excise Duty
- (b) IGST
- (c) Stamp Duty
- (d) Service Tax

SOLUTIONS

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

16 J&K LG CAN NOMINATE MLAS WITHOUT CABINET'S AID OR ADVICE

POLITY

IN FOCUS

- On August 11, 2025, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) told the Jammu & Kashmir High Court that the Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) may **nominate five members** to the J&K Legislative Assembly without the “aid and advice” of the elected government.
- The affidavit, filed in ongoing litigation on the validity and procedure of such nominations, has triggered a sharp political response, with parties in J&K alleging a dilution of democratic norms and the Opposition announcing a rejoinder ahead of the **August 14** hearing.

IN BRIEF: UT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR AND LADAKH

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ON AUGUST 5 REVOKED ARTICLE 370 OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION BY WAY OF A PRESIDENTIAL ORDER



The Nomination Power: Text, Design, and Numbers

Statutory Location of the Power: The nomination power arises from amendments to the **J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019**, notably **Sections 15, 15A and 15B** (inserted in 2023), which provide for **five nominated seats** in addition to directly elected members.

- The MHA's affidavit emphasises that the **L-G is a distinct statutory authority**, and where Parliament has conferred a specific function on the L-G, it is to be exercised **as a statutory duty** and **not** as an extension of the Council of Ministers; hence, **no “aid and advice”** is required for these nominations.

Who Can Be Nominated? (Five Seats)

- Two Kashmiri migrants (Kashmiri Pandits), including one woman.**

- **One person from the PoJK community** (Pakistan-occupied Jammu & Kashmir).
- **Two women**, if in the L-G's opinion women are **not adequately represented** in the Assembly.

Assembly Strength and Seat Arithmetic

- The five nominations would take the current **house size from 90 to 95** in the immediate term (post-election configuration).
- In the broader schema after the **2023 amendment** to the Reorganisation Act, the **total sanctioned strength** is explained by the Centre as “**directly elected seats + all nominated seats**”. Illustratively, while **24 seats** remain **vacant** for PoJK areas, the amended overall design contemplates an Assembly scaled at **119** (earlier **114**), with the MHA arguing that nominated seats sit **in addition** to directly elected ones.
- The Centre analogises this construction to **Puducherry** under the **Union Territories Act, 1963**, where nominated members are counted **over and above** directly elected strength.

The MHA's Position Before the High Court

Core Submission: Nominations are **outside the realm of the business** of the elected government in J&K; the L-G exercises this as a **statutory function in discretion**.

- The interpretation of **Section 12 of the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963** (voting procedures and the treatment of nominated members) is said to apply *pari materia* to Sections 15/15A/15B of the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019, supporting L-G-led nominations without cabinet advice.
- **Procedural Posture:** The Union contends the petitioner's claims about **exceeding sanctioned strength** are **misconceived**, since the statute treats nominated seats as **additional** to directly elected ones.
- The MHA also noted that the writ's apprehensions may be **academic** in certain factual scenarios but nonetheless set out its legal stance comprehensively.

The Litigation and Timeline

- **The Petition and the Court's Query:** A public interest petition challenges the **constitutionality** of enabling **five nominated members with voting rights**, asking whether this scheme **violates the basic structure** by potentially **altering majorities** in the Assembly.
- On **October 21, 2024**, the High Court sought the Union's response on the **2019 Act** changes; the MHA's **July 24, 2025** affidavit supplies that reply.
- The matter is listed for **August 14, 2025**, with the petitioner (Congress leader **Ravindra Kumar Sharma**)



- stating that a **counter-reply** will be filed, followed by arguments.
- **Political Backdrop in the House:** The **2024 Assembly elections** filled **90 seats**; two became **vacant** subsequently (one death; the Chief Minister **Omar Abdullah** vacating **Budgam** and retaining **Ganderbal**).
- The **NC-Congress alliance** formed government. Multiple parties (NC, PDP, Congress) have publicly argued that any nominations should issue **on the elected government's recommendation**.



Constitutional and Jurisprudential Fault Lines

“Aid and Advice” vs. Express Discretion

- The constitutional convention in parliamentary systems is that a nominal head (Governor/L-G) acts **on the “aid and advice”** of the elected Council, except where the **Constitution or law** explicitly grants **discretion**.
- The **MHA** reads the **Reorganisation Act** and UT law as conferring **express statutory discretion** on the **L-G** for these nominations; critics counter that **so consequential a power**—creating **voting members**—must be **cabinet-advised** unless unmistakably carved out otherwise.

Precedents Cited and Their Bearings

- **K. Lakshminarayanan v. Union of India** (Puducherry): The **Supreme Court** indicated that the **L-G’s consultation** with the Chief Minister for nominated members **was not compulsory**, a footing the MHA relies upon to justify **L-G-centric nominations**.
- **Delhi Services Cases (2018 & 2023)**: The Court underscored that the **L-G** should generally **act on aid and advice**, treating **discretionary powers** as **exceptions**. Commentators argue that asserting nominations are “outside the realm” of elected government **pushes against this jurisprudence**.
- **Comparative Practice:** Post-**Lakshminarayanan, Puducherry (2021)** witnessed a **government collapse** attributed in part to the combined effect of nominated members and defections, illustrating how nominations with voting rights can swing majorities.

Basic-Structure and Federal-Balance Questions

- The petition frames a **basic-structure** concern: Can a framework that allows **appointed members with votes** to potentially **reshape government stability** be reconciled with **popular sovereignty** and **representative democracy**?
- A related contention is whether **post-poll augmentation** of voting strength by **unelected nominees** risks **distorting the electoral verdict**, especially in **closely-balanced Houses**.
- **Distinct Authority Thesis:** The Centre’s thesis is that once Parliament recognises the L-G as a distinct authority under statute, powers conferred on the L-G are to be exercised by the L-G, in discretion, and **not** as a limb of the elected executive.
- On this reading, nominations are a statutory duty assigned to the L-G; therefore, “aid & advice” is inapplicable.
- **Strength Accounting and Comparators:** The Centre stresses that directly elected strength is not equal to the total sanctioned strength; rather, sanctioned strength includes all nominated seats wherever provided.
- The analogy with Puducherry—where the Assembly strength is 30 elected + 3 nominated—is invoked to argue that J&K’s nominated five similarly add to the house.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. How many individuals can the Lieutenant-Governor of Jammu & Kashmir nominate to the Legislative Assembly, according to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs' submission before the High Court in August 2025?

- (a) Five members (b) Four members
(c) Six members (d) Eight members

2. Which legislative framework, amended in 2023, inserted provisions (Sections 15, 15A, and 15B) to create five nominated seats in the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly alongside elected representatives?

- (a) Government of India Act, 1935
(b) Union Territories Act, 1963
(c) J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019
(d) Representation of the People Act, 1950

3. Which sections, inserted into the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019 through 2023 amendments, provide the legal basis for five nominated seats in the Legislative Assembly of Jammu & Kashmir?

- (a) Sections 5, 6 and 7 (b) Sections 18, 19 and 20
(c) Sections 22, 23 and 24 (d) Sections 15, 15A and 15B

4. How many women must be included among the two Kashmiri migrant (Kashmiri Pandit) nominees to the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly?

- (a) Two women (b) One woman
(c) No mandatory women (d) Three women

5. Which community has been specifically allocated one nominated seat in the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly under the amended J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019?

- (a) Kashmiri migrant women (b) Pahari-speaking people
(c) PoJK community (d) Dogra community

6. How many women can the Lieutenant-Governor nominate to the J&K Legislative Assembly if he considers that women are inadequately represented?

- (a) One woman (b) Two women
(c) Five women (d) None of the above

7. How many nominated seats have been added to the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly, raising its immediate strength from 90 to 95 members?

- (a) Five nominations (b) Four nominations
(c) Six nominations (d) Eight nominations

8. How many Assembly seats have been constitutionally reserved and left vacant for constituencies in Pakistan-occupied Jammu & Kashmir (PoJK)?

- (a) 18 seats (b) 21 seats
(c) 24 seats (d) 28 seats

9. How many seats make up the overall sanctioned strength of the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly after the 2023 amendment to the J&K Reorganisation Act, revised upward from the earlier figure of 114?

- (a) 115 (b) 116 (c) 118 (d) 119

10. Which Union Territory's legislative framework, under the Union Territories Act, 1963, has been used by the Centre as an analogy for counting nominated members in addition to directly elected ones in Jammu & Kashmir?

- (a) Andaman & Nicobar Islands
(b) Puducherry
(c) Ladakh
(d) Daman & Diu

11. Which section of the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963 has been invoked by analogy (*pari materia*) to explain how nominated members in Jammu & Kashmir's Assembly are treated under the amended Sections 15, 15A, and 15B?

- (a) Section 12 (b) Section 16
(c) Section 21 (d) Section 27

12. How many nominated seats are added to the 30 elected members in the Puducherry Legislative Assembly model, which the Centre uses as an analogy for Jammu & Kashmir?

- (a) +1 nominated (b) +2 nominated
(c) +3 nominated (d) +5 nominated

13. Whose inclusion in the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly, with voting rights, has raised concerns that post-facto nominations could influence majority equations and government stability?

- (a) Directly elected MLAs
(b) Vacant PoJK seats
(c) Independents nominated by parties
(d) Five nominees

SOLUTIONS

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

17

THAILAND-CAMBODIA DISPUTE
AND PEACE AGREEMENT

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

IN FOCUS

- After **five days of deadly border clashes**, **Thailand** and **Cambodia** agreed to an “**immediate and unconditional**” **ceasefire** in Kuala Lumpur, brokered with the facilitation of Malaysia’s Prime Minister.
- The truce follows months of skirmishes and escalatory measures along their **undemarcated 817-km frontier**, particularly near the **Preah Vihear/Phra Viharn** area and the **Prasat Ta Muen Thom/Ta Moan Thom** complex.
- A fragile calm now prevails amid rising **online vitriol**, tightened border controls, large-scale **civilian displacement**, and plans to **deploy ASEAN observers** to monitor compliance.

The Latest Crisis

Thailand launches airstrikes on Cambodia

Thai and Cambodian soldiers clashed along their border on July 24, 2025, in a major escalation that left at least 15 people dead. Each side is blaming each other for causing the escalation.



Flashpoint Timeline and Military Exchanges

- Tensions had simmered since **May**, when a confrontation at a contested sector resulted in the death of a Cambodian soldier. Subsequent months saw **nationalist rhetoric**, reciprocal trade and media restrictions, and **border closures**.
- In late July, after a **Thai soldier** was grievously injured in a **land-mine blast** Thailand attributed to Cambodian forces, diplomatic relations deteriorated sharply, with **ambassador withdrawals** and **reciprocal expulsions**.
- **Thailand conducted air strikes** on Cambodian military positions; **Cambodia retaliated** with rocket and artillery fire. Firefights erupted at multiple points along the border between Thailand’s **Surin** and **Sisaket** provinces and Cambodia’s **Oddar Meanchey** and **Preah Vihear** provinces.
- Casualty and displacement figures evolved as reporting consolidated: initial accounts spoke of **at least 35 deaths** and **~260,000 displaced** on both sides; later tallies cited **at least 43 fatalities**, marking the **worst violence in more than a decade**.

Ceasefire Architecture and Monitoring

- The parties agreed to an **immediate, unconditional ceasefire**, a **freeze on troop movements and patrols**, and—after four days of follow-on talks in Kuala Lumpur—to **invite ASEAN observers**. Each side will form

- an **interim observer team** comprised of defence officials from ASEAN members and coordinated by **Malaysia**, pending a formal observation mission.
- An unresolved humanitarian and diplomatic sticking point involves 18 Cambodian soldiers captured hours after the truce took effect; two wounded personnel were repatriated subsequently. A joint understanding anticipates release and repatriation after the cessation of active hostilities, but timelines and modalities remain sensitive.
- United States officials publicly tied progress on the ceasefire to trade talks, with tariff relief following the truce. Diplomatic messaging framed the monitoring arrangement as an “important step” to solidify the ceasefire.

The Frontier and Its Colonial-Era Roots

- The **Thailand–Cambodia** boundary—drawn in the early **1900s** by **French** colonial cartographers—has been contested for over a century. A 1904 treaty envisaged the frontier along the **Dangrek Mountains watershed**, but the official **1907 map** placed disputed temples and adjoining terrain on the **Cambodian** side, sowing the seeds for recurring disputes.
- The **Southeast Asian “Emerald Triangle”** denotes the forested tri-border region of **Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos**. It is rich in **Angkorian-era** sites and difficult terrain, factors that complicate demarcation, patrols, and humanitarian access during crises.



The Sites at the Heart of the Standoff

- **Preah Vihear (Khmer) / Phra Viharn (Thai):** An 11th–12th century hilltop temple dedicated to **Lord Shiva**, emblematic of **Khmer high classicism**. The **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** awarded sovereignty to **Cambodia in 1962** and **reaffirmed** Cambodia’s position **in 2013**, while urging a demilitarised zone. Cambodia secured **UNESCO World Heritage** inscription in **2008**, an act that re-energised nationalist contestation
- **Prasat Ta Muen Thom / Ta Moan Thom:** A 12th-century Shiva temple later syncretised with **Buddhist** use, linked to **Prasat Ta Muen** (pilgrim rest house) and **Prasat Ta Muen Tot** (hospital shrine). The complex illustrates **Angkorian** road-station architecture attributed to kings **Udayadityavarman II** and **Jayavarman VII**.
- These locations are not only military vantage points but also **cultural icons** claimed within contrasting national narratives, ensuring that even minor incidents can become **symbolic tests of sovereignty**.

Parallel Identities, Contested Heritage

- Thailand and Cambodia share **Theravada Buddhist** traditions, intertwined **ethno-linguistic** ties, cuisines, and performing arts. Yet both assert primacy over shared heritage, a dynamic that elites have sometimes **instrumentalised** to consolidate domestic support.
- Scholars note the **politicisation of history** around **Khmer-Siamese** era claims. In moments of tension, public discourse can frame artefacts, monuments, and even **intangible culture** (e.g., martial arts branding, culinary naming) as sovereignty markers rather than conduits of shared civilisation.
- **From UNESCO Listings to Domestic Politics:** The **2008** heritage listing of **Preah Vihear** catalysed political contention in Thailand and mobilisation in Cambodia, entrenching **hardline positions** on border posture. The **2013 ICJ clarification** sought to lower the temperature, but practical demilitarisation faltered amid **jurisdictional objections** and **map disagreements**.

Legal and Diplomatic Contours**ICJ Rulings and Mapwork Disputes**

- The ICJ's **1962 judgment** and **2013 reaffirmation** recognise **Cambodian sovereignty** over **Preah Vihear** and its immediate environs, but practical implementation is blocked by **mapping disputes** and differing **cartographic baselines**. Thailand's subsequent **jurisdictional objections** leave the legal-political matrix unsettled, incentivising **confidence-building** mechanisms over courtroom remedies—at least in the short term.

ASEAN's Monitoring Role and External Leverage

- The move to **ASEAN ceasefire monitoring** reflects a regional preference for **quiet mechanisms** and **host-country consent**. The interim, Malaysia-coordinated observation teams are meant to deter violations, verify incidents, and institutionalise **communication channels** at the border.
- **External economic leverage**, including **trade conditionality** and tariff adjustments, has reinforced the ceasefire logic. Symbolically, regional and extraregional actors have linked **commercial engagement** to **conflict de-escalation**, increasing the cost of renewed hostilities.

Displacement, Closed Crossings, and Supply Strains

- With the **border almost entirely shut**, routine **cross-border movement** for work, trade, healthcare, and schooling has been disrupted. Prior to the crisis, more than **520,000 Cambodians** were employed in Thailand across **agriculture, construction, fishing, and manufacturing**; many have **queued to return home** fearing abuse or job loss.
- Evacuation centres emerged on both sides, and local hospitals and authorities wrestled with **access policies** and **non-discrimination** standards during peak tensions.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Where did Thailand and Cambodia agree to an “immediate and unconditional” ceasefire after five days of deadly border clashes, with Malaysia’s Prime Minister facilitating the talks?

- (a) Bangkok (b) Kuala Lumpur
(c) Phnom Penh (d) Jakarta

2. Which disputed temple area along the undemarcated 817-km Thailand–Cambodia frontier saw escalations that led to the 2025 truce?

- (a) Preah Vihear (b) Angkor Wat
(c) Sre Pok River Basin (d) Tonle Sap

3. Which regional initiative has been proposed to ensure compliance with the Thailand–Cambodia truce, alongside tightened border controls and humanitarian responses to displacement?

- (a) Deploy Red Cross monitors
(b) Deploy UNHCR field staff
(c) Deploy ICJ legal experts
(d) Deploy ASEAN observers

4. Which regional initiative has been proposed to ensure compliance with the Thailand–Cambodia truce, alongside tightened border controls and humanitarian responses to displacement?

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(b) Deploy UNHCR field staff
(c) Deploy ICJ legal experts
(d) Deploy ASEAN observers

5. Which Thai provinces witnessed border firefights with Cambodia’s Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear provinces during the recent clashes?

- (a) Surin and Sisaket
(b) Chiang Mai and Lamphun
(c) Ubon Ratchathani and Yasothorn
(d) Kanchanaburi and Tak

6. Which number of Cambodian soldiers, captured soon after the ceasefire was announced, became central to post-truce humanitarian negotiations?

- (a) 14 Cambodian (b) 16 Cambodian
(c) 12 Cambodian (d) 18 Cambodian

7. Which country’s officials described the ASEAN monitoring arrangement as an “important step” while conditioning tariff relief on adherence to the Thailand–

Cambodia truce?

- (a) Australia (b) Russia
(c) United States (d) United Kingdom

8. Which colonial power’s cartographers drew the Thailand–Cambodia boundary in the early 1900s, leaving disputes that have lasted for more than a century?

- (a) British (b) French
(c) Dutch (d) Portuguese

9. Which watershed was supposed to form the basis of the Thailand–Cambodia boundary under the 1904 treaty, before the 1907 map controversially shifted certain temples to the Cambodian side?

- (a) Dangrek Mountains watershed
(b) Chao Phraya River watershed
(c) Annamite Range watershed
(d) Irrawaddy River watershed

10. Which term is used to describe the forested tri-border region shared by Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos?

- (a) Golden Crescent
(b) Southeast Asian “Emerald Triangle”
(c) Mekong Highlands
(d) Indochina Frontier Zone

11. Which heritage period is most visible in the archaeological sites scattered across the Emerald Triangle, adding complexity to border patrols and humanitarian operations?

- (a) Angkorian-era (b) Mughal-era
(c) French colonial-era (d) Srivijayan-era

12. Which period saw the construction of the Preah Vihear/Phra Viharn temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva and reflecting Khmer architectural high classicism?

- (a) 9th century (b) 10th century
(c) 11th–12th century (d) 13th century

13. Which court confirmed Cambodia’s sovereignty over the Preah Vihear temple in 1962, reaffirmed it in 2013, and encouraged demilitarisation of the surrounding zone?

- (a) World Trade Court
(b) East Asian Arbitration Tribunal
(c) International Criminal Tribunal
(d) International Court of Justice

SOLUTIONS

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

18

NEPAL OBJECTS TO INDIA-CHINA
TRADE VIA LIPULEKH

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

- The resumption of **India-China border trade via Lipulekh Pass (Uttarakhand)** in August 2025 has triggered fresh diplomatic objections from **Nepal**, which reasserted its claim over the Kalapani-Limpiyadhura-Lipulekh region.
- While the **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** of India rejected Nepal's claims as lacking historical basis, it confirmed that trade disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic has now been mutually restored through **Lipulekh, Shipki La (Himachal Pradesh), and Nathu La (Sikkim)**.
- This development coincided with Chinese Foreign Minister **Wang Yi's visit to India** (19–20 August 2025) and followed Indian Foreign Secretary **Vikram Misri's visit to Nepal** (17–18 August 2025), highlighting the strategic sensitivities of this tri-junction.

Diplomatic Update

- The MEA clarified that border trade through Lipulekh had commenced in **1954** and has continued for decades. The reopening was decided during recent consultations between India and China, which agreed to restore commercial activities via the three Himalayan passes.
- Nepal's **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** objected, citing its constitutional map that depicts **Limpiyadhura-Lipulekh-Kalapani east of the Mahakali River** as part of Nepal. India described such unilateral expansion of claims as **untenable**, but reiterated its willingness to resolve agreed boundary issues with Nepal through dialogue.



TRI-JUNCTION TROUBLE



- Nepal has two tri-junctions with India and China
- The one in dispute now is Lipulekh in Kalapani, at the border of Uttarakhand with Nepal
- In 1816, the Sugauli Treaty signed by Nepal and British India identified Kali river as

Nepal's boundary with India

- Nepal claims the river to Kalapani's west is the main Kali, and thus Nepal has territorial rights to it
- India holds that a ridgeline to Kalapani's east is the border, thus Kalapani falls within its territory

The India-Nepal Border Dispute

The 2019 Kalapani-Lipulekh Episode

- The current disputes trace back to **November 2019**, when India published a new political map after the reorganisation of **Jammu & Kashmir**. This map showed **Kalapani-Lipulekh within India**, prompting objections from Nepal. Citing the **Treaty of Sugauli (1816)**, Kathmandu asserted that all territories east of the **Kali/Mahakali River**, including **Limpiyadhura-Kalapani-Lipulekh**, belong to Nepal.
- India responded that its map "accurately" depicted sovereign Indian territory and that unresolved issues would be dealt with under established bilateral mechanisms.

Geographical and Historical Background

- The dispute concerns the **western frontier of Nepal and India**, where **Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district** meets **Nepal's Darchula district** around the **Kalapani-Limpiyadhura-Lipulekh** region. The **Treaty of Sugauli (1816)** fixed the Kali/Mahakali River as Nepal's western boundary but did not specify its precise source, creating cartographic ambiguity.

- **Lipulekh Pass**, situated in Uttarakhand's Kumaon region, lies near the **India–Nepal–China tri-junction**. Historically, it served as an ancient trade corridor to Tibet and remains a vital route for the **Kailash–Mansarovar Yatra**, thus carrying both strategic and religious significance.
- India formally notified **Lipulekh (1992)**, **Shipki La (1994)**, and **Nathu La (2006)** as authorised trading posts with China, though MEA records note Lipulekh trade activity as early as **1954**.
- The core of the boundary question stems from conflicting interpretations of the **Sugauli Treaty**. Early **British-era maps (1819–1856)** identified the Kali's origin near Limpiyadhura, whereas later surveys (1879, 1920–21) placed the river source closer to **Kuti Yangti**, fuelling present disputes.
- The **1950 India–Nepal Peace and Friendship Treaty** fostered an open border regime, yet the publication of political maps by both nations after **2019** hardened claims, leaving demarcation incomplete in Kalapani.
- **Competing Claims:** Nepal maintains that all territory east of the river, including Limpiyadhura, Kalapani, and Lipulekh, belongs to it under the treaty. India, however, identifies the river's source closer to Kalapani rather than Limpiyadhura, leading to differing boundary lines.
- **Institutional Mechanisms:** Between **1981 and 2007**, the **Joint Technical Level Boundary Committee** prepared 182 of 183 strip maps, leaving Kalapani and Susta unresolved. In **2014**, India and Nepal established the **Boundary Working Group (BWG)**, assigning Kalapani and Susta to the **Foreign Secretaries**, with technical inputs from the BWG.

Developments After 2019

- In **May–June 2020**, Nepal issued a revised map incorporating **Limpiyadhura–Kalapani–Lipulekh** and amended its Constitution accordingly. India rejected this as an “unjustified cartographic assertion.”
- In **July 2025**, BWG meetings resumed in **New Delhi**, where both sides agreed to complete boundary demarcation by **2027**, excluding Kalapani and Susta which remain subject to higher-level negotiations.

India–China Border Trade Resumption

- During Chinese Foreign Minister **Wang Yi's visit** to New Delhi (19–20 August 2025), India and China agreed to **resume border trade** through Lipulekh, Shipki La, and Nathu La. This move is part of broader diplomatic normalisation, also encompassing **direct flights** and **cultural exchanges**.
- Local traders in **Dharchula (Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand)** welcomed the decision, emphasising its importance for livelihoods and calling for speedy operationalisation. Strategically, the reopening aligns with efforts to enhance **regional connectivity** and maintain dialogue along sensitive border sectors.

Major Himalayan Passes in Strategic Context

- Several Himalayan passes illustrate the significance of high-altitude connectivity. **Umling La (Eastern Ladakh)** has become the world's highest motorable pass under Project Himank. **Lipulekh** is central to India–China trade and India–Nepal disputes. **Nathu La (Sikkim)** and **Shipki La (Himachal Pradesh)** function as formal Indo–China trade routes, while **Naku La (Sikkim)** has seen recent face-offs along the LAC.
- **Zoji La (J&K–Ladakh)**, known as the “Mountain Pass of Blizzards,” is reinforced by the **Zojila Tunnel**, Asia's longest under construction. **Dungri La/Mana Pass (Uttarakhand)** in the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve links India and Tibet under strict Army permits. **Rohtang Pass (Himachal Pradesh)** remains a vital link between the Kullu Valley and Lahaul–Spiti.

Important Timelines

- **1816 – Treaty of Sugauli:** The East India Company and Nepal sign the treaty, setting the **Kali/Mahakali River** as Nepal's western boundary, but leaving ambiguity about the river's exact source.
- **1819–1856 – Early British Maps:** Several maps mark **Limpiyadhura** as the river's source, placing Kalapani within Nepalese territory.
- **1879–1921 – Later British Surveys:** New surveys identify **Kuti Yangti** near Kalapani as the source, shifting the interpretation in India's favour.

- **1954 – India-China Border Trade via Lipulekh:** India begins trade with Tibet through **Lipulekh Pass**, marking its long-standing commercial use.
- **1992–2006 – Formalisation of Border Trade Posts:** India notifies **Lipulekh (1992)**, **Shipki La (1994)**, and **Nathu La (2006)** as official trade passes with China.
- **2019 – India’s New Political Map:** Post-reorganisation of **Jammu & Kashmir**, India’s maps show Kalapani–Lipulekh within Uttarakhand. Nepal objects, citing the **Sugauli Treaty**, and issues diplomatic protests.
- **2020 – Nepal’s Revised Map & Constitutional Amendment:** Nepal releases a new map including **Limpiyadhura–Kalapani–Lipulekh** and amends its Constitution, formalising the claim. India rejects this as an “unjustified cartographic assertion.”
- **2025 – India-China Trade Resumption via Lipulekh:** India and China restore border trade through **Lipulekh, Shipki La, and Nathu La**. Nepal objects again, asserting territorial claims.
- **2025 – Boundary Working Group (BWG) Meeting:** India and Nepal resume technical-level meetings in New Delhi, aiming to complete boundary demarcation by **2027**, leaving Kalapani and Susta for Foreign Secretary-level talks.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which Himalayan pass saw the resumption of India-China border trade in August 2025, leading to fresh diplomatic objections from Nepal?

- (a) Nathu La Pass (b) Jelep La Pass
(c) Shipki La Pass (d) Lipulekh Pass

2. Which disputed Himalayan region did Nepal reassert its claim over after India resumed border trade with China via Lipulekh Pass in August 2025?

- (a) Nathu La-Jelep La
(b) Doklam Plateau
(c) Kalapani-Limpiyadhura-Lipulekh
(d) Pangong Tso-Chushul

3. Which trio of Himalayan passes currently facilitate official border trade between India and China, as reaffirmed by the MEA in 2025?

- (a) Lipulekh, Shipki La, and Nathu La
(b) Rohtang, Jelep La, and Nathula West
(c) Bum La, Doklam, and Kalapani
(d) Kargil, Rezang La, and Demchok

4. Which year marked the commencement of official border trade through the Lipulekh Pass, as clarified by India's Ministry of External Affairs?

- (a) 1947 (b) 1954 (c) 1962 (d) 1975

5. Which river's alignment is central to the India-Nepal boundary dispute over the Limpiyadhura-Lipulekh-Kalapani region?

- (a) Teesta River (b) Mahakali River
(c) Sutlej River (d) Yamuna River

6. Which region's reorganisation by India in 2019 indirectly triggered Nepal's objections over the Kalapani-Lipulekh area?

- (a) Nagaland (b) Himachal Pradesh
(c) Jammu & Kashmir (d) Meghalaya

7. Which historical treaty forms the basis of Nepal's argument that Limpiyadhura-Kalapani-Lipulekh lies within its sovereign boundary?

- (a) Treaty of Lahore (b) Treaty of Sugauli

- (c) Treaty of Amritsar (d) Treaty of Lhasa

8. Which district of Uttarakhand borders Nepal's Darchula district and is central to the Kalapani-Limpiyadhura-Lipulekh dispute?

- (a) Chamoli district (b) Almora district
(c) Pithoragarh district (d) Tehri Garhwal district

9. In which geographical region of Uttarakhand is the Lipulekh Pass located?

- (a) Rohilkhand region (b) Garhwal region
(c) Bundelkhand region (d) Kumaon region

10. Which region was historically linked to India through the Lipulekh Pass as an ancient trade corridor?

- (a) Bhutan (b) Myanmar (c) Tibet (d) Afghanistan

11. Which nation is linked to India through the three authorised Himalayan trading posts of Lipulekh, Shipki La, and Nathu La?

- (a) China (b) Myanmar (c) Sri Lanka (d) Pakistan

12. Which treaty signed in 1950 underpins the open-border relationship between India and Nepal, even as disputes over Kalapani persist?

- (a) Treaty of Gandaki (b) Friendship Treaty
(c) Treaty of Lhasa (d) Shimla Agreement

13. Which institution was jointly established by India and Nepal in 2014 to manage technical aspects of boundary issues, while disputes at Kalapani and Susta were left for higher-level dialogue?

- (a) Himalayan Mapping Authority
(b) Joint Technical Boundary Forum
(c) Indo-Nepal Survey Committee
(d) Boundary Working Group

14. Which border town in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district saw local traders welcome the reopening of trade routes, highlighting its importance for livelihoods?

- (a) Dharchula (b) Joshimath
(c) Almora (d) Mussoorie

SOLUTIONS

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

19 UN PLASTIC TREATY NEGOTIATIONS END IN FAILURE

SCIENCE & TECH

IN FOCUS

- After **10 days of negotiations in Geneva (August 5–15, 2025)**, countries again failed to conclude the **first global, legally binding treaty to end plastic pollution**.
- This second collapse in eight months (after the Busan stalemate in October–December 2024) exposed **fundamental divisions** over the treaty's **scope, ambition, and legally binding measures**, particularly on **life-cycle coverage, production cuts, and controls on chemicals of concern**.
- Delegations could not achieve consensus on core articles or on **means of implementation** (finance, technology transfer, capacity-building), pushing the process toward a further session informally dubbed **INC-5.3**, with time and venue yet to be decided.

Origins and Mandate

The global process to negotiate a binding treaty on plastic pollution began at the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) in March 2022, where member states adopted Resolution 5/14. This resolution marked a historic moment, as it provided the first formal mandate to develop a legally binding international instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

The resolution created the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), tasked with completing the draft text of the instrument through five negotiating sessions between late 2022 and the end of 2024. The overarching objective was to establish a comprehensive treaty covering the full life cycle of plastics, from production to waste management, while also addressing marine litter.

INC-1: Laying the Groundwork (Uruguay, November 2022)

The first session of the INC, held in Punta del Este, Uruguay, in November 2022, was largely procedural. Delegates debated the rules of procedure, the scope of the treaty, and the modalities of how negotiations should move forward. While the session did not produce substantive text, it set the stage for subsequent talks by agreeing on workstreams and timelines. It also brought forward differing perspectives—some countries pushed for a comprehensive, binding approach, while others preferred voluntary national measures.

INC-2: Broadening the Options (France, June 2023)

- The second session, hosted in Paris in June 2023, deepened discussions on the possible scope and structure of the treaty. Delegates began to outline elements such as product design standards, recycling targets, and restrictions on certain plastic types. Contentious issues emerged around whether the treaty should address production caps on virgin plastic and how to balance the responsibilities of producers versus consumers.
- The session underscored a growing divide between countries advocating for a strong, globally binding framework with harmonized rules and those preferring a nationally determined approach.

INC-3: The First Draft (Kenya, November 2023)

- The third session, held in Nairobi in November 2023, marked a significant milestone with the release of the “zero draft”—the first formal negotiating text. This draft attempted to capture the wide range of proposals, from bans on problematic plastics to extended producer responsibility schemes. However, negotiations quickly became bogged down in disagreements over binding obligations, financial support for developing countries, and trade implications.
- While the session demonstrated progress in compiling proposals, it also revealed just how far apart member states remained.

INC-4: Consolidation but Continuing Divides (Canada, April 2024)

By the time of INC-4 in Ottawa, Canada, in April 2024, negotiators attempted to streamline the zero draft into a more coherent text. Discussions consolidated overlapping options but failed to resolve deep divisions. Key sticking points included:

- Whether to cap global plastic production.
- The role of chemical additives in plastics.
- The extent of financial and technical assistance to developing countries.
- While there was progress in narrowing down textual options, political differences remained stark, particularly between high-income countries and major plastic-producing economies.

INC-5: A Stalemate (Busan, October–December 2024)

The fifth and originally final session, held in Busan, South Korea, from October to December 2024, was expected to deliver the draft treaty text. Instead, negotiations ended in stalemate. Countries could not bridge differences on core issues such as:

- Whether the treaty should be binding on production levels.
- How to finance global efforts, including a proposed multilateral plastic pollution fund.
- Mechanisms for monitoring and enforcement.
- Despite long hours of debate, no consensus was reached. Delegates agreed to reconvene for an additional negotiating round to break the deadlock.

INC-5.2: The Extended Session (Geneva, August 2025)

- Recognising the urgency of delivering a treaty before 2030, countries agreed to hold a continuation of INC-5, dubbed INC-5.2, in Geneva in August 2025.
- This session aims to finalise compromises, building on years of work and overcoming entrenched divides. Geneva was chosen as a neutral venue, with the hope that extended negotiations will yield the first near-complete draft of a global plastics treaty.

Geneva, August 2025: What Broke Down

- Countries could not agree on the **treaty's scope** (full life-cycle vs. waste-stage focus), **definitions** (including what counts as “plastics” and “chemicals of concern”), and whether to embed **production-side obligations** (e.g., **caps or cuts on primary plastic polymers**).
- The talks were further split over **chemicals controls**, with many delegations seeking binding, list-based restrictions, while others resisted **global lists** and favoured national discretion.

- Delegations clashed on **means of implementation**, including **finance, technology transfer**, and **capacity-building**, with several developing countries insisting that **ambition must be matched by resources and equity**.
- **Procedure and Consensus**: Negotiations operate under the principle “**nothing is agreed until everything is agreed**,” making **consensus vital**. A large group pushed to allow **voting at the Conference of the Parties** to unlock deadlocks; opponents insisted on **consensus for all key decisions**, including adoption of annexes.

Blocs, Numbers, and Red Lines



High-Ambition Coalition (≈80–100 countries)

- Led by **Norway, Panama, the EU, the UK** and joined by many in **Africa, the Pacific, Latin America, and Japan**, this bloc demanded **legally binding measures across the full life-cycle**.
- Positions included: **phase-out plans for plastics, toxic-free reuse/refill/repair systems** (endorsed by 57 countries), **production cuts** (supported by 89), **strong chemical controls** (120), **voting to break deadlocks** (120), and a dedicated **health article** (130).



Like-Minded Producers and Supporters

- **Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russia—supported by China and India**—argued the draft veered into **trade** rather than strictly **environmental measures**, resisted **production cuts on primary polymers**, and questioned global lists as **overreach**.
- This grouping represents a **larger share of global population** and emphasised that plastics remain **integral to development trajectories**.

India's Position: Continuity with Sharper Edges

Positions Restated (and Newly Articulated)

- India **opposed production-side caps/cuts** and any separate article to regulate primary polymer supply, citing the “**right to development**.”
- For the **first time**, India explicitly opposed global product phase-out lists (e.g., **Annex Y** from Busan listing **single-use straws, cutlery, carry bags, rinse-off cosmetics with microbeads**, etc.).
- India stressed that the treaty's mandate must remain anchored in **UNEA-2022**, avoid overlap with existing MEAs, and preserve consensus for key decisions, including annex adoption.
- India warned that financial mechanisms not grounded in equity, historical responsibility, and national circumstances would burden developing countries and risk undermining implementation.

Domestic Context Cited by India

- India referenced its **ban notifications on short-lived single-use plastics, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** under the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 (with 2022 and 2024 amendments), and commitments to reduce virgin material use in packaging—while rejecting binding production targets.

Why Talks Also Failed Earlier: The Busan Prequel

INC-5 (Busan, 2024): Sticking Points: Caps on virgin polymer production, year-wise phase-outs for single-use plastics, and restrictions on specific plasticizers (e.g., DEHP, DBP, BBP, DIBP) by 2040 split the room.: India and key producers opposed production limits and timeline-based chemical curbs, framing them as economically harmful and mandate-stretching.

The Bigger Picture: Why a Treaty Still Matters

- **Escalating Scale of the Problem:** Global plastic output rose from **234 million tonnes (2000)** to **460 million tonnes (2019)** and is projected to reach **~700 million tonnes by 2040**. Asia produces nearly **half**, followed by **North America (~19%)** and **Europe (~15%)**.
- Only about **9%** of plastic waste is **recycled**; roughly **8 million tonnes/year** enter the **oceans**; and at current trends **plastic could outweigh fish by 2050**.
- **Human and Ecological Risks:** Plastics can persist **20–500 years**, fragment to **micro-/nano-plastics**, and carry **additives** (e.g., **BPA**) linked to **endocrine disruption, cancer, reproductive** and **neurodevelopmental** risks.
- Plastic's cradle-to-grave chain contributes about **3.6%** of global **GHG emissions**, largely from **fossil feedstocks**; by **2050**, emissions from plastics could rise **~37%** over 2020 levels to **~3.35 GtCO₂e**.

India and Plastics: Scale, Systems, and Gaps**Generation and Leakage**

- India is described as a **major contributor** to global plastic pollution, with estimates around **9.3 million tonnes/year**, constituting a substantial share of global waste; approximately **3.5 million tonnes** are **released into the environment** annually due to **management gaps**.
- Rapid **urbanisation** and **e-commerce** have increased **non-recyclable packaging** streams, stressing municipal systems with uncontrolled dumping, open burning, and insufficient sanitary landfills.

Economic Stakes and Systemic Fixes

- India risks **~USD 133 billion** in **lost material value** from plastic packaging waste by **2030**, much of it from **uncollected** material.
- While **EPR** is on the books, enforcement inconsistency and capacity gaps hinder outcomes; complementary initiatives include the **India Plastics Pact**, **Project REPLAN**, **Un-Plastic Collective**, **GoLitter Partnerships**, and Rule amendments in **2022** and **2024** to tighten accountability.

What Are Plastics?**Definition and Structure**

- Plastics are **materials**—either **synthetic** or **natural**—that can be shaped when soft and then **harden** to retain their form; at the molecular level, they are **polymers** made of repeating **monomers** linked into long chains.
- The properties of a plastic—such as strength, flexibility, transparency, and heat resistance—depend on the **monomer chemistry, chain length, branching**, and any **additives** blended during manufacture.

How Plastics Are Formed (in brief)

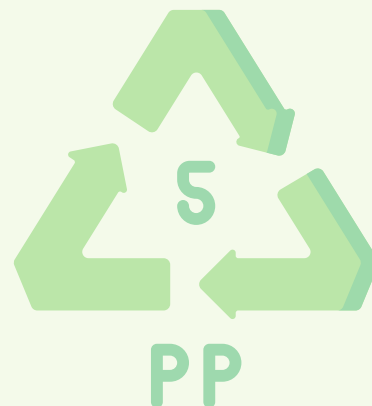
- In **polymerisation**, small **monomers** (for example, ethylene or propylene) chemically react—via addition or condensation mechanisms—to form very large **polymer** molecules.
- Manufacturers compound these polymers with stabilisers, plasticisers, fillers, pigments, and flame retardants to achieve specific performance in packaging, textiles, electronics, construction, mobility, and healthcare.



What Are Plastics?

Common Types and Typical Uses (illustrative)

- **Polyethylene (PE):** Widely used in films, bags, bottles, and pipes; valued for toughness and chemical resistance.
- **Polypropylene (PP):** Found in food containers, caps, fibres, and automotive parts; noted for fatigue resistance and low density.
- **Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC):** Used in pipes, cable insulation, flooring, and medical tubing; offers durability and flame resistance.
- **Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET):** Dominant in beverage bottles and fibres; strong, transparent, and good gas barrier with proper design.
- **Polystyrene (PS):** Used in appliances, disposable foodware, and insulation foams; easy to mould with good rigidity.
- **Polyurethanes (PU):** Present in flexible foams (furniture), rigid foams (insulation), coatings, and sealants due to tunable chemistry.



PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Which session, yet to be formally scheduled, was suggested after countries again failed to agree on a legally binding plastics treaty during Geneva talks in August 2025?
(a) INC-5.3 (b) COP-30
(c) Paris+25 (d) SDG Summit II
- Which UNEA resolution, adopted in 2022, mandated negotiations for a legally binding global instrument on plastic pollution, "including in the marine environment"?
(a) Resolution 3/7 (b) Resolution 4/11
(c) Resolution 5/14 (d) Resolution 6/2
- Which group of countries spearheaded demands for legally binding measures across the full life-cycle of plastics during the treaty negotiations?
(a) India, China, and Russia
(b) Norway, Panama, the EU, the UK
(c) USA, Canada, and Australia
(d) Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia
- Which group of countries, backed by China and India, argued that the draft plastics treaty veered into trade issues and opposed production cuts on primary polymers?
(a) Norway, Panama, EU, UK
(b) Brazil, Japan, and Mexico
(c) Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russia
(d) Kenya, Fiji, and South Africa
- Which framework did India highlight as the foundational mandate guiding plastic pollution treaty talks, cautioning against exceeding it or duplicating existing MEAs?
(a) Kyoto Protocol (b) UNEA-2022
(c) Montreal Protocol (d) UNFCCC
- Which region currently accounts for nearly half of global plastic production, far surpassing North America and Europe?
(a) Africa (b) Latin America
(c) Middle East (d) Asia
- Which approximate share of global plastic waste is currently recycled, highlighting the scale of the waste management challenge?
(a) 15% (b) 9% (c) 25% (d) 40%
- Which target year has been identified in estimates projecting India's potential loss of USD 133 billion from uncollected plastic packaging waste?
(a) 2030 (b) 2045 (c) 2050 (d) 2028
- Which category of plastics can be reheated and reshaped because their polymer chains are not

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

permanently cross-linked, making them more suitable for recycling?

- (a) Bioplastics (b) Thermosetting plastics
(c) Elastomers (d) Thermoplastics

10. Which type of plastics cure into a permanently cross-linked network, cannot be remelted on heating, and are therefore difficult to recycle mechanically?

- (a) Bioplastics (b) Thermoplastics
(c) Thermosets (d) Elastomers

11. Which plastic, valued for toughness and chemical resistance, is widely used in films, bags, bottles, and pipes?

- (a) Polypropylene (b) Polyethylene
(c) Polystyrene (d) Polyvinyl chloride

12. Which plastic, dominant in beverage bottles and fibres, is valued for strength, transparency, and good

gas barrier properties when properly designed?

- (a) Polypropylene (b) Polystyrene
(c) Polyvinyl chloride (d) Polyethylene Terephthalate

13. Which products, besides appliances, are typically manufactured using polystyrene (PS)?

- (a) Foodware, and insulation foams
(b) Plastic pipes, and fittings
(c) Synthetic fibres, and ropes
(d) Medical syringes, and IV bags

14. Which plastic, valued for durability and flame resistance, is commonly used in pipes, cable insulation, flooring, and medical tubing?

- (a) Polypropylene
(b) Polystyrene
(c) Polyvinyl Chloride
(d) Polyethylene

SOLUTIONS

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

20 PM MODI ATTENDS SCO SUMMIT IN CHINA

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

- At the **25th Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** held at **Tianjin, China (31 August–1 September 2025)**, Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** joined leaders including **Xi Jinping** and **Vladimir Putin** in wide-ranging deliberations on **global governance reform, counter-terrorism, peace and security, economic and financial cooperation, sustainable development, and connectivity**.
- The Summit culminated in the **Tianjin Declaration**, endorsed a long-term **SCO Development Strategy (2026–2035)**, advanced institutional reforms, and—significantly—**explicitly condemned the April 2025 Pahalgam terror attack**. India underlined its SCO vision anchored in **S-C-O: Security, Connectivity, Opportunity** and proposed a **Civilisation Dialogue Forum** to deepen people-to-people ties.



SCO

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

- 1996 Shanghai Five**
Kazakhstan Tajikistan Kyrgyzstan Russia China
- 2001 Shanghai Five → SCO**
Uzbekistan was included.
Renamed as Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)
- 2017 First Round of Expansion**
India and Pakistan Joined.
- 2022 SCO Summit, Uzbekistan**
Varanasi was selected as the SCO region's 1st "Tourism and Cultural Capital" for 2022-23.
- 2023 SCO Summit, India**
India hosted the summit for the 1st time. It was held virtually.
Iran was included as SCO's 9th member.
SCO members agreed to explore using "national currencies" for payments within the grouping.
- 2024 SCO Summit, Kazakhstan**
Belarus became the 10th member state of the SCO.

An Eurasian intergovernmental organisation and economic and security alliance



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Governance

Main Focus

Regional Development	Security Issues	Regional Terrorism
		Ethnic Separatism
		Religious Extremism

Governed by Heads of State Council (HSC), SCO's supreme decision-making body (Meet once a year)

Official Languages: Russian, Chinese

Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)

A Permanent Organ of the SCO

Headquarters: Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Serves to promote cooperation of member states against the 3 evils

- Regional Terrorism
- Ethnic Separatism
- Religious Extremism

Origins and Evolution

The **SCO** was established in **June 2001** in **Shanghai**, with **Uzbekistan** as the sixth founding member. Formed from the "**Shanghai Five**" (1996)—**China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan**—to address post-Soviet border confidence-building and force reductions The **SCO Charter** was signed in **June 2002** (effective **19 September 2003**).

- Subsequent initiatives included a **Programme of Multilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation (September 2003)** envisaging a favourable environment for trade/investment and plans (2006) to combat **international drug trafficking**. **India and Pakistan** became full members in **2017 (Astana)**; **Iran** joined in **2023** and **Belarus** in **2024**, taking membership to **10**.
- **Members (10):** China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan, Iran, Belarus.
- **Partners (17):** Sri Lanka, Turkey, Cambodia, Azerbaijan, Nepal, Armenia, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Maldives, Myanmar, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and including **Laos (granted 2025)**, following the merger of observer and dialogue categories.
- **Structure, Languages, and Venues:** The **Heads of State Council (HSC)** is the apex decision-maker and meets annually; the **Heads of Government Council (HGC)** meets yearly on economic and budgetary priorities. Two permanent bodies underpin the organisation: the **Secretariat (Beijing)** and the **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS, Tashkent)**. The **official working languages** are **Russian** and **Chinese**, and HGC venues generally rotate in **Russian alphabetic order** of member states' names.

Highlights of PM Modi's Visit to the 25th SCO Summit (Tianjin, 31 Aug-1 Sep 2025)

- **Set the agenda under "S-C-O: Security, Connectivity, Opportunity."** He framed India's SCO approach around firm action on **security**, rule-based **connectivity**, and economic **opportunity**.
- **Called for zero tolerance on terrorism.** He urged coordinated action against **terror financing** and **radicalisation**, insisted on **no double standards**, and thanked members for solidarity after the **Pahalgam attack**.
- **Backed practical connectivity projects.** He reaffirmed India's strong support for **Chabahar Port** and the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** as trust-building corridors for Eurasian trade.
- **Pressed for wider multilateral reform.** He called for time-bound reforms of global institutions, including a more representative **United Nations**.
- **Diplomatic courtesies.** He thanked **President Xi Jinping** for hosting, congratulated **Kyrgyzstan** on assuming the **2025-26 chairmanship**, and noted adoption of the **Tianjin Declaration**.



Tianjin Summit 2025: Documents, Decisions, and Institutional Upgrades

- Adoption of the **Tianjin Declaration** as the central political outcome.
- Approval of the **SCO Development Strategy (2026-2035)** setting long-term priorities.
- Endorsement of a **Cooperation Programme (2026-2030) to counter extremist ideology** within SCO space.
- A **Roadmap for SCO Energy Cooperation until 2030** to guide regional energy security and coordination.

- **Security, Crime, and Cyber Resilience:** Agreements on establishing an **SCO Anti-Drug Center** and a **Universal Center for Countering Challenges and Threats** to member-state security. Inauguration of **four new specialised SCO centres** focused on: countering security threats and challenges; tackling transnational organised crime; enhancing information and **cybersecurity**; and strengthening **anti-drug cooperation**.
- **Economic and Financial Architecture:** Decision to establish an **SCO Development Bank** to support infrastructure, economic progress, and social cooperation across the region. Expansion of platforms for energy transition, green industry, digital economy, artificial intelligence, higher and technical education, and workforce development.

Institutional Reform and External Linkages

- **Observer states and dialogue partners merged into a single category of SCO partners**, streamlining the external architecture.
- **Laos** was granted **SCO partner status**, expanding the family to **10 members and 17 partners (27 in all)**.
- The **SCO obtained observer status within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)**, strengthening institutional interfaces.
- **Cholpon-Ata (Kyrgyz Republic)** was designated **SCO Tourist and Cultural Capital for 2025–2026**
- **SCO Chairmanship (2025–2026)** passed to the **Kyrgyz Republic**, with the theme: *“25 years of the SCO: together for a stable world, development, and prosperity.”*

Counter-Terrorism, Pahalgam, and Regional Security Signalling

- **Explicit Condemnation and Coherence:** The **Tianjin Declaration explicitly condemned the Pahalgam terror attack (April 2025)** that killed 26 persons, and also denounced the **Jaffer Express hijacking (March)** and the **Khuzdar school-bus bombing (May)** in Pakistan. This marked a corrective to the **Qingdao Defence Ministers’ meeting (June 2025)**, whose draft omitted Pahalgam—prompting India’s Defence Minister to withhold signature at the time. The leaders’ statement restored coherence to SCO’s collective stance against terrorism.
- **India’s Position and Calls to Action:** India reiterated **zero tolerance for terrorism**, urged **coordinated action against terror financing and radicalisation**, and stressed **no double standards**. New centres on **organised crime, drug trafficking, and cyber threats** were welcomed as part of a results-oriented security agenda. India also pressed for **reform of multilateral institutions**—including the **United Nations**—to make them more representative and effective.

Connectivity, Economy, and People-to-People Initiatives

- **Strategic Corridors:** India reaffirmed strong support for **Chabahar Port** and the **International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** as **trust-building, development-oriented** connectivity solutions that diversify Eurasian supply chains and strengthen market access.
- **Civilisational and Youth Linkages:** To reinforce societal bridges, India proposed launching a **Civilisation Dialogue Forum** under the SCO, alongside deeper cooperation in **start-ups, innovation, skills, and youth empowerment**.

India–China–Russia Dynamic

- A brief thaw was visible in **India–China** engagement with the Prime Minister’s first China visit in seven years and a leaders’ interaction on the sidelines. However, longstanding **structural challenges**—including unresolved **boundary issues**, periodic **border crises (2013, 2014, 2017, 2020)**, and a persistent **trade imbalance**—continue to limit the pace of normalisation.
- For India, progress at Tianjin (notably the explicit reference to **Pahalgam**) is meaningful but not dispositive; **trust-building will require sustained action**. Concurrently, India’s ties with the **United States** remain strategically consequential; prudence dictates **not overestimating possibilities with China nor underestimating convergences with the US**.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. At which location was the 25th Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) convened?
(a) Astana, Kazakhstan (b) Samarkand, Uzbekistan
(c) Tianjin, China (d) Dushanbe, Tajikistan

2. Which three pillars did India highlight as the foundation of its vision for the SCO at the 25th Summit in Tianjin?

- (a) Security, Connectivity, Opportunity
(b) Stability, Commerce, Outreach
(c) Sovereignty, Cooperation, Openness
(d) Safety, Culture, Organisation

3. Which date is associated with the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as a regional grouping?

- (a) July 2000 (b) June 2001
(c) August 2002 (d) May 2004

4. Which country joined the original “Shanghai Five” to become the sixth founding member when the SCO was established in June 2001?

- (a) Mongolia (b) Turkmenistan
(c) Afghanistan (d) Uzbekistan

5. Which of the following states joined the SCO framework in 2025 as part of the restructured membership categories?

- (a) Saudi Arabia (b) Laos
(c) Turkey (d) United Arab Emirates (UAE)

6. Which languages are recognised as the official working languages of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)?

- (a) English and Hindi (b) Arabic and Persian
(c) Kazakh and Uzbek (d) Russian and Chinese

7. Which strategic project, along with the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC), did India reaffirm its strong support for as a trust-building corridor for Eurasian trade?

- (a) Chabahar Port (b) Gwadar Port
(c) Sittwe Port (d) Hambantota Port

8. Which global institution did India call to be made more representative as part of its demand for wider,

time-bound multilateral reforms?

- (a) United Nations (b) World Bank
(c) IMF (d) WTO

9. Which key document was adopted at the 25th SCO Summit, alongside India extending diplomatic courtesies to the host and the incoming chair Kyrgyzstan?

- (a) Samarkand Declaration (b) Astana Declaration
(c) Tianjin Declaration (d) Dushanbe Declaration

10. Which major institutional step was taken at the SCO Summit to strengthen cooperation on security, crime, and cyber resilience?

- (a) Expansion of SCO membership to new observer states
(b) Establishment of four new specialised SCO centres
(c) Launch of the Belt and Road Initiative within SCO framework
(d) Formation of a joint SCO peacekeeping force

11. Which organisation provided observer status to the SCO, marking a step toward stronger institutional linkages between Eurasian regional bodies?

- (a) Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)
(b) Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)
(c) South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)
(d) Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)

12. Which city in the Kyrgyz Republic was designated as the SCO Tourist and Cultural Capital for 2025–2026?

- (a) Bishkek (b) Osh (c) Karakol (d) Cholpon-Ata

13. Which country assumed the SCO Chairmanship for the 2025–2026 term with the theme, “25 years of the SCO: together for a stable world, development, and prosperity”?

- (a) Russia (b) India (c) Kyrgyz Republic (d) China

14. Which project, along with the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC), did India strongly reaffirm support for as a connectivity solution to diversify Eurasian supply chains?

- (a) Chabahar Port (b) Gwadar Port
(c) Colombo Port (d) Karachi Port

SOLUTIONS

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

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!**

[illegible]

Policy in Assam
Indian sprinter Hima Das, General Secretary of Assam Cricket Association Devajit Lion Saikia, and scientist Uditkhab Bharali are also in the committee.

[illegible]

1

POLAVARAM- BANAKACHERLA PROJECT DISPUTE

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

The **Polavaram-Banakacherla Link Project (PBLP)** has reignited water-sharing disputes between **Andhra Pradesh** and **Telangana**, leading to the intervention of the **Union Government**. The project, which seeks to divert **200 TMC of Godavari floodwaters** to the drought-prone **Rayalaseema region**, has been strongly opposed by Telangana, citing violations of the **Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014**, and the absence of statutory clearances. In July 2025, the Centre constituted high-level expert committees and directed the establishment of **Krishna River Management Board (KRMB)** at Amaravati and **Godavari River Management Board (GRMB)** in Hyderabad to ensure cooperative management. The dispute underscores challenges of **inter-state water governance**, environmental risks, and the need for cooperative federalism in India's river basin management.

Background to the Dispute

- Following the **bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014**, both states inherited unresolved issues regarding the **Krishna** and **Godavari rivers**.
- The **Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal (KWDT)** and the **Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal (GWDT)** had earlier allocated water shares among riparian states, but the use of **surplus waters** remained contentious.
- The present conflict intensified with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister **N. Chandrababu Naidu's** renewed push for the Polavaram-Banakacherla project, first envisioned in 2014.
- His Telangana counterpart, **Revanth Reddy**, has accused Andhra of violating statutory processes and jeopardising Telangana's water security.

The Polavaram-Banakacherla Link Project

Objectives and Scope

- The PBLP aims to **drought-proof Rayalaseema**, particularly **Kurnool** and **Kadapa** districts, by transferring **200 TMC of Godavari floodwaters** into the Krishna and Penna basins.
- Andhra Pradesh argues that annually nearly **3,000 TMC of Godavari floodwaters** flow unutilised into the Bay of Bengal during the monsoon, which can be redirected for irrigation, drinking water, and industrial use.

Infrastructure and Design

- The project envisages a **three-part water transfer system**. First, water would be drawn from the **Polavaram Dam** and routed to the **Prakasam Barrage** at Vijayawada.
- Second, water would be lifted to the **Bollapalli reservoir** in Palnadu district, which has a proposed capacity of **150 TMC ft**. Finally, tunnels under the **Nallamala forests** would channel the water to the **Banakacherla reservoir**.
- The system requires **six lift stations** with an estimated power demand exceeding **4,000 MW**, and involves canals, tunnels, and inter-basin transfer mechanisms.
- The project is estimated to cost **₹80,112 crore** and requires acquisition of **40,500 acres of land**, including significant stretches of forest area.

Andhra Pradesh's Position

- The Andhra government maintains that it is utilising "**unused surplus waters**" that would otherwise drain into the sea.
- Officials argue that the project is fully compliant with the **AP Reorganisation Act, 2014**, and with tribunal awards, particularly the GWDT directive to divert **80 TMC of Godavari water** into the Krishna basin.

- Chief Minister Naidu has highlighted the project's alignment with national missions such as **Jal Jeevan Mission**, **Blue Revolution**, and **Make in India**, and framed it as vital for ensuring **Rayalaseema's water security**.
- Andhra Pradesh has also agreed to cooperative measures such as installing **telemetry systems** across reservoirs and repairing the **Srisailem project**, which supports both irrigation and hydropower generation.

Expert Concerns and Environmental Challenges

- Hydrologists and environmental experts have raised serious concerns about the project. Increasing the **Polavaram Right Main Canal's** capacity from **17,500 to 38,000 cusecs** could significantly alter natural flow regimes, reducing freshwater inflows to downstream deltas.
- This in turn risks **salinity intrusion**, decline in **soil fertility**, and disruption of **agricultural productivity** in both the **Krishna** and **Godavari deltas**.
- Further, the **Nallamala forest tunnels** could destabilise soil and groundwater systems, affecting **critical wildlife habitats**, threatening **tigers, elephants**, and other species, and displacing indigenous communities reliant on forest ecosystems.
- Experts argue that alternative solutions like **groundwater recharge**, **rainwater harvesting**, and **micro-irrigation** have not been fully explored.

Constitutional Basis

- The governance of inter-state rivers in India is rooted in **Article 262** of the Constitution. **Article 262(1)** empowers Parliament to legislate on inter-state water disputes, while **Article 262(2)** allows it to bar the jurisdiction of the **Supreme Court** and other courts.
- **Entry 17 of the State List** gives states control over irrigation, water supply, and canals, whereas **Entry 56 of the Union List** empowers the Union to regulate inter-state rivers.
- The **River Boards Act, 1956** provides for coordinated development of inter-state rivers, though no board has ever been constituted under this law.
- The **Inter-State Water Disputes Act, 1956**, amended in **2002**, establishes tribunals to adjudicate disputes. While tribunal awards are binding, enforcement is often delayed. The **Cauvery Water Dispute** and **Mahadayi Water Dispute** are notable precedents where prolonged adjudication affected implementation.

2

PARLIAMENTARY PANEL FLAGS DIP
IN RURAL LOCAL BODY FUNDS

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

The **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj**, chaired by **Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka (Congress MP)**, has released two critical reports in July 2025 highlighting structural challenges in India's rural governance system. The first report, *Devolution of Funds under Panchayati Raj System*, flagged the **steady decline in financial allocations to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)** under recent Union Budgets, warning that it undermines fiscal decentralisation guaranteed by the **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992**. The second report, tabled in both Houses on **July 22, 2025**, criticised the Union Government's move to **disengage the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad**, from the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), calling it a threat to institutional credibility and long-term policy research in rural development.

Declining Funding for Panchayati Raj Institutions

Parliamentary Committee's Findings

- The Committee observed that allocations to PRIs—both **untied transfers** (general-purpose grants) and **scheme-based transfers** (earmarked for specific programmes)—have shown a **steady decline** across successive Union Budgets since 2020.
- This decline, according to the Committee, has restricted the ability of Panchayats to perform constitutionally mandated functions such as **basic service delivery, infrastructure development, livelihood generation, and social welfare implementation**.
- The report underlined that inadequate financial support is eroding the credibility of Panchayats as **self-governing institutions**, which was the central objective of the **73rd Amendment**. The panel noted that without predictable and adequate fiscal flows, the principle of fiscal decentralisation is weakened, and rural local bodies remain dependent on higher tiers of government.

Recommendations on Financial Devolution

The Committee recommended urgent corrective measures, including:

- Consultation between the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**, the **Ministry of Finance**, and the **Fifteenth Finance Commission** to ensure that adequate, **untied and performance-linked resources** are provided to PRIs.
- Development of mechanisms to **ring-fence PRI funds** to prevent diversion by state departments.
- Establishment of systems for **greater transparency** in inter-tier fiscal transfers between states and Panchayats.

State Finance Commissions (SFCs)

The report placed special emphasis on the constitution of **State Finance Commissions (SFCs)**, which are mandated under Article 243-I of the Constitution to recommend the distribution of state finances to PRIs. As of July 2025:

- **25 states** have constituted SFCs.
- Only **nine states** have constituted their **6th SFCs**.
- Some states have not even constituted the **3rd, 4th, and 5th SFCs**.

The Committee praised **Punjab and Tamil Nadu** for good compliance in SFC constitution, timely submission of reports, and laying of Action Taken Reports (ATRs). In contrast, it noted delays in **Arunachal Pradesh** and **Chhattisgarh**, while **Gujarat, Jharkhand, and Telangana** were still at early stages of submitting their reports. The Committee urged the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** to impress upon all state governments to **regularly constitute SFCs** so that the flow of central grants under the **Finance Commission devolutions** is not disrupted.

3

RUSSIA WITHDRAWS FROM 1987
INF TREATY

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

IN FOCUS

- In August 2025, **Russia officially ended its commitment to the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty of 1987**, a landmark Cold War-era arms control agreement. The decision came amid escalating tensions with the United States, particularly over sanctions, missile deployments, and disagreements concerning the ongoing war in Ukraine.
- The **INF Treaty**, which once eliminated an entire class of nuclear-capable missiles, had already been weakened by the **US withdrawal in 2019**. Russia's latest exit not only signals the collapse of a significant arms control framework but also raises fears of a renewed **nuclear arms race**, challenging the stability of the existing **global non-proliferation architecture**.

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty

- The **INF Treaty** was signed in **1987** by the **United States** and the then **Soviet Union** at the height of the Cold War. It was signed by United States President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.
- The treaty prohibited all **ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles** with ranges between **500 and 5,500 kilometres**, leading to the dismantling of thousands of such weapons.
- However, mutual allegations of non-compliance began to weaken the treaty. In **2019**, the United States under President Donald Trump formally withdrew, accusing Russia of violating its provisions.

Russia's Exit from the INF Treaty

- In **August 2025**, the Russian Foreign Ministry declared that Moscow **no longer considers itself bound** by the treaty.
- It argued that the treaty's conditions had "disappeared" and blamed recent US actions for escalating threats to Russian security.
- Specific reference was made to the **deployment of US Typhon missile systems in the Philippines and missile drills during the Talisman Sabre exercises in Australia**.
- Russia also announced it would end its **self-imposed freeze** on missile deployments, paving the way for the reintroduction of **short- and intermediate-range nuclear-capable missiles**.
- Moscow accused Washington of undermining stability by deploying missile systems in both **Europe and Asia**.

The US Response and Escalating Standoff

- The United States, under President Donald Trump, responded with a mix of sanctions and military signalling.
- Trump threatened to impose **penalties on countries trading oil with Russia**, specifically targeting **India and China**, while also raising tariffs on Indian exports.
- He further announced the deployment of **two American nuclear submarines to undisclosed regions**, which the Kremlin described as dangerous nuclear rhetoric.
- These measures coincided with Trump's attempts to push Moscow into agreeing to a **ceasefire in Ukraine**.
- Russia, however, described the sanctions and tariffs as part of a broader **"neocolonial" policy** by Washington to preserve its hegemony in a shifting multipolar order.

4

80 YEARS OF THE US ATOMIC
BOMBING ON JAPAN

MISCELLANEOUS

IN FOCUS

- On **6 August 2025**, **Hiroshima** marked the **80th anniversary** of the world's first wartime nuclear attack with a solemn ceremony that reaffirmed calls for **nuclear disarmament** even as global militarism intensifies.
- At **8:15 a.m.**, precisely the moment when the **U.S. B-29 Enola Gay** dropped the **uranium** bomb "**Little Boy**" on **6 August 1945**, a bell tolled and a minute's silence was observed at **Peace Memorial Park** in the presence of delegates from a record **120 countries and regions**, survivors known as **hibakusha**, national officials, and representatives of the **United Nations**.
- The commemoration, followed three days later by remembrance events for **Nagasaki**—which was devastated by the **plutonium** bomb "**Fat Man**" on **9 August 1945**—underscored the enduring humanitarian, legal, and geopolitical legacy of nuclear weapons from **World War II** to the present.

The 80th Anniversary Ceremony in Hiroshima

Sequence, Messages, and Participation

- The ceremony began with children and citizens offering flowers and water to symbolize relief for those who suffered in the immediate aftermath of the blast. At **8:15 a.m.**, the city paused in silence, after which **Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui** read the annual **Declaration of Peace**, urging the abolition of nuclear weapons and warning that contemporary claims that nuclear arsenals are indispensable for national security risk nullifying lessons painfully learned since **1945**.
- A message on behalf of **UN Secretary-General António Guterres** called for renewed global efforts toward disarmament. Schoolchildren from across Japan delivered the "**Promise of Peace**," linking generational memory with future responsibility.
- The presence of delegations from **120** countries and regions, including representatives from nuclear-armed states, signaled both the gravity of the moment and the persistence of international divisions over deterrence and disarmament.

Voices of Survivors and the Passing of Witnesses

- Hibakusha** testimonies framed the day. With the surviving cohort now averaging over **86** years of age and their total number falling below **100,000** for the first time, many described this anniversary as the last major milestone they would personally witness.
- Survivor groups such as **Nihon Hidankyo**, awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize in 2024** for their advocacy, warned that acceptance of nuclear deterrence among world leaders is growing and that the window for living memory to shape policy is closing.

The Strategic Context and the Post-War Order

Surrender, Potsdam, and Signaling to the Soviet Union

- The bombings precipitated **Japan's surrender on 15 August 1945**, ending World War II in the Pacific.
- The **Potsdam Declaration** framework and wartime diplomacy shaped U.S. decision-making.
- Beyond compelling surrender, the attacks also communicated technological and strategic dominance at a moment when **U.S.-Soviet** tensions were sharpening, a signal that influenced early **Cold War** dynamics.

Nuclear Deterrence and Doctrines in the Cold War

- The psychological and strategic impact of nuclear weapons reshaped both warfare and diplomacy. Concepts such as **nuclear deterrence** and **mutually assured destruction** became foundational to superpower relations.

- Crises and negotiations—from the **Cuban Missile Crisis** to the evolution of **anti-ballistic missile** limits and **arms control**—constituted a decades-long effort to balance deterrence with the reduction of catastrophic risk.

From Humanitarian Shock to the Non-Proliferation Regime

Early Proposals and the Emergence of Treaties

- Initial post-war proposals, including the **Baruch Plan (1946)** to place atomic energy under international control, failed to take hold. A more durable architecture arrived with the **Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT, opened in 1968; in force 1970)**.
- The NPT rests on three pillars—**non-proliferation, disarmament, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy**—and recognises five **nuclear-weapon states** while obligating others not to acquire nuclear arms.
- The **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** assumed inspection and verification responsibilities, a role that has extended even into conflict zones, as seen in inspections of facilities such as **Zaporizhzhia**.

The Test Ban Norm and the CTBT

- The **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT, 1996)** sought to ban all **nuclear explosions** worldwide. Although not yet in force due to the non-ratification of key states, the treaty and its **International Monitoring System** have embedded a powerful global norm against testing.
- The images and data from Cold War tests—such as **Castle Bravo** and **Castle Romeo** in **1954**, whose fallout infamously affected the Japanese fishing vessel **Daigo Fukuryū Maru**—contributed to public mobilization and the eventual institutionalization of test bans.

5

AZERBAIJAN, ARMENIA PUBLISH TEXT
OF INITIALED PEACE AGREEMENT

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

- On **8 August 2025** in **Washington, D.C.**, **Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan** and **Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev** initialed a **United States–brokered peace agreement** that both governments published on **11 August 2025**.
- The text affirms mutual recognition of territorial integrity, the relinquishment of all territorial claims, a ban on the use or threat of force, and adherence to international law, thereby seeking to close nearly four decades of armed confrontation centred on Nagorno-Karabakh.
- The accord follows Baku's full restoration of control over the region in 2023 and the ensuing exodus of almost the entire ethnic Armenian population to Armenia. The announcement coincided with the United States obtaining exclusive development rights to a strategic South Caucasus **transit corridor**, which Washington framed as an instrument for enhanced energy exports and bilateral economic ties.

The Washington Accord: Parties, Commitments, and Textual Core

- The agreement emerged from a trilateral meeting at the **White House**, where **President Donald Trump** witnessed the initialing ceremony with the two leaders.
- In parallel statements, **Yerevan** and **Baku** released the identical text through their foreign ministries, thereby ensuring authoritative alignment on the agreed language.
- The core provisions record that **Armenia** and **Azerbaijan** will respect each other's **sovereignty and territorial integrity**, **renounce any claims** over each other's internationally recognised territory, **refrain from the use of force**, and **conduct relations in conformity with international law**.
- Prime Minister **Pashinyan** described the document as a “**solid foundation for reliable and lasting peace**” that balances the interests of both sides. Although both capitals had repeatedly expressed a desire for peace since **2023**, negotiations had largely **stalled** until the **August 2025** breakthrough.

Conflict Background: From Imperial Collapse to Post-2023 Realities

- The dispute's roots extend to the aftermath of the **Russian Empire's collapse in 1917**, when both **Armenia** and **Azerbaijan** advanced competing claims over **Nagorno-Karabakh**, a **mountainous, landlocked** enclave in the **South Caucasus** situated between the **Black Sea** and the **Caspian Sea**.
- Following episodic wars and ceasefires, the **1994** truce left Nagorno-Karabakh under **Armenian-backed control** while remaining **internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan**.
- The status quo unspooled in **2023**, when **Azerbaijan** launched a rapid offensive that re-established **Baku's full control** over the region and precipitated the **mass displacement** of almost all of the enclave's **approximately 100,000 ethnic Armenians** to Armenia.
- The humanitarian, legal, and property issues arising from the **2023** shift created a new baseline that any durable peace text would have to acknowledge, even as both sides signalled an intention to pursue normalisation.

Strategic Geography and the US-Brokered Corridor

- The U.S. has proposed a new transit corridor across the South Caucasus region. This project is being presented as a way to boost energy exports and create more economic connections between countries.
- The corridor is called the “Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity.” It is not just about peace talks—it is also about building a bigger system of trade routes, energy pipelines, and secure transit links. The idea is to connect the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions, which would also link Europe and Asia.
- In short, the U.S. wants to use this corridor both as a peace initiative and as a strategic project for energy and trade.

Regional and Extra-Regional Stakes

- The **South Caucasus** sits astride critical **east-west** and **north-south** arteries that integrate **energy pipelines, road and rail corridors**, and **maritime links**.
- A sustained Armenia-Azerbaijan détente lowers **transaction and insurance costs**, reduces **escalation risks**, and improves **route reliability** for shippers and energy traders operating between **Europe, Russia, Central Asia, and West Asia**.
- The explicit **US role** as convener and corridor developer highlights renewed **American engagement** in the region's security-economics nexus and introduces incentives for **compliance** tied to infrastructure finance and market access.

India's Perspective and Connectivity Calculus

- For **India**, both **Armenia** and **Azerbaijan** are nodes within the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** that connects **India** with **Russia** and onward to **Eurasia**.
- A durable peace reduces risks along complementary routes and can enhance predictability for Indian trade and energy logistics. **India's 1995 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Armenia** provides an existing bilateral framework, while India's engagement with **Azerbaijan** through energy markets and multilateral formats creates an interest in **regional stability, legal clarity, and corridor interoperability**.
- New US-led corridor development, if harmonised with INSTC segments and port assets, can produce **network effects** that improve **throughput** and **cost efficiency** for Indian exporters and importers.

6

SC STRIKES DOWN ARMY'S BAR ON
WOMEN JAG OFFICERS

LEGAL UPDATES

IN FOCUS

On 11 August 2025, the **Supreme Court of India** delivered a landmark judgment striking down the **Indian Army's policy restricting women officers' appointment in the Judge Advocate General (JAG) branch**. A Bench of Justices **Dipankar Datta** and **Manmohan** ruled that the notification which provided only three posts for women as against double the number for men violated the **fundamental right to equality under Article 14**. The Court directed that **merit, not gender, must be the sole criterion of selection**, ordering the Union Government to create a **common merit list** and to allocate **50 percent of vacancies to women** in JAG. The ruling extends the trajectory of judicial interventions in advancing **gender equality in India's defence forces**, reinforcing earlier judgments such as **Babita Puniya (2020)** and **Kush Kalra (2021)**, and comes against the backdrop of a decade of steady growth in the role of women in India's armed forces.

The Judge Advocate General Branch and Women's Eligibility

- The **Judge Advocate General (JAG)** branch functions as the **legal arm of the Indian Army**, advising commanders on matters of **military law, discipline, operational directives, and administrative governance** under the **Army Act, 1950**.
- JAG officers are **commissioned combatants** and can be deployed in **combat-support roles** during wartime. While **Section 12 of the Army Act, 1950** historically restricted the entry of women into the Army, it explicitly permitted their induction into branches such as JAG.
- Despite this statutory opening, Army policy had imposed a **gender-based bifurcation** of vacancies, reserving six of nine JAG posts for men.
- The Supreme Court ruled that such discrimination had no legal basis, since the **testing parameters and service conditions** for men and women in JAG were identical. The judgment emphasized that once women are permitted entry under the law, the executive cannot limit their numbers through administrative notifications.

Supreme Court's Directives on Recruitment and Operational Roles

- The judgment ordered that the Army must prepare a **single merit-based list**, ensuring selection **solely on the basis of merit**, irrespective of gender.
- It categorically rejected the Union's argument that women officers could not be deployed in **counter-insurgency** or **counter-terrorism operations**, holding that this exclusion had no statutory basis and contradicted equality principles.
- The Court highlighted the proven operational capability of women officers, citing **Captain Ojaswita Shree**, **Major Dwipannita Kalita**, and **Flight Lieutenant Shivangi Singh**, who have performed successfully in high-risk assignments.
- It also referenced **Major Gopika Bhatti**, who commanded convoys in militant-prone areas, and **Colonel Anshu Jamwal**, who served in **UN Peacekeeping Missions** in combat zones. The Court concluded that **"no nation can be secured by only one half of its population"**, affirming that women must be integrated across operational and legal roles.

Judicial Precedents in Expanding Women's Role in Defence

- The **2025 ruling** builds on a line of progressive Supreme Court judgments that dismantled structural barriers for women in uniform.
- In **Secretary, Ministry of Defence vs. Babita Puniya (2020)**, the Court mandated **Permanent Commission (PC)** for women officers in the Army across all arms where **Short Service Commission (SSC)** was available,

- declaring denial of PC on gender grounds a violation of Article 14.
- In **Kush Kalra vs. Union of India (2021)**, the Court directed the entry of women into the **National Defence Academy (NDA)**, opening the path to permanent commissions and command roles at par with men.
- These decisions together reflect the Court's consistent position that **gender-based discrimination in the armed forces cannot be justified by administrative convenience, stereotypes, or operational presumptions.**

Women in Commanding and Combat Roles

- The policy and judicial momentum has coincided with significant operational achievements by women officers. **Captain Shiva Chauhan** became the first woman officer deployed at **Kumar Post, Siachen Glacier**, in **January 2024**.
- In **December 2023**, **Captain Geetika Koul** and **Captain Fatima Wasim** became the first women medical officers to be deployed at Siachen after completing training at **Siachen Battle School**.
- **Lt Cdr Prerna Deosthalee** was appointed the first woman officer to command an **Indian Naval warship**, while **Group Captain Shaliza Dhami**, a helicopter pilot, became the first woman from a flying branch to command a **combat unit in the IAF in 2023**.
- Earlier milestones laid the foundation: **Sub-Lieutenant Shivangi** became the first woman pilot in the Navy to fly the Dornier maritime reconnaissance aircraft in **2019**.
- In **2017**, six women officers circumnavigated the globe aboard **INSV Tarini**, and in the same year, the Air Force inducted its first women fighter pilots—**Avani Chaturvedi**, **Bhawana Kanth**, and **Mohana Singh**.

7

PIXXEL TO LAUNCH INDIA'S FIRST COMMERCIAL SATELLITE CONSTELLATION

SCIENCE & TECH

IN FOCUS

- India is embarking on a historic transformation of its space sector with the announcement of the nation's first fully **indigenous commercial Earth Observation Satellite System (EOSS)** to be built and operated by a private consortium under a **Public-Private Partnership (PPP)** framework.
- On **12 August 2025**, the **Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe)** confirmed the selection of the **PixxelSpace India-led consortium**, comprising **Dhruva Space, PierSight, and SatSure**, to design, manufacture, launch, and manage a constellation of **12 state-of-the-art satellites** over the next four to five years.
- With an investment exceeding **₹1,200 crore**, the initiative is a first for the Indian space industry and signals the maturity of private participation in strategic satellite infrastructure.

A Landmark PPP Initiative in Indian Space

- The project was awarded after a competitive bidding process in which two other consortia also participated. Under the PPP arrangement, the Union government will extend **strategic, technical, and policy support**, while the PixxelSpace-led consortium will **own, operate, and commercialise** the EO constellation.
- All satellites will be **manufactured in India**, launched on **Indian rockets**, and controlled through **domestic ground stations**, thereby ensuring **data sovereignty** and drastically reducing dependence on foreign imagery.
- Chairman of IN-SPACe, **Pawan Goenka**, described the project as a coming-of-age moment for India's private space industry, emphasising that it demonstrates the ability of Indian companies to execute large-scale, technologically advanced, and commercially viable space missions for both domestic and global markets.

Structure and Composition of the Constellation

- The **12-satellite network** will be built in phases, deployed progressively to ensure **continuous service upgrades** and expanded coverage.
- The constellation will feature a **diverse mix of payloads**, including **panchromatic, multispectral, hyperspectral, and Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) sensors**.
- These satellites will deliver **sub-metre very high-resolution data** and wide-swath coverage, operational round the clock under all weather conditions thanks to SAR technology.
- The inclusion of **hyperspectral imaging** adds the capability to capture data across hundreds of spectral bands, enabling precise analysis of Earth's surface conditions.
- The system will provide **Analysis Ready Data (ARD)** and **Value-Added Services (VAS)** to meet the needs of critical sectors, including **climate change monitoring, disaster assessment, precision agriculture, water quality mapping, infrastructure development, urban planning, marine surveillance, and national security**.

Role of Consortium Members

- Pixxel, headquartered in **Bengaluru**, is a pioneering space-data company with the world's highest-resolution **commercial hyperspectral imaging constellation**. Its **Firefly satellites**, launched in early 2025, already provide imagery across 135 spectral bands at ~5-metre resolution for industries like agriculture, oil and gas, and mining. Pixxel's in-house Earth Observation Studio, **Aurora**, makes hyperspectral data actionable and accessible to global users.
- Dhruva Space**, based in Hyderabad and established in 2012, offers **full-stack satellite solutions**, from

- spacecraft manufacturing to launch deployers and ground-station services. It operates one of India's largest upcoming spacecraft manufacturing facilities, positioning it as a key player in the scaling of national and international missions.
- PierSight is focused on building SAR and AIS constellations to provide persistent, all-weather maritime monitoring. Its expertise in radar-first, analysis-ready products ensures that agencies and enterprises receive actionable intelligence rather than raw data.
- SatSure, a Bengaluru-based deep-tech startup, integrates satellite remote sensing, big data analytics, and AI to create decision-support solutions for agriculture, infrastructure, climate, and financial services. Its subsidiary, KaleidEO, develops novel optical and multispectral payloads offering sub-metre resolution. SatSure will drive commercialisation of the data services arising from the constellation.
- Together, these four firms represent the strengths of India's emerging private space ecosystem—from satellite manufacturing and launch services to advanced analytics and sector-specific solutions.

IN-SPACe and the Regulatory Framework

- The establishment of the constellation is being overseen by **IN-SPACe**, an autonomous nodal agency under the **Department of Space**, which functions as the **single-window regulator** for private participation in space activities.
- By enabling non-governmental entities to design, launch, and operate satellite systems, IN-SPACe bridges the traditional divide between **ISRO's government-led missions** and private sector innovation, thereby accelerating India's rise as a **commercial space power**.

8

SC RESERVES VERDICT ON AGE CAP
FOR SURROGACY

LEGAL UPDATES

IN FOCUS

- The **Supreme Court of India** has reserved its verdict in a set of petitions that challenge the **age restrictions imposed under the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021** and the **Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act, 2021**. The case has emerged as one of the most significant tests of the balance between **medical regulation, reproductive autonomy, and constitutional rights to equality and liberty**.
- Couples who had already initiated fertility procedures before the enactment of the new surrogacy law argue that retrospective application of the age limits unfairly renders them ineligible, raising questions under **Article 14 (Right to Equality)** and **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty)** of the Constitution.

The Case Before the Supreme Court

- The Bench comprising **Justices B. V. Nagarathna and K. V. Viswanathan** heard petitions from couples whose surrogacy efforts began before the 2021 legislation but whose continuation was barred once the law came into effect in **January 2022**.
- One striking example involves a couple, with the husband aged **62 years** and the wife **56 years**, who lost their only child in 2018.
- They began fertility treatments in 2019, but delays due to the **COVID-19 pandemic** meant that their embryo transfer only occurred in early 2022. The pregnancy was unsuccessful, and when they attempted another transfer, they were informed that they were now above the statutory age limit.
- The petitioners submitted that the absence of “**grandfather clauses**”—transitional provisions protecting those already undergoing treatment—made the retrospective application of the Act unreasonable and excessively harsh.
- They argued that the restrictions amounted to **unreasonable classification** and infringed their right to **reproductive autonomy**.

Legal Framework for Surrogacy in India

- The **Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021** and the **Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act, 2021** together provide the legal framework for surrogacy and assisted reproduction in India. Both Acts came into force in **January 2022**. The provisions aim to regulate fertility services, prevent exploitation, and promote ethical practices, but they also impose **stringent eligibility criteria**.
- For intending couples, the woman must be between **23 and 50 years**, and the man between **26 and 55 years**. Single women are eligible only if they are **widows or divorcees** aged between **35 and 45 years**, effectively excluding **unmarried women**. Couples must obtain a **certificate of essentiality**, which requires proof of infertility, a **court order** on parentage and custody, and **insurance coverage** for the surrogate.
- The surrogate herself must be a **married woman** aged **25 to 35 years**, with at least one biological child, and may only serve as a surrogate **once in her lifetime**. She must also be a **close relative** of the intending couple and cannot use her own eggs. Importantly, the Acts ban **commercial surrogacy**, allowing only **altruistic surrogacy** in which the surrogate is compensated solely for medical expenses.
- To ensure compliance, the Acts provide for a **National Surrogacy Board** at the central level, **State Surrogacy Boards**, and mandatory registration of all fertility and surrogacy clinics.

The Court's Concerns and Observations

- The government, represented by **Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati**, defended the statutory age limits on the grounds of **medical safety**. The ASG argued that the restrictions were based on medical expert recommendations, aligned with **natural reproductive timelines**, and necessary to protect the **health of the child**. She stressed that advanced parental age poses genetic and epigenetic risks to unborn children and raises concerns about whether elderly parents can provide sustained care for at least two decades.
- However, the Bench questioned the rational connection between the Act's objectives and the strict age limits. Justice **Nagarathna** asked why surrogacy should be prohibited for older couples when **natural geriatric pregnancies are not banned**, noting that "some couples will take the risk anyway." She highlighted the harsh impact on "genuine intending couples who had already commenced surrogacy," remarking that the law's real object was to prevent **commercial surrogacy**, not to stop parenthood itself.

Petitioners' Arguments and Constitutional Dimensions

- The petitioners argued that the retrospective application of the age limits violated their **right to equality under Article 14** by creating arbitrary classifications, and infringed their **right to reproductive autonomy**, which forms part of **Article 21**. They emphasised that international and Indian jurisprudence increasingly recognise reproductive choice as central to personal liberty and dignity.
- They also criticised the law for excluding **unmarried single women, LGBTQ+ couples, and single men**. By limiting eligibility to only **married couples, widows, and divorcees**, the law, they claimed, entrenches a narrow definition of family that excludes genuine intending parents. Petitioners further warned that the **complete ban on commercial surrogacy**, combined with the restrictive eligibility framework, risks driving the practice underground, defeating the law's regulatory purpose.

9

INDIA'S FIGHTER JET CRISIS: MIG-21
RETIREMENT

NATIONAL NEWS

IN FOCUS

- On 22 July 2025 the Ministry of Defence announced that the last two squadrons of the Indian Air Force's MiG-21 fighter-interceptor will retire by September 2025, with a ceremonial decommissioning planned at the Chandigarh air base on 19 September.
- The squadrons are presently based at Nal in Rajasthan. This retirement brings to a close more than six decades of IAF service by India's first supersonic fighter and will temporarily reduce the IAF's active fighter strength from 31 squadrons to 29 against the sanctioned 42, until Light Combat Aircraft **Tejas Mk-1A** inductions begin, with the first aircraft expected to arrive by March 2026.

The MiG-21's Design Lineage and Global Production

- The MiG-21 was designed by **Mikoyan-Gurevich** in the erstwhile USSR and entered service in 1959 as part of the Soviet evolutionary design approach that iteratively advanced from the MiG-15 and MiG-17 to the supersonic MiG-19.
- The aircraft combined the roles of a fighter-interceptor and a ground-attack platform in a compact, single-engine, single-seat airframe. It could reach a maximum speed of about **2,230 km/h** and typically carried a **23 mm twin-barrel cannon** with **four air-to-air missiles**. NATO designated the type "**Fishbed**."
- Nearly **11,680** MiG-21s were produced globally, comprising approximately **10,650** in the USSR, **195** in former Czechoslovakia, and **840** in India, making it the most-produced combat aircraft since the Korean War era and placing it in service with more than **60** air forces.

India's Induction, Local Assembly, and Variants

- India's strategic partnership with the USSR crystallised in 1955 and, in 1961, the IAF chose the MiG-21 over Western competitors after Moscow offered a full transfer of technology with rights for indigenous assembly.
- The IAF inducted the aircraft in **1963** as its first supersonic fighter. Over time, **1,100–1,200** MiG-21s across variants—MiG-21, MiG-21PF/Type-77, Type-96, BIS and the upgraded **Bison**—passed through the IAF inventory, with a historic peak of roughly **400** aircraft across **19** squadrons.

Safety Record, "Flying Coffin" Controversy, and Professional Stewardship

- The aircraft's long life and the stresses of high-intensity flying contributed to a reputation sometimes encapsulated by the "Flying Coffin" label. An objective view requires context. Fighter jets are densely packed, highly complex machines operating under extreme loads; even cutting-edge fleets face losses.
- The U.S. Air Force's overall mishap rate declined from **5.2** in 1960 to **1.3** in 2018, while the IAF recorded its lowest-ever accident rate of **0.20–0.27** in the 2020–2024 period. Historical comparisons show older U.S. types such as the F-86 Sabre averaging about **4.4** crashes per **10,000** flight hours.
- Domestic debate also reflected difficult periods: analyses have cited nearly **500** MiG-21 accidents with more than **450** fatalities since 1965, and the downing of a MiG-21 Bison flown by Wing Commander **Abhinandan Varthaman** during the 2019 aerial skirmish with Pakistan.
- Notwithstanding, the IAF's management of a dated inventory—supported by upgrades, spares husbandry, and training—kept the type operationally relevant for far longer than typical fleet cycles.

Why Retirement Now: Technology, Accuracy, and the Changing Character of Air War

- The original MiG-21 architecture, conceived more than half a century ago, places natural limits on retrofit potential. Contemporary air warfare emphasises sensor fusion, electronic warfare resilience, networked data links, precision weapons, and low-observable tactics.

- Advances in avionics and weapon accuracy enable smaller forces to achieve higher lethality, allowing fewer, stealthier aircraft to neutralise targets once requiring entire squadrons of legacy platforms.
- As India widens its strategic ambit beyond its immediate borders and maritime approaches, fleet composition must align with wars of the future rather than standards of the past. The phrase “the old order changeth” aptly captures the transition from a venerable interceptor to multi-role platforms with modern survivability and strike reach.

The Transition Plan: Tejas Mk-1A and the Interim Capability Gap

- The MiG-21 phase-out had been slated for 2022 but slipped due to unavailability of replacements. With retirement now fixed for September 2025, the IAF's strength falls to **29 squadrons** pending the arrival of **Tejas Mk-1A** aircraft.
- The Tejas Mk-1A induction is critical, yet delivery schedules have tightened the near-term calculus. A contract for **83** Mk-1A aircraft signed in **2021** envisaged deliveries beginning in March 2024, but none had been handed over by mid-2025.
- Production has been accelerated with a plan to deliver **eight** aircraft in the current fiscal and the remainder by **2028**. An Empowered Committee for Capability Enhancement has been tasked with improving the vendor ecosystem, while **HAL** progresses parallel work on **LCA Mk-2** and integrates **99 GE** engines to support production lines.

The Broader Fighter Fleet and Modernisation Milestones

- The IAF currently relies on **Su-30MKI**, **MiG-29**, **Mirage-2000**, **Jaguar**, and **LCA Tejas** fleets for operational readiness.
- India has procured **272** Su-30MKIs, of which roughly **200** are operational; to offset attrition, a **₹1,300-crore** contract for **12** additional Su-30MKIs was signed in December, with engines licence-produced by HAL.
- Structural risks include the planned retirement of **Jaguars** by **2030**, which, alongside the MiG-21 exit, could reduce fleet strength by about **16 squadrons** without fresh inductions. Future programs—**MRFA** for a new multi-role fighter and the indigenous **AMCA** fifth-generation project—remain pivotal but time-sensitive.
- Meanwhile, regional air-power asymmetries are widening: assessments note that **China** fields around **1,300** fourth-generation aircraft and two fifth-generation types (**J-20** and **J-31**), underscoring arguments that India will require on the order of **400–450** advanced fighters to sustain strategic parity into the 2030s.

10 USA-RUSSIA ALASKA SUMMIT

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

The **US-Russia Alaska Summit**, held on 15 August 2025 at **Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage**, was the first face-to-face meeting between President **Donald Trump** and President **Vladimir Putin** since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Billed as a step toward peace, the summit produced no ceasefire agreement but carried immense symbolic and strategic weight. Putin, once shunned as a pariah in the West, was welcomed with red-carpet honours on US soil, underscoring a dramatic shift in optics. Trump declared the meeting “**extremely productive**,” while Putin spoke of “constructive” talks, yet no concrete progress was announced.

Optics and Symbolism of the Alaska Meeting

- The images of Trump applauding Putin's arrival on the red carpet and offering him a ride in his armoured limousine highlighted the symbolic victory for Moscow.
- For Putin, ostracised by most Western capitals for over three years, this moment marked his re-entry into global diplomacy on the most high-profile stage possible.
- The summit reinforced his stature as an equal to the US President, with American servicemen rolling out ceremonial honours, a detail that resonated strongly in Russian domestic narratives.
- Putin also experienced something rare: unscripted questions from reporters. He was asked directly whether he would “stop killing civilians” in Ukraine and whether he was ready to meet President **Volodymyr Zelenskyy** in a trilateral summit. Though he did not answer, the exchange was significant in breaking through the carefully controlled environment he usually enjoys at home.

Proceedings and Statements

- The leaders' formal statements avoided direct engagement with reporters. Putin spoke first, framing the meeting as respectful and constructive, while briefly touching upon the “situation in Ukraine.”
- He stressed that any peace settlement required addressing the “root causes” of the war, which in Moscow's terms means recognition of Russian sovereignty over **Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson**, along with Ukrainian neutrality, demilitarisation, and new elections. These demands, tantamount to Ukrainian capitulation, signalled that Russia was not ready for concessions.
- Trump, uncharacteristically brief, avoided any detailed mention of Ukraine. He acknowledged that “thousands” were dying weekly but insisted that “great progress” had been made without offering specifics. He revealed no roadmap for a ceasefire or negotiations with Zelenskyy, nor did he reiterate his earlier threats of “severe consequences” if Russia was not serious about peace. The session ended with Putin joking in English, “Next time in Moscow?”—a rare aside that hinted at further talks on Russian soil.

Strategic Assessments: Putin's Gains

- Putin's main victory lay in perception. He was honoured on a US military base, flanked by symbols of American power including **B-2 bombers and F-22 Raptors**, and treated as a legitimate peer despite accusations of war crimes.
- He emphasised growing US-Russia trade, pointing to a **20% increase** since Trump returned to office, and outlined areas of potential cooperation: energy, digital technology, high-tech industries, Arctic projects, and space exploration.
- He also highlighted Russia's interest in ensuring “Ukraine's security,” though with the implicit condition that Kyiv's defence arrangements must exclude NATO membership or foreign military presence. His delegation of businessmen and advisers underscored the priority of lifting sanctions and expanding economic ties, signalling that Moscow views trade and security as linked pillars of negotiations.

11

SUPREME COURT INTERVENES IN BANKE BIHARI TEMPLE ORDINANCE DISPUTE

LEGAL UPDATES

IN FOCUS

- The **Supreme Court of India** has intervened in the ongoing legal dispute concerning the **Uttar Pradesh Shri Bankey Bihari Ji Temple Trust Ordinance, 2025**, which sought to transfer the administration of the historic **Banke Bihari Temple in Vrindavan, Mathura** to a state-controlled statutory trust.
- The apex court stayed further proceedings before the **Allahabad High Court**, expressed displeasure over the strong language used against the state government, and proposed the formation of an **interim committee led by a retired High Court judge** to manage the temple's affairs until the constitutional validity of the ordinance is decided.

Background of the Ordinance

- The **Uttar Pradesh government** promulgated the Shri Bankey Bihari Ji Temple Trust Ordinance, 2025, with the stated aim of improving administration, modernising facilities for devotees, and utilising temple funds for developmental works, including the creation of a **corridor project** by acquiring land around the temple. The government compared these initiatives with similar projects undertaken at **Ayodhya** and **Kashi**.
- However, the ordinance was challenged through multiple **Public Interest Litigations (PILs)** on grounds of constitutional validity, particularly the question of whether the state could take over the management of a religious institution.

Where is Shri Banke Bihari Temple Located?

- Located in the holy city of Vrindavan in the Uttar Pradesh district of **Mathura**. It is located next to the temple of **Shri Radha Vallabh**. This temple is one of the seven Thakur of Vrindavan temples, along with Shri Govind Dev Ji, Shri Radha Vallabh Ji, and four more.
- Bihari means “supreme enjoyer,” while Bankey means “bent in three places.” Lord Krishna is seen standing in the Tribhanga pose. This spiritual figure was first revered by Haridas Swami as Kunj-Bihari, or “Enjoyer of Lakes.”
- Apart from having a galaxy of musicians in his court, including Bakshu, Bhanu, and Baiju, Swami Haridas is reportedly the guru of the well-known musician Tansen. Haridas, who is renowned for founding the Haridasi School of Mysticism, was a trailblazer in the propagation of Dhrupad. He was hailed as a key figure in the Bhakti movement and music because of his passionate language and melodic voice, which inspired many.
- The renowned vocalist Tansen's mentor, Swami Haridas, founded it. Built in 1864, the current temple complex that houses “Banke Bihari” is a singular example of Indian craftsmanship.

Supreme Court's Observations on High Court Proceedings

- A bench of **Justice Surya Kant** and **Justice Joymalya Bagchi** reviewed the orders passed by a single-judge bench of the **Allahabad High Court** in July and August 2025.
- The High Court had criticised the government's move as a “sin” and raised strong objections to state interference in temple affairs.
- The Supreme Court stayed those observations, noting that matters relating to the **constitutionality of statutes** must ordinarily be heard by a **division bench**.
- The Supreme Court also emphasised the need for balanced adjudication and transferred all pending petitions from the single judge to a division bench of the Allahabad High Court.

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Developmental Goals and Wider Context

- The dispute highlights the state's broader ambition to align the development of **Vrindavan's Banke Bihari Temple** with projects at **Ayodhya's Ram Mandir** and **Kashi Vishwanath Temple**, positioning these sites as hubs of religious tourism. The government's emphasis on crowd facilities, improved amenities, and regulated management reflects a model of governance where secular oversight intersects with religious institutions.
- At the same time, the controversy underscores the delicate balance between **state authority under Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution**—which guarantee the right to manage religious affairs—and the state's responsibility to regulate secular and administrative matters in public interest.

Present Status

- The Supreme Court has kept the constitution of the statutory trust envisaged in the ordinance **in abeyance**. An interim committee will soon be formally constituted under judicial supervision. Meanwhile, the **Allahabad High Court's division bench** will examine the constitutional validity of the ordinance, and until then, no substantive state takeover will be implemented.

12

AFRICAN UNION URGES ADOPTION OF WORLD
MAP SHOWING CONTINENT'S TRUE SIZE

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

- The **African Union (AU)** has formally endorsed the “**Correct The Map**” campaign, which seeks to replace the centuries-old **Mercator projection** with a more accurate world map that reflects the true size of **Africa**. The campaign argues that the Mercator projection, created in the 16th century, has long distorted the continent's size, portraying it as smaller and marginal compared to regions like **Europe**, **North America**, and **Greenland**.
- By supporting alternatives such as the **Equal Earth projection (2018)**, the AU hopes to correct historical misrepresentations, strengthen African identity, and reclaim the continent's rightful place on the global stage.

Historical Background of the Mercator Projection

- The **Mercator projection** was created in **1569** by **Gerardus Mercator (1512–1594)**, a Flemish cartographer, mathematician, and engraver.
- His projection revolutionised navigation by representing the Earth on a rectangular grid, where **longitude and latitude lines intersect at right angles**. This allowed sailors to draw straight lines between two points for compass navigation, a critical advancement for sea travel.
- The first version of Mercator's map was made on **18 sheets** forming a wall-size mosaic measuring 48 inches high by 80 inches wide. Over time, the projection was embraced by **schoolbooks, atlases, and publishers**, and by the 19th century it became the standard world map for education and public use.
- However, the very stretching of northern and southern regions to make the Earth fit into a rectangle caused significant distortions. Areas closer to the poles, such as **Canada, Russia, Europe, and the United States**, appear much larger than reality, while equatorial regions such as **Africa, India, and South America** look disproportionately small.

Distortions and Their Impact

- The distortion is most evident in the depiction of **Greenland and Africa**. Greenland, which is roughly the size of the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, appears almost equal in size to the entire African continent. In reality, Africa is more than **14 times larger than Greenland** and is the **second-largest continent by area**, home to over **1.4 billion people** and **55 member states of the African Union**.
- Critics argue that this cartographic distortion has reinforced **Western cultural hegemony** and perpetuated stereotypes of Africa as “small” and “marginal.” Historians and economists note that it contributed to the **Scramble for Africa** during the colonial period, making the continent appear conquerable and insignificant.
- **Rabah Arezki**, a former World Bank economist, has highlighted that just as Africa was depicted as small during colonisation, it continues to be shown as irrelevant in modern geopolitics when the Mercator projection is used.

The Correct The Map Campaign

- The “**Correct The Map**” campaign has been spearheaded by advocacy organisations such as **Africa No Filter** and **Speak Up Africa**. It calls for replacing the Mercator projection with the **Equal Earth projection (2018)**, which was designed to accurately reflect the relative sizes of continents while maintaining an aesthetically familiar appearance.
- **Moky Makura**, Executive Director of Africa No Filter, described the Mercator as the “world's longest misinformation and disinformation campaign,” stressing that the misrepresentation of Africa must end.

- **Fara Ndiaye**, co-founder of Speak Up Africa, emphasised that these distortions affect children's self-perception when taught in schools. The campaign therefore advocates for the Equal Earth projection to become the **standard in African classrooms** and eventually in global institutions.
- The AU's **Deputy Chairperson Selma Malika Haddadi** stated that the endorsement aligns with Africa's broader goal of **reclaiming its rightful place in world affairs**, especially in light of increasing calls for reparations for colonialism and slavery. She argued that although a map may seem trivial, it shapes global narratives in **education, media, and policy-making**.

Institutional and Global Responses

- The AU plans to engage its **55 member states** in discussions for collective action on adopting the Equal Earth projection. It will also advocate globally for organisations such as the **World Bank** and the **United Nations** to switch. The campaign has already submitted a formal request to the **United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM)**.
- The **World Bank** has confirmed that it has begun phasing out the Mercator projection on its online maps and already uses the **Winkel-Tripel or Equal Earth projection** for static maps. Other regions, notably the **Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Reparations Commission**, represented by Vice Chair Dorbrene O'Marde, have endorsed Equal Earth as a rejection of the "ideology of power and dominance" embedded in the Mercator worldview.

Alternatives to the Mercator Projection

- While the Mercator projection was historically useful for maritime navigation, several alternatives have emerged over time to address its distortions. The **Gall-Peters projection**, also known as the **Peters projection** from the 1970s, depicts continents according to their true proportions. In **2017**, Boston schools in the United States officially introduced the Peters projection into classrooms.
- In popular culture, the distortion of Africa on the Mercator map was notably highlighted in the American television drama **"The West Wing" (1999–2006)**, where cartographers explained the biases implicit in the map.
- The Equal Earth projection, developed in **2018**, has gained momentum for offering a compromise between visual familiarity and geographical accuracy. The AU and advocacy groups argue that this projection better reflects Africa's size and importance.

13

UK AND FRANCE TO RECOGNISE
PALESTINE

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

The emerging diplomatic consensus in 2025 to **recognise a Palestinian state** has accelerated after announcements by the **United Kingdom**, **France**, and **Canada** signalling formal recognition at the September session of **UNGA 80**. The move is framed as a corrective to prolonged stalemate over the **two-state solution**, mounting humanitarian catastrophe in **Gaza**, and shifting public and parliamentary opinion. While recognition is largely symbolic in the absence of agreed borders, a capital, or unified governance, it is intended to carry strong political and moral weight and to re-energise negotiations toward a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel.

Meaning and Limits of Recognition

- Recognition would acknowledge **Palestine** as an independent, **sovereign** state in principle. At present, Palestine holds “**permanent observer state**” status at the **United Nations**, which confers participation without voting rights.
- Full UN membership would still require a **UN Security Council** recommendation and a two-thirds vote in the **General Assembly**, a process that is subject to a **P5 veto**.

Who Recognises Palestine Now

- As of 2025, **147 of 193 UN member states** recognise the **State of Palestine**, reflecting majority support across **Africa**, **Asia**, and the **Middle East** (including **India**), with several Western states yet to follow.
- If **France** and the **UK** proceed in September—and **Canada** follows—Palestinian statehood would be recognised by four of the **UNSC’s five permanent members** (the **UK**, **France**, **China**, and **Russia**).
- The **United States** would remain the sole P5 holdout, with current statements citing the absence of a functional Palestinian government.

The UK’s Conditional Pledge

Policy Shift and Stated Conditions

- Prime Minister **Sir Keir Starmer** has committed the **UK** to recognise Palestine in **September** unless **Israel** agrees to a ceasefire in **Gaza**, refrains from **annexation** in the **West Bank**, and engages in a peace process aimed at a **two-state solution**.
- The conditions reflect a calculated attempt to create a “**moment of maximum impact**,” aligning recognition with concrete de-escalatory steps.

Political Rationale and Historical Context

- The UK position is shaped by images of widespread **starvation** and the sharp shift in British public opinion.
- Foreign Secretary **David Lammy** has invoked Britain’s historical role, including the **Balfour Declaration (1917)**, which supported “a national home for the Jewish people” with the concomitant pledge not to prejudice the “civil and religious rights” of existing non-Jewish communities.
- The BBC’s archival image of **British troops lowering the Union Flag in 1948** underscores the unfinished international business dating from the end of the British Mandate.

Canada and France: Catalysing Momentum

Canada’s Announcement and Humanitarian Focus

- Prime Minister **Mark Carney** has stated that **Canada** will vote to recognise Palestinian statehood at **UNGA 80**, explicitly linking the decision to the **humanitarian crisis** in **Gaza** and to disagreements over control of **aid delivery**.
- Ottawa positions recognition as a lever to press for ceasefire, access, and negotiations.

France's Lead Within the G7 and the "New York Call"

- **France** has declared it will formally recognise Palestine in **September**, becoming the first **G7** country to take this step.
- Paris co-chaired a high-level **UN** summit with **Saudi Arabia** to build global support, culminating in a "**New York call**" endorsed by foreign ministers from **Andorra, Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Slovenia, and Spain**.
- **The UK and Canada** have likewise indicated recognition on stated conditions. The **United States** has criticised the UN conference as unproductive, and **Israel** maintains that recognition rewards terrorism, especially in light of the **2023 Hamas attack** and the ongoing war.

Washington's Position and P5 Dynamics

- The current **US** stance reiterates opposition to recognition absent a functional Palestinian governing authority. While several past US administrations supported the concept of a Palestinian state in principle, **full recognition** has not been forthcoming; a **US veto** blocked the 2024 Palestinian bid for full UN membership. If **London** and **Paris** move ahead, **Washington** would stand alone among the **P5**, complicating its claim to neutral mediation.

The Two-State Solution

- **Territorial Vision:** The two-state formula envisages **Israel** and **Palestine** living side by side, with a sovereign Palestinian state in the **West Bank** and **Gaza Strip**, and **East Jerusalem** as its capital—broadly reflecting lines prior to the **Six-Day War (1967)**. Continued **settlement expansion** and entrenched security realities have made the formula increasingly difficult to operationalise.
- **Historical Milestones:** The present impasse is rooted in a sequence of events and accords: the **Balfour Declaration (1917)**; the **UN Partition Plan (1947)** placing **Jerusalem** under international control; the **creation of Israel (1948)** and the displacement of roughly **700,000 Palestinians (Nakba)**; the **Six-Day War (1967)** and subsequent territorial occupations; the **First Intifada (1987–1993)**; and the **Oslo Accords (1993)** establishing the **Palestinian Authority** and mutual recognition. Subsequent efforts—including informal frameworks such as the **Geneva Accord (2003)**—have struggled amid violence, political fragmentation, and expanding facts on the ground.

Why Recognition Is Happening Now

- Recognition talk long sat in the "final-status" basket for the **moment of maximum impact**. In 2025, that moment is being redefined by mass **food insecurity** warnings in **Gaza**, intense domestic pressure on Western governments, and a visible coalition of states ready to act in September. The **Reuters** imagery of civilians carrying **aid** in **northern Gaza** has become emblematic of the urgency driving capitals such as **London, Paris, and Ottawa**.

14

THE JAN VISHWAS (AMENDMENT OF PROVISIONS) BILL, 2025

ACT & BILLS

IN FOCUS

The **Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025**, introduced in the **Lok Sabha on 18 August 2025** by the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, seeks to further the government's agenda of **decriminalisation and rationalisation of minor offences**. It amends **16 central Acts administered by 10 ministries** to remove imprisonment clauses for technical lapses, replace them with monetary penalties or warnings, and simplify compliance frameworks. The Bill is regarded as the second major reform under the **Jan Vishwas initiative**, following the **2023 Act**, and is intended to reduce unnecessary litigation, ease the burden on courts, and foster trust-based governance for citizens and businesses.

Evolution of the Jan Vishwas Initiative

- The **Jan Vishwas Act of 2023** marked the first major step in this direction, decriminalising **183 provisions across 42 central Acts** administered by 19 ministries. It introduced a mechanism to revise fines and penalties every three years, signalling a systemic shift away from outdated penal approaches.
- Building upon this, the **2025 Bill**—often described as **Jan Vishwas 2.0**—expands reforms to cover **355 provisions in 16 Acts**, of which **288 are decriminalised** to promote ease of doing business, while **67 provisions are amended** to ease compliance for citizens. The initiative reflects the government's stated goal of dismantling colonial-era laws and outdated punishments that disproportionately criminalise routine activities.

Rationale Behind the Bill

Overreach of Criminal Law

- Research by the **Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy** highlights that India has **882 central laws**, of which **370 contain criminal provisions for 7,305 offences**.
- More than 75% of these relate not to core criminal justice but to sectors such as **shipping, taxation, financial institutions, and municipal governance**.
- The **Observer Research Foundation (2022)** reported that of the **1,536 laws governing business in India**, over half carried imprisonment clauses.
- Out of **69,233 compliances**, nearly 38% carried potential imprisonment, often for minor defaults.
- This proliferation of criminal penalties has created regulatory friction, increased compliance costs, and burdened the judiciary.
- As of **24 August 2025**, the **National Judicial Data Grid** recorded **3.6 crore pending criminal cases** in district courts, of which **2.3 crore** were older than one year. Many of these involve minor or technical lapses, undermining the principle of proportionality in punishment.
- **Examples of Outdated Punishments:** Instances include criminal penalties for acts such as **milking a cow on the street** or not providing **proper exercise to a pet dog**. Such archaic laws, rarely enforced, allow arbitrary state action and perpetuate unnecessary criminalisation.

Key Provisions of the Bill

Decriminalisation of Offences

The Bill removes imprisonment clauses from a wide range of laws, replacing them with **monetary fines or penalties**. For example:

- Under the **Motor Vehicles Act, 1988**, driving while mentally or physically unfit will now attract a fine instead of possible imprisonment.
- Under the **Electricity Act, 2003**, non-compliance with directions earlier punishable by three months' imprisonment will now be punishable only with fines.

- **Warnings and Improvement Notices:** A new system of **warnings and improvement notices** is introduced for first-time offences in **76 provisions under 10 laws**. For example, offences under the **Legal Metrology Act, 2009**, such as use of non-standard weights, will attract a warning or improvement notice requiring compliance within a specified time before penalties are imposed for repeat violations.
- **Rationalisation and Escalation of Penalties:** Fines and penalties are revised upward in monetary terms and will increase automatically by **10% every three years**. This ensures deterrence without requiring frequent legislative amendments.
- **Removal of First-Instance Penalties:** For certain offences under the **Central Silk Board Act, 1948** and the **Tea Act, 1953**, first-time offenders will receive a warning rather than immediate penalties.
- **Adjudication Mechanism:** The Bill provides for the appointment of **adjudicating officers** to conduct inquiries and levy penalties, with appellate authorities empowered to hear appeals. This creates a quasi-judicial mechanism for speedy resolution outside conventional courts.

15

UTTARAKHAND'S BILL TO GOVERN
MINORITY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

ACTS & BILLS

IN FOCUS

The **Uttarakhand Minority Educational Institutions Bill, 2025** establishes a unified, secular regulatory framework for **minority educational institutions** across communities—extending benefits previously confined to **madrastas** to institutions run by the **Sikh, Jain, Christian, Buddhist, and Parsi** communities as well. It replaces the state's madrasa-specific regime with a new authority, safeguards **constitutional rights**, recognises additional scripts and classical languages such as **Gurmukhi** and **Pali**, and ties recognition to transparent governance, academic standards, and oversight aligned with the **Uttarakhand Board of School Education**.

Legislative Timeline and Policy Shift

Cabinet Approval and Introduction

- On **August 17, 2025**, the State Cabinet approved the Bill; it was scheduled for introduction in the Assembly session beginning **August 19, 2025**.
- The measure marks a first-of-its-kind shift from a religion-specific recognition system to a consolidated framework covering multiple minority communities.
- **Passage in the Assembly:** Amid opposition protests, the **Uttarakhand State Authority for Minority Education (USAME) Bill, 2025** was **passed** in the Assembly on **August 21, 2025**, bringing madrasas and non-Muslim minority institutions under a single statutory umbrella.

Transition from Madrasa-Specific Regime

Repeal and Re-recognition

- The Bill provides for repeal of the **Uttarakhand Madrasa Education Board Act, 2016** and the **Uttarakhand Non-Government Arabic and Persian Madrasa Recognition Rules, 2019**, with repeal to take effect from **July 1, 2026**.
- All **452** madrasas currently recognised by the erstwhile Board must obtain **fresh recognition** under the new law by the **2025–26** academic session. One media report referred to the repeal as being “deemed null and void from July 1, 2016”; official planning details, however, specify **July 1, 2026** as the operative date for cessation of the old framework.
- **Inclusivity Beyond Madrasas:** The Bill explicitly extends recognition, support mechanisms, and oversight to institutions established by **Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Jains, Buddhists, and Parsis**, replacing a single-community board with a community-agnostic statutory architecture intended to enhance **transparency, quality, and mainstreaming**.

Establishment of USAME

Composition and Decision-Making

- The **USAME** will have **12 members**: a **Chairperson** from one of the six minority communities with **15 years** of professorial experience; **six academicians** (one from each community) with **10 years** relevant teaching experience; **one retired civil servant** of secretary rank or above; **one social worker** with **10 years** experience in school education; and **three ex-officio members** (Director General, School Education; Director, **SCERT**; and Director, **Minority Welfare**).
- The Authority will meet **at least quarterly**, decide by **vote**, and in the event of a tie, the **senior-most ex-officio** member will cast the **deciding vote**. The **state government** retains an **overriding power** to act immediately, and to **modify or rescind** USAME's actions.

Curricular Role and Academic Alignment

- Within **30 days** of its constitution, USAME will form **sub-committees** to develop **curricula** for minority institutions within **six months**, which will then be vetted by the **Uttarakhand Board of School Education**.
- In addition to Board-permitted subjects, institutions may teach **religion-specific subjects**, including recognition of **Gurmukhi** and **Pali**, provided these conform to standards set by the Authority.

Recognition Framework and Compliance

- **Recognition Requirement and Tenure:** Any minority-run institution imparting **religious education** must secure recognition from **USAME**. Recognition will be granted for **three academic sessions** at a time, with provision for **inspection** during appraisal.

Statutory Conditions (Section 14)

- Recognition conditions include **affiliation** to the state Board, operation by a **society, trust, or non-profit** explicitly serving the concerned minority community, and **banking of all transactions** through an institutional account in a commercial bank.
- Institutions must **not compel** students or employees to participate in **religious activities**; must appoint **qualified teachers** as per Board norms; and must accept the applicability of **Board and USAME rules** to all **academic, administrative, and financial** matters.
- Institutions must not engage in acts that harm **communal and social harmony**. A draft cap of **not more than 15% non-minority enrolment** was **deleted** before finalisation following dissent.
- **Application Scrutiny and Inspections (Section 15):** USAME is empowered to **examine** recognition applications and, where required, **inspect** institutions to verify compliance. The Authority may **cancel recognition** for **misutilisation of funds** or **violation** of Section 14 stipulations.
- **Population Profile:**
 - As per **Census 2011**, slightly over **17%** of Uttarakhand's **1.01 crore** population were **non-Hindus** (including those not stating religion).
 - **Muslims** comprised **13.94%**, **Sikhs** **2.35%**, and all other minorities together accounted for **less than 1%**.
- **Transition Milestones:** Key transitions include the **cessation** of the **Madrasa Education Board** and **2019 Recognition Rules** by **July 1, 2026**, the **re-recognition** of existing **452** madrasas under USAME by the **2025–26** academic year, and the constitution of **USAME sub-committees** to finalise curricula within **six months** of the Authority's formation.

16

SC OVERTURNS SARPANCH ELECTION
RESULTS IN HARYANA

LEGAL UPDATES

IN FOCUS

The **Supreme Court of India** set aside the earlier result of the **sarpanch election** in **Buana Lakhu village, Panipat (Haryana)** after an unprecedented **recount of EVM votes on the Supreme Court premises**. The Court declared **Mohit Kumar** elected, reversing the 2022 outcome that had shown **Kuldeep Singh** as winner. The decision clarifies when courts may **order recounts**, how **election petitions** must be framed, and in rare cases how courts may **declare a new winner** if the valid vote tally so warrants.

Case Snapshot and Procedural Timeline

- Haryana held panchayat polls on **November 2, 2022**. For Buana Lakhu sarpanch, seven candidates contested across six booths; authorities initially recorded **1,117 votes** for **Kuldeep Singh** and **804** for **Mohit Kumar**, declaring Singh the winner by **313** votes.
- Kumar alleged that at **Booth No. 69** the presiding officer **swapped votes** between the two leading candidates. A same-day recount at Panipat reportedly showed Kumar ahead by **51** votes, but subsequent litigation followed.
- In **March 2024**, the **Punjab and Haryana High Court** set aside Kumar's election. In **April 2025**, the **Additional Civil Judge-cum-Election Tribunal (Panipat)** ordered a recount limited to Booth No. 69; that order too was set aside by the High Court in **July 2025**.
- On **July 31, 2025**, a **three-judge Bench led by Justice Surya Kant** directed that **all EVMs from all booths** be produced in the Supreme Court and recounted under **videography** by a **Court-nominated Registrar** on **August 6, 2025**, in the presence of the parties and their representatives.
- The Registrar's recount on the Court premises credited **1,051 votes** to **Mohit Kumar** and **1,000** to **Kuldeep Singh**. Accepting the videographed report signed by both sides, the Bench on **August 11, 2025** **disposed of the appeal** and **declared Mohit Kumar the elected sarpanch**; the **Election Tribunal** was directed to treat the Registrar's report as **final and conclusive**.
- A notification followed, and Kumar took **oath** as sarpanch; officials indicated **show-cause** action against the booth presiding officer for the discrepancy.

Legal Pathways to Challenge Elections

- For **Parliamentary, Assembly, or State Legislative Council** elections, an **election petition** lies to the **High Court** of the state where the poll was held; for **local government** polls, the petition lies before the **district-level civil court/election tribunal**.
- Only a **candidate** or an **elector** in that election may file such a petition, generally **within 45 days** of the **declaration of results**. The petition must set out **material facts** concisely; allegations of **corrupt practices** are treated as **quasi-criminal** and require a **high standard of proof** with particulars of persons, dates, and places. Petitions lacking material facts can be rejected at the threshold.

Grounds on Which a Court May Invalidate an Election

- Courts may void an election for **bribery** or **undue influence** (including non-disclosure of **criminal antecedents**), for **disqualification** or lack of **qualification** on the date of election, for **improper rejection or acceptance of nomination**, or for **improper reception/rejection of votes**—but only if these irregularities **materially affected** the result. Non-compliance with the Constitution or election laws/rules may also vitiate an election where material impact on the outcome is proved.

When a Court Can Order a Recount of Votes

- A **recount** is an exceptional remedy because it risks compromising the **secrecy of the ballot**.

- Courts require the petitioner to plead **specific material facts** and present **prima facie evidence** showing that a **counting mistake is probable** and that a recount is **necessary**.
- As a rule, recounts are ordered to be conducted **at the local election venue**; the Buana Lakhu case is notable for the **Supreme Court conducting an EVM recount at its own premises**, under Court supervision and videography, before declaring the corrected result.

Rare but Permissible: Declaring a New Winner

- A court may, in **rare** situations, both **void the earlier result** and **declare another candidate elected** if satisfied on the final valid tally—that the candidate **secured a majority of valid votes**, or would have done so **but for votes obtained through corrupt practices** quantified with reliable evidence.
- In **February 2024**, the Supreme Court similarly corrected the **Chandigarh mayoral election** after finding that the presiding officer had **wrongfully invalidated eight paper ballots**; once treated as valid, those votes flipped the result and the Court **declared the actual winner**.

Current Status and Administrative Follow-Up

- **Mohit Kumar** stands **declared and notified** as sarpanch following the **August 11, 2025** order and has assumed office.
- District authorities have indicated **disciplinary scrutiny** of the polling-station functionary implicated in the vote-swap error.
- The case serves as a contemporary guide to **when recounts are warranted**, the **threshold of pleadings and proof**, and the **outer limits** of judicial relief in election disputes involving EVMs.

17

HARYANA'S NEW 'DICTIONARY MEANING OF FOREST' WILL AFFECT THE ARAVALLIS

ENVIRONMENT

IN FOCUS

On **August 18, 2025**, the **Haryana Government** issued a notification officially defining the “**dictionary meaning of forest**.” The state claims that this definition aligns with **Supreme Court precedents** and “judicial expectations.” However, environmentalists argue that the criteria are too restrictive and may exclude large parts of the **Aravalli hills**, a fragile ecosystem already threatened by **illegal mining, urbanisation, and real estate encroachment**. The move comes in the backdrop of the **Supreme Court's March 2025 directive** requiring all states and Union Territories to clearly define forests and conduct surveys under the **Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 (FCA)**.

Haryana's New Definition of Forest

- **Criteria for Classification:** A patch of land is deemed to be “forest as per dictionary meaning” if it fulfils the following: **Minimum area:** Five hectares in isolation or two hectares if contiguous with government-notified forests. **Canopy density:** At least **0.4 (40%)**.
- **Exclusions from Definition:** **Linear, compact, or agro-forestry plantations, and orchards** situated outside government-notified forests will not be classified as forests. This means that **tree belts along roads, canals, and railway tracks**, which serve ecological purposes, remain excluded.

Supreme Court's March 2025 Directives

Background of the Order

- On **March 4, 2025**, the **Supreme Court** directed all **States and UTs** to define “forest” and initiate surveys.
- These directions were issued during hearings on the challenge to the **Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023** (*Ashok Kumar Sharma, IFS (Retd) & Ors. v. Union of India*).

Key Instructions

- **Expert Committees:** States/UTs to form committees within one month to identify “forest-like areas,” “unclassified forest lands,” and “community forest lands.”
- **GIS-based mapping:** Use of **2011 Lafarge Umiam Mining guidelines**, requiring:
 - District-wise mapping of plots that may qualify as forest.
 - Inclusion of **core, buffer, and eco-sensitive zones** of protected areas
 - Identification of **wildlife corridors** and **lands diverted from forest use**
 - Reference to **TOPO-sheets** and **Forest Survey of India maps**.
- **Accountability:** Chief Secretaries and UT Administrators would be **personally liable** for non-compliance.

Legal Context: FCA, Godavarman Case, and Amendments

- **Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980:** The FCA restricted dereservation or diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes without **prior approval of the Centre**.
- **Godavarman Ruling, 1996:** In *T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad v. Union of India*, Justices **J.S. Verma** and **B.N. Kirpal** held that **forest must be understood in its dictionary meaning**, covering all statutorily recognised forests regardless of **size, ownership, or notification status**.
- This expanded the FCA's scope, bringing even small or unclassified forests under protection.
- **Amendment of 2023:** The **2023 amendment** restricted the FCA to: **Notified forests**, and Lands identified as forests in official government records. The government argued that the wide applicability of the FCA was **restricting development projects**, even minor works like building toilets in tribal schools.
- The amendment was challenged by retired **Indian Forest Service (IFS) officers** and NGOs such as **Vanashakti** and **Goa Foundation**, who argued it **diluted forest protections**.

18

US DESIGNATES BALOCH GROUP AS TERROR ORGANISATION

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

On August 11, 2025, the **U.S. State Department** designated the **Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA)** and its suicide wing, the **Majeed Brigade**, as a **Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO)** under **Section 219 of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act**. This step builds upon the BLA's earlier listing as a **Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT)** in 2019 and aims to curb its access to international financial systems and support networks. The decision came after recent high-profile attacks in Pakistan, including the 2024 Karachi airport suicide blasts, the Gwadar Port Authority attack, and the March 2025 hijacking of the Jaffar Express, which killed 31 people and held over 300 hostages.

The Balochistan Liberation Army and Its Origin

- The **Balochistan Liberation Army** is one of the most prominent separatist groups in Pakistan, advocating for **Baloch independence**.
- The BLA formally announced itself in **2005** with a **rocket attack in Kohlu** during a visit by then-President **Pervez Musharraf**.
- The group was founded by **Khair Baksh Marri**, a tribal leader, and after his death in **2014**, leadership reportedly shifted to his son **Hyrbyair Marri**, currently based in **London**.
- The BLA's activities intensified after the **2006 killing of Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti**, a former Baloch chief minister and governor, and after Pakistan allowed **China to develop Gwadar Port**.

The Majeed Brigade: Suicide Wing of the BLA

- The Majeed Brigade is the specialised suicide attack unit of the BLA, named after two brothers, Majeed Langove and his sibling, who died fighting for the Baloch cause.
- Its first suicide attack occurred on December 30, 2011, killing 14 people.
- The group resurfaced in 2018 with an attack on a bus carrying Chinese engineers in Dalbandin, near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.
- It has since been linked to major attacks:
 - Chinese Consulate in Karachi (2018)
 - Gwadar Pearl Continental Hotel (2019)
 - Pakistan Stock Exchange in Karachi (2020)
- The Brigade was also responsible for the 2024 Karachi and Gwadar attacks and the 2025 Jaffar Express hijacking.

Legal Significance of the FTO Designation

- Under **Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act**, an **FTO designation** criminalises any support to the organisation in the **U.S.**, whether **financial, logistical, or intelligence-related**.
- The group's **assets in the U.S.** can be **frozen**, and **travel restrictions** are imposed on its members.
- The designation also **bars access to the American financial system**, making it difficult for the group to mobilise resources globally.
- U.S. Secretary of State **Marco Rubio** emphasised that such designations are "an effective way to curtail support for terrorist activities."

Historical and Political Background of Balochistan

- **Balochistan** is Pakistan's largest province by **area** (around half the country's landmass) but home to just **3.6% of its population**.
- Rich in **gas, oil, copper, and gold deposits**, it remains underdeveloped and economically marginalised.

- The Baloch struggle dates back to **1947**, when the **Khan of Kalat** declared independence after Partition. Pakistan's army forced accession in **March 1948**, fuelling decades of resentment.
- By the **late 1970s**, many tribal chieftains had been co-opted, but insurgency resurfaced in the **2000s**, largely over issues of **resource exploitation** and **ethnic marginalisation**.
- Sections of Balochistan continue to mark their own "independence day," including the **78th anniversary observed on August 12, 2025**.

Geopolitical and Regional Significance

- The designation coincided with **Pakistan Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir's visit to Washington**, alongside a **U.S.–Pakistan trade deal** that could enable American firms to access **Balochistan's oil reserves**.
- Pakistani officials, such as **Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry**, hailed the move as a **diplomatic victory**, claiming the BLA operated as a **proxy of India**. India, however, has **repeatedly denied** these allegations.
- In **July 2025**, the U.S. also designated the **Resistance Front (TRF)**, a Pakistan-based proxy of **Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)**, which India welcomed as a step in **U.S.–India counter-terrorism cooperation**.

India's Position and Angle

- Pakistan has long accused **India** of **supporting Baloch separatism**, an allegation New Delhi has **categorically rejected**. Analysts note that the timing of the designation may also reflect **U.S. balancing diplomacy**—penalising India over its **trade ties with Russia** while simultaneously supporting Pakistan's counter-terror claims.
- The U.S. action may also indirectly impact **China's strategic interests**, as BLA and Majeed Brigade have consistently targeted projects linked to the **China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**.

19

SC DIRECTS CENTRE TO FRAME SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER RULES

LEGAL UPDATES

IN FOCUS

On August 25, 2025, the **Supreme Court of India** urged the Union Government to frame **guidelines to regulate social media**, noting that **influencers** often **commercialise free speech** in ways that can harm the **dignity of vulnerable groups**. A Bench of **Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi** directed that guidelines be prepared **in consultation with the National Broadcasters and Digital Association (NBDA)**. The case arose from derogatory remarks about persons with **Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA)** by named comedians; the Court ordered **public apologies** on their platforms. With nearly **491 million** Indians active on social media, the Court stressed the need to **balance Article 19(1)(a)** freedoms with **Article 19(2)** limits.

The Immediate Case and Court Directions

Trigger and Parties

- A non-profit supporting persons with **SMA** intervened, alleging derogatory content by **Samay Raina, Vipul Goyal, Balraj Paramjeet Singh Ghai, Sonali Thakkar, and Nishant Jagdish Tanwar**.
- The **Attorney-General R. Venkataramani** stated the Centre would frame guidelines in consultation with stakeholders to protect rights **without impinging dignity, honour, and respect**.

Key Directions

- **Policy Mandate:** Centre to draft **comprehensive guidelines** for social media regulation **with NBDA**.
- **Apology Requirement:** Comedians to issue **public apologies** on **YouTube** and other platforms.
- **Prospective Design:** Guidelines should address evolving technologies, not merely react to a single incident
- **Commercialisation Caveat:** **Commercial speech** cannot be used as a shield to target vulnerable groups.

Constitutional Framework on Free Speech

Guarantees and Limits

- Article 19(1)(a) guarantees freedom of speech and expression.
- Article 19(2) permits reasonable restrictions on eight grounds: sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, contempt of court, defamation, and incitement to offences. Courts have repeatedly held that restrictions cannot exceed these grounds.

Leading Judgments

- **Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015):** Struck down Section 66A, IT Act, 2000; vague categories like “annoyance” or “hatred” cannot criminalise speech. Speech that “offends, shocks, or disturbs” is protected; any curb must satisfy reasonableness and proportionality under Article 19(2).
- **Kaushal Kishore v. State of Uttar Pradesh (2023):** Reaffirmed that Article 19(2) grounds are exhaustive; individuals cannot be taxed or penalised merely for unpopular opinions.
- Recent quashings (e.g., case against Imran Pratapgadhi) underscore that discomfort—even to the judiciary—does not by itself negate protection under Article 19(1)(a).

Current Statutory and Regulatory Landscape

Core Statutes and Rules

- **Information Technology Act, 2000:** Section 79(1): Safe-harbour for intermediaries (e.g., Facebook, X, Instagram) for third-party content, conditioned on neutrality and due diligence.
- **Section 69A:** Government power to block online content for specified grounds (e.g., sovereignty, security, public order).

- **IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021:** Mandate due diligence, notice-and-takedown, user safety, and compliance on issues like privacy, defamation, national security.
- **2023 Amendment** sought takedown of false/misleading content related to the Government of India; enforcement stayed by the Supreme Court over potential misuse concerns.
- **K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017):** Recognised **privacy** as a fundamental right under Article 21. Informs digital governance, including the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDP Act), platform policies, and data-processing norms.

Why the Court's Push Now?

- **Scale and Risk:** India has ~491 million active social media users, intensifying challenges of hate speech, deepfakes, misinformation, cyberbullying, and derogatory content targeting women, children, persons with disabilities, minorities, and senior citizens.
- **Accountability Gaps:** Influencer marketing and paid promotions can mislead users without disclosures, exposing them to financial and consumer harms (e.g., illegitimate apps, betting promotions). Platforms already face due-diligence duties under the IT Rules, 2021, but clarity on commercial speech and influencer responsibilities remains uneven.

Court's Observations on Dignity, Humour, and Harm

- **Balancing Liberty and Dignity:** Humour is valuable, but derogatory jokes can perpetuate stigma and undermine inclusivity—contrary to the constitutional aspiration to mainstream disadvantaged sections. Commercialising free speech does not license targeting vulnerable groups; boundaries between free, commercial, and prohibited speech must be clear.
- **Immediate Remedial Measures:** Ordered unconditional apologies by the named comedians on their own social media channels. Stressed sensitisation, digital ethics, and awareness as complements to enforceable and proportionate rules.

20 THE SAMUDRAYAAN MISSION UPDATES

POLITY

IN FOCUS

The **Samudrayaan Project**, which is part of India's **Deep Ocean Mission (2021–26)**, is the country's first human deep-sea exploration programme that seeks to send three **aquanauts** to a depth of **6,000 metres** by 2027 using the indigenously developed **Matsya-6000** submersible. With this mission, India will join the select group of countries, namely the **United States, Russia, China, Japan, and France**, that already possess human-rated deep-sea exploration capabilities. In preparation for this ambitious undertaking, two Indian aquanauts, **Commander (Retd) Jatinder Pal Singh** and **R. Ramesh**, successfully dived to depths of **5,002 metres** and **4,025 metres** respectively in the Atlantic Ocean aboard the French vessel **Nautilie** earlier in August 2025.

Objectives and Significance of the Samudrayaan Project

- The project is being led by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) through the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) in collaboration with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), specifically its Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) and Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC).
- The project aims to develop indigenous technologies for deep-sea mining, the design of human-occupied submersibles, and the advancement of underwater robotics to ensure India's technological independence in ocean exploration.
- One of the main goals is to survey and explore the deep seabed for polymetallic nodules, which are rich in iron, manganese, cobalt, nickel, and rare earth elements that are essential for energy transition and advanced manufacturing.
- The mission also seeks to provide climate change advisory services by developing observation and modeling capabilities that can project seasonal to decadal climate variables for better planning of coastal and marine economies.
- The project is expected to build capacity in deep-sea biodiversity research, enabling India to discover, conserve, and sustainably utilise marine flora and fauna, including micro-organisms with potential biotechnological applications.
- The mission, with an overall budget of ₹4,077 crore spread across five years, contributes to India's Blue Economy policy by linking ocean resources to long-term economic growth, energy security, and national strategic interests.

Matsya-6000: India's First Human Submersible

- The **Matsya-6000** is a specially designed human-occupied submersible, shaped like a large fish, which contains a **spherical crew module** to house the aquanauts during their mission.
- The personnel sphere has a **diameter of 2.26 metres** and is constructed from a high-strength **titanium alloy (Ti-6Al-4V ELI grade)** with a wall thickness of **80 mm**, allowing it to withstand extreme external pressures of up to **600 bar at depths of 6,000 metres** under sea conditions as low as **-3 °C**.
- The submersible is capable of carrying a **three-member crew** for **12 hours of active mission time** and has been designed with emergency systems that can sustain human life for **up to 96 hours** if required.
- It is equipped with **life-support systems** such as oxygen replenishment, carbon dioxide scrubbers, and packed **re-breather systems** that recycle exhaled air, ensuring safe conditions in the confined underwater environment.
- The submersible also contains **acoustic communication systems**, **Li-Po batteries for power supply**, **drop-weight escape mechanisms** to ensure safe ascent during failures, and **bio-vests** to monitor aquanauts' health during the mission.

21

INDIA RELEASES 3 JOINT DOCTRINES FOR ARMED FORCES

POLITY

IN FOCUS

On August 27, 2025, General Anil Chauhan, the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), released India's first-ever Joint Doctrine on Special Forces Operations (JDSF) along with the Joint Doctrine for Airborne & Heliborne Operations during the RAN SAMWAD Tri-Service Seminar at the Army War College, Dr Ambedkar Nagar, Madhya Pradesh. These doctrines have been formulated by the Doctrine Directorate of the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS) with active participation from the Army, Navy, and Air Force. The JDSF provides guiding principles, operational concepts, and frameworks for interoperability, aiming to enhance synergy among the Para Special Forces (Army), MARCOS (Navy), and Garud Commando Force (Air Force) in both conventional and unconventional domains.

Importance of Special Forces in National Security

- The Special Forces (SFs) have become integral to achieving **national security objectives**, given their role in conventional, sub-conventional, and emerging hybrid warfare environments.
- Due to their agility, strategic reach, and precision capabilities, SFs are uniquely suited to generate disproportionate operational impact through deep insertion, unconventional operations, and precision strikes.
- They are trained to operate in **hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments** for high-risk missions where conventional forces may not be suitable.

Key Roles and Missions under the Joint Doctrine

- The doctrine outlines SF tasks such as **capturing enemy commanders, rescuing prisoners of war and hostages**, and conducting **air ambushes near enemy airfields**.
- They are tasked with **disrupting enemy national command and control systems, striking high-value targets** to cripple economies, and **degrading enemy air defence and logistics installations**.
- SFs will conduct **Combat Beach Reconnaissance (CBR)** prior to amphibious landings and identify **drop zones or landing sites** before heliborne or airborne operations.
- They are expected to **gather meteorological and hydrographic data** for planning strikes and maritime operations.
- SF troops are responsible for **post-strike damage assessment**, ensuring accurate evaluation of inflicted damage and identifying the need for repeated targeting.
- In **Low Intensity Conflict Operations (LICO)**, such as insurgencies or counter-terrorism operations, SFs can conduct **prolonged sabotage actions** against enemy supply chains and communications.
- In **Unconventional Warfare**, their cultural and linguistic adaptability allows them to undertake **covert operations**, connect with **indigenous forces**, and gather local intelligence.

Doctrinal Objectives and Strategic Vision

- The JDSF articulates a **unified philosophy** that integrates SF operations across **land, maritime, and air domains**.
- It establishes **strategic and tactical objectives**, including exposing enemy deception plans, isolating commanders from their troops, and degrading operational command-and-control frameworks.
- The doctrine is designed to remain a **living document**, subject to **regular review** in line with evolving threats, **technological advancements**, and **operational experiences**.
- The emphasis is on **joint planning, execution, and capacity building**, ensuring that SFs remain future-ready in the face of **hybrid threats and expanding battlespaces**.

22 UN DECLARES FAMINE IN GAZA

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

On **August 22, 2025**, the **United Nations** officially declared a **famine in Gaza**, marking the **first-ever famine in West Asia**. The announcement was made by the **Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Initiative (IPC)**, a coalition mandated to monitor and classify global hunger crises. According to IPC estimates, **over 500,000 people** in Gaza Governorate, including **Gaza City**, are already facing “catastrophic” hunger (IPC Phase 5), and the number is projected to rise to **641,000 people**—nearly **one-third of Gaza’s population**—by the end of September 2025. **UN aid chief Tom Fletcher** described the crisis as “**entirely preventable**”, blaming the situation on the **systematic obstruction of humanitarian aid by Israel**, while Israel’s Foreign Ministry rejected the famine declaration, calling it based on “**Hamas lies** laundered through organisations with vested interests.”

Defining and Declaring Famine

- **IPC Criteria for Famine (Phase 5):** A famine is declared when three thresholds are simultaneously met: At least **20% of households** face extreme food shortages and starvation; At least **30% of children under five** suffer from **acute malnutrition**; At least **two persons per 10,000** die each day from **starvation or hunger-related diseases**.
- **Application to Gaza:** The IPC confirmed that these thresholds were met in **Gaza Governorate** as of **August 15, 2025**. It further warned that famine conditions are expected to **expand to Deir el-Balah and Khan Yunis governorates** by the end of September, thereby covering **two-thirds of the Gaza Strip**.

Causes of the Famine

Conflict and Blockade

- The famine follows **22 months of relentless conflict** since the **Hamas attack on Israel in October 2023**, which killed **1,219 people** in Israel. Israel’s military response has since killed **over 62,192 Palestinians**, most of them civilians, according to Gaza’s health ministry figures deemed credible by the UN.
- In **March 2025**, Israel **completely banned humanitarian aid supplies** from entering Gaza, before allowing very limited quantities in late May. This blockade created severe shortages of **food, medicine, and fuel**.

Collapse of Food and Health Systems

- The IPC noted that **98% of Gaza’s cropland** has been destroyed or rendered inaccessible, **livestock herds have been decimated**, and **fishing has been banned**, collapsing Gaza’s local food system.
- The **healthcare system** has deteriorated drastically, leaving hospitals overwhelmed, while access to **drinking water, hygiene, and sanitation** has been reduced to critical levels.

Gaza Strip: Geographic and Strategic Context

- The **Gaza Strip** is a **41 km-long and 10 km-wide coastal enclave** in West Asia, bordered by **Israel (north and east)**, **Egypt (southwest)**, and the **Mediterranean Sea (west)**.
- Despite its small size, it is one of the most **densely populated territories in the world**, and has long been central to the **Israeli-Palestinian conflict**.
- The current famine highlights the **humanitarian fragility** of the enclave, which remains under heavy blockade, conflict-driven destruction, and political contestation.

23

INDIA TO SUPPLY FORTIFIED RICE FOR
GLOBAL HUNGER RELIEF

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

On 25 August 2025, India and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) signed a **Letter of Intent (LoI)** enabling the supply of **up to 200,000 metric tonnes of fortified rice** from **Food Corporation of India (FCI)** warehouses over **five years** to support **humanitarian food and nutrition needs** in crisis-affected regions worldwide. The Government of India affirmed that it will bear the **entire cost of fortification**, estimated at **₹2,700 crore per annum**, while leveraging India's status as an **agricultural-surplus nation** to contribute to **global food security** under the principle of "**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**."

What the India-WFP Pact Delivers

Senior officials underscored the partnership's strategic value: **Sanjeev Chopra** (Secretary, **DFPD**) reiterated India's humanitarian commitment; **Carl Skau** (Deputy Executive Director, **WFP**) highlighted the reliability of India-sourced supplies amid constrained aid budgets; and stakeholders including **Ashutosh Agnihotri** (CMD, **FCI**), **Samir Wanmali** (Regional Director, **WFP APARO**), and **Elisabeth Faure** (Country Director, **WFP India**) joined deliberations on supply-chain, fortification, and smart warehousing collaboration.

Scope and Sourcing

- The LoI operationalises **humanitarian sourcing of fortified rice** from **FCI depots**, providing WFP a **dependable pipeline** for rapid emergency response and nutrition-sensitive food assistance in multiple geographies.
- The arrangement **builds on discussions** at the **February 2025 WFP Executive Board side event in Rome**, where India and WFP mapped modalities for long-term cooperation, including aligned quality standards, traceability, and logistics.

Financing and Execution

- The **Centre funds fortification** inputs (premix, blending, quality assurance) estimated at **₹2,700 crore annually**, ensuring that nutrition standards are maintained **without increasing the humanitarian cost-to-serve** for crisis operations.
- Execution over the **five-year horizon** allows **predictable planning** for WFP operations and **steady off-take** from Indian public stocks, which supports both **domestic stock rotation** and **global humanitarian needs**.

How the Pact Aligns with the Four Dimensions of Food Security (as depicted)

- **Food Availability:** Large-volume **availability** is enhanced by drawing on India's **public grain stocks** and **surplus rice production**, ensuring that **adequate supplies** can be mobilised swiftly for international emergencies.
- **Access to Food:** **Access** improves as WFP channels the fortified rice through **humanitarian corridors** and national safety nets, reducing the **economic and physical barriers** that crisis-hit households face in obtaining food.
- **Food Utilisation:** **Utilisation** quality rises because **fortification** addresses **micronutrient deficiencies** (e.g., iron, folic acid, vitamin B-12), thereby improving **nutrient intake and absorption** among vulnerable groups such as **children and pregnant women**.
- **Stability:** **Stability** strengthens through a **multi-year LoI**, which smooths supply fluctuations, supports **buffer planning** for shocks, and integrates with WFP's **pre-positioning** and **mobile storage** solutions for last-mile delivery during crises.
- **Key idea:** True food security requires all **four dimensions—availability, access, utilisation, and stability—to be satisfied simultaneously**; this partnership intentionally advances each pillar.

India's Broader Role in Global Food Security**Production, Trade, and South-South Cooperation**

- India is a **food-surplus** economy and a **major producer** (largest in **milk, pulses, spices**; second-largest in foodgrains, fruits, vegetables, cotton, sugar, tea, aquaculture shrimp), enabling exports that support nutrition and income globally.
- Through **ICAR** and allied institutions, India shares **high-yield seeds, agri-tech, and sustainable practices** with partners in **Asia and Africa**, deepening **South-South Cooperation**.

Domestic Architecture with Global Relevance

- The **National Food Security Act (2013)** assures rights-based access, covering up to **75% rural** and **50% urban** populations; currently **~80 crore beneficiaries** receive **highly subsidised grains**.
- Reforms such as **digitised ration cards** and **One Nation, One Ration Card (ONORC)** enable **nationwide portability**, offering a replicable template for migrant-sensitive safety nets.
- Nutrition-sensitive programmes—**POSHAN Abhiyaan, fortified staples**, and diversification of the PDS—address hidden hunger, while promotion of millets advances climate-resilient diets.

Food Security in India: Progress and Pain Points

- **Decreasing per-capita food availability** (from **510.1 g/day** in 1991 to **507.9 g/day** in 2021) and **high food waste** (second globally) necessitate cold-chain expansion, modern storage, and efficient logistics to curb **post-harvest losses**.
- **Climate vulnerability** (heat, erratic rainfall, extremes) calls for scaling **NICRA, drip irrigation, crop diversification, and soil-health interventions** to stabilise yields
- **Undernutrition and anaemia** (about **12% undernourished; 35.5% stunting** in under-5s; **67% children** and **57% women** anaemic) require **fortified foods, supplementation, and behaviour change campaigns**.
- **PDS leakage** (estimated **28%**) and **ghost beneficiaries** (with **4.7 crore** cards cancelled in 2013–2021) justify **blockchain/IoT tracking, biometric/QR checks, and real-time dashboards** for procurement-to-distribution integrity.

Food Security in India: Progress and Pain Points

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The World Food Programme: Mandate and Relevance

- **Established in 1961** (UNGA and **FAO**), headquartered in **Rome**, the **WFP** is the UN's lead agency for **hunger eradication**, recognised with the **2020 Nobel Peace Prize**.
- WFP invests in **local nutritious solutions, fortification, social protection, and climate-resilient livelihoods**, while building **institutional capacity** and addressing **gender inequalities** that affect access to food.
- The multi-year India-WFP fortified-rice pipeline **adds scale, predictability, and nutrition quality** to emergency responses at a time of **rising global food insecurity and tight donor funding**.

24

NEPAL ENTERS THE INTERNATIONAL
BIG CAT ALLIANCE

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

Nepal officially joined the **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)** by signing the Framework Agreement, becoming part of an **India-led global coalition** to conserve seven species of big cats. With **snow leopard, tiger, and common leopard** inhabiting its landscapes, Nepal's participation strengthens **transboundary collaboration** in conservation. The step also highlights Nepal's success in **almost tripling its tiger population** from **121 in 2009** to **355 in 2022**, a remarkable conservation achievement that aligns with global biodiversity goals.

International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)

Establishment and Launch

- The idea of IBCA was **first proposed in 2019** by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** and was officially launched on **9 April 2023** in **Mysuru, Karnataka**, coinciding with the **50th anniversary of Project Tiger**.
- The alliance is **modelled on the International Solar Alliance (ISA)**, with a governance framework including an **Assembly of Members** (decision-making body), a **Standing Committee** (policy execution), and a **Secretariat** based in New Delhi, India.

Membership

- The IBCA is a **multi-country, multi-agency coalition** with participation from **over 90 range and non-range countries**.
- **Founding members** include **India, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ecuador, Kenya, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru, Suriname, and Uganda**.
- The Indian Union Cabinet allocated a **budgetary support of ₹150 crore for 2023-28** to operationalise the alliance.

Significance of Nepal's Joining

Ecological Contribution

- Nepal is home to **snow leopards, tigers, and common leopards**, making its membership crucial to **regional biodiversity corridors** that cut across the Himalayas and the Indo-Gangetic plains.
- Its success in **tiger conservation**—tripling numbers within 13 years—is globally recognised as a **model for community-driven conservation**.

India's Role in Big Cat Conservation

Domestic Leadership

- India is home to **five of the seven IBCA species**: **Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, and Cheetah** (reintroduced in 2022). Only **jaguar and puma** are absent from India's landscape.
- India has developed **exemplary conservation models** like **Project Tiger (1973)** and the **Asiatic Lion conservation in Gir**, which are guiding frameworks for IBCA.

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 150 multiple-choice questions for a total of 150 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.
14. Detach and keep the carbon-copy OMR response sheet that comes with the question booklet; this is your only answer sheet.
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SECTION-A: ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Passage:- 1 How our social world shapes our brains is the most important discovery in the science of human development. This is best illustrated by two classic bodies of research. The first was a series of experiments conducted in newborn animals, usually mice, in which one eye was sewn shut, depriving the brain of visual stimuli from the external world from that one eye during a critical period of brain development. When the eyelid was later reopened, nerve recordings in response to visual stimuli showed that far fewer neurons activated in the deprived eye, while parts of the brain's visual cortex representing the open eye grew substantially. These experiments vividly demonstrated that visual experience relies not just on the anatomy of the eye (which was normal in both eyes) but stimulation of the brain circuits responsible for interpreting visual stimuli. Without these stimuli, the neural pathways, while physically intact, were functionally dead. This is the essence of what neuroscientists refer to as the plasticity of the brain; quite simply, the brain's structure and functions are shaped by experience.

But does this phenomenon extend to humans and, in particular, to adults whose brains were, for so long, considered to be static or, worse, to be condemned to suffer an inexorable decline with age? The iconic London taxi-driver study was conducted in the early 2000s, at which time the drivers were required to memorise the city's intricate network of 25,000+ streets and use this mental map to navigate their passengers on unpredictably different journeys several times a day. Using brain imaging, scientists showed that this intensive spatial memory work led to local enlargement of the posterior hippocampus of the brain, with changes strongly correlating to time spent navigating without external aids; in comparison, drivers who followed the same driving route repeatedly, such as bus drivers, showed no changes. This study not only demonstrated that repeated activation of specific regions of the brain by challenging cognitive tasks led to structural changes in the brain in humans, but that adult brains also showed neural plasticity. Of course, this also explains why speech therapy can help a person regain speech after a stroke even in late life. Thus, science shows unequivocally that experience is essential for the brain to evolve its capabilities in diverse respects, from sensory perception and motor coordination to remembering things and making complex decisions. It also showed that failure to use these capabilities regularly can lead to the shutting down of entire brain regions. So, what's my point? That we should pause and ponder on how the takeover of our lives by digital applications, which have totally disrupted the way our brains interact with the environment, might shape our brains and, ultimately, our capabilities.

[<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/remember-way-restaurant-transformative-technology-dumb-species-10209165/>]

Q1. Which option best captures the passage's central claim and its concluding implication?

- A. The brain's structure and functions are shaped by experience throughout life; underuse can cause functional loss; therefore, we should critically reflect on how pervasive digital applications may be reshaping our cognitive capacities.
- B. Plasticity is well-established only in newborn animals; adult human brains are mostly fixed, so concerns about digital applications' cognitive effects are overstated.
- C. Plasticity is a phenomenon restricted to vision; domains like memory, decision-making, and speech therapy outcomes fall outside its scope.
- D. Digital technologies are inherently harmful and should be abandoned to preserve the brain's anatomy.

Q2. In the context of the passage, which pair best matches a close synonym and a most appropriate antonym for "plasticity"?

- A. Synonym: elasticity; Antonym: neurogenesis.
- B. Synonym: flexibility limited to childhood; Antonym: maturation.
- C. Synonym: malleability/adaptiveness of neural circuits; Antonym: rigidity/fixity of structure and function.
- D. Synonym: transparency; Antonym: opacity.

Q3. What is the most reasonable implication of the statement that "failure to use these capabilities regularly can lead to the shutting down of entire brain regions"?

- A. Those regions literally die irreversibly and can never recover at any age, regardless of therapy.
- B. Digital applications will inevitably cause permanent brain damage in all users.
- C. Any short-term reduction in practice immediately erases previously acquired skills.
- D. Sustained underuse may produce functional atrophy despite intact anatomy, supporting a “use-it-or-lose-it” principle.

Q4. In “Of course, this also explains why speech therapy can help a person regain speech after a stroke even in late life,” what does the pronoun “this” most directly refer to?

- A. The bus drivers’ repetitive, unchanging routes.
- B. Demonstrated adult neural plasticity—i.e., structural change from repeated activation by challenging tasks.
- C. The doctrine that brains necessarily decline with age.
- D. The large number of London streets that drivers memorised.

Q5. Which scenario most closely mirrors both (i) the deprivation effect in the animal studies and (ii) the experience-driven enlargement seen in the taxi drivers?

- A. A student abandons mental arithmetic because of calculators and later shows declining calculation fluency, whereas a peer trains intensively on abacus methods and exhibits measurable parietal strengthening proportional to hours practiced.
- B. A person reads more novels but paradoxically becomes worse at vocabulary, while a non-reader somehow improves vocabulary without study.

- C. A runner rests for two days and suddenly runs faster than a peer who trains consistently.
- D. A chef who avoids using knives starts cooking safer meals than one who practices knife skills daily.

Q6. Which option best represents the author’s stance in the final paragraph regarding digital applications?

- A. An alarmist demand to abandon digital tools to protect the brain.
- B. An uncritical celebration of digital technologies as inevitable progress.
- C. A strictly neutral summary lacking any evaluative suggestion.
- D. A cautionary, reflective prompt to consider how pervasive apps might reshape cognition via plasticity and to exercise mindful agency.

Q7. Which statement accurately reflects the study’s reported findings?

- A. Enlargement was observed in the posterior hippocampus, correlating with time spent navigating without aids; routine-route drivers (e.g., bus drivers) showed no such changes.
- B. The anterior hippocampus shrank, and bus drivers exhibited the largest growth.
- C. Changes were unrelated to navigation time; all driver groups showed equal alterations.
- D. The study found new neurons growing in the spinal cord, unrelated to navigation.

Passage:- 2 The Supreme Court of India’s proceedings on free-roaming dogs represent an earnest, even if inadequate, attempt to reconcile competing claims of compassion and safety. On August 11, 2025, the Court had directed the Municipal Corporation of Delhi to round up strays and confine them in shelters. Eleven days later, it changed course, permitting release after vaccination and deworming, and that aggressive or rabid animals be retained. India bears one of the world’s heaviest burdens of rabies and anthropological accounts are clear that this threat shapes daily life, limiting children’s movements and forcing families into repeated medical expenses. Rabies also disproportionately kills those least able to navigate the health system. While the Animal Birth Control Rules were updated in 2023, experience shows that without 70% sterilisation coverage, they are ineffectual. The August 11 order was significant because it acknowledged that the present framework, however well intentioned, is inadequate for India’s dense settlements. Objections that shelters will be overcrowded and disease-ridden and that permanent impoundment will precipitate an ecological imbalance confront the same issues that undermine the Rules.

Properly resourced and regulated shelters can be managed with veterinary standards, space norms and transparent oversight. India already maintains similar institutions for cattle on a large scale. But if canine facilities are in squalor — which may have motivated the Court to change course — it will be due to the same administrative neglect and policy fragmentation between States that have kept sterilisation coverage from crossing 70% in any major city, and which have been keeping alive fears of other species migrating into the ecological niches dogs once occupied.

Street dogs are woven into India's urban fabric, even offering companionship to the homeless. Such perspectives deserve a place in cultural discourse but cannot override the human right to access public spaces without fear of injury. Compassion is not annulled if dogs are removed from public roads; they must still be compassionately rehomed, sheltered and, when incurably aggressive or ill, euthanised humanely. A modern statute must replace the outdated Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960. It should classify dogs as adoptable, shelter-bound or unfit and mandate municipal shelters with minimum standards. Crucially, governments should count stray dogs across States and determine the true cost of maintaining shelters rather than chronically underestimating it. This system should also have the support of the national veterinary cadre, better waste management and penalties for abandoning pets. Without these measures, urban India will keep trading visible menace for invisible neglect.

[<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/practising-compassion-on-the-stray-dogs-issue-court-order/article69971796.ece>]

Q8. Which option best captures the passage's central claim and policy direction?

- A. Urban compassion requires prioritising animal rights over human safety, with unconditional release of strays because shelters inevitably fail in India's conditions.
- B. The present Animal Birth Control framework is sufficient; the only problem is public sentiment, so courts should avoid intervening and let municipalities continue as before.
- C. The Court's oscillation spotlights a larger need for a modern statute and system—classifying dogs, building regulated shelters, counting strays, costing upkeep, and aligning compassion with the human right to safe public space—or else India will merely swap street danger for institutional neglect.
- D. Ecological balance makes shelters unworkable; therefore, wide-scale permanent impoundment must be legally prohibited and strays left to self-regulate.

Q9. In the sentence "Compassion is not annulled if dogs are removed from public roads...", which pair gives the closest synonym and a most appropriate antonym in context?

- A. Synonym: nullified/invalidated; Antonym: affirmed/upheld.
- B. Synonym: softened; Antonym: hardened.
- C. Synonym: celebrated; Antonym: mourned.
- D. Synonym: delayed; Antonym: expedited.

Q10. Which statement accurately reflects details from the passage?

- A. On August 22, 2025, the Court mandated permanent impoundment without exceptions and forbade any release.
- B. The August 11, 2025 order directed confinement in shelters, and eleven days later the Court allowed release after vaccination and deworming, keeping aggressive or rabid dogs back.

C. India bears a relatively low burden of rabies and most families rarely incur medical costs due to it.

D. The Animal Birth Control Rules were updated in 2024 and have achieved sterilisation coverage above 70% in major cities.

Q11. In "But if canine facilities are in squalor — which may have motivated the Court to change course — it will be due to the same administrative neglect...", the pronoun "which" most directly refers to:

- A. Policy fragmentation alone.
- B. Administrative neglect alone.
- C. The squalid condition of canine facilities (the "squalor").
- D. Cattle shelters run on a large scale.

Q12. Which city-policy scenario most closely mirrors the author's proposed approach to free-roaming dogs?

- A. A city criminalises feeding strays and funds only sporadic ad-hoc rescues, without standardised facilities or costing.
- B. A municipality relies entirely on NGOs, with no legal classifications, no audits, and no penalties for abandonment.
- C. A court orders mass release after minimal vaccination, while sterilisation targets remain unmeasured and unfunded.
- D. A statute replaces an outdated law; dogs are classified as adoptable/shelter-bound/unfit; minimum-standard municipal shelters are mandated and costed; a national veterinary cadre, better waste management, and penalties for abandonment support the system.

Q13. Which option best captures the author's stance toward the Court's actions and the way forward?

- A. Cultural affection for street dogs is sentimental and should be excluded from policy discourse.

- B. The Court's reversal proves strays are harmless; therefore, status quo ABC implementation is adequate.
 C. The Court's efforts are earnest yet inadequate; human safety in public spaces must be secured and compassion institutionalised via a modern statute, regulated shelters, and systemic supports.
 D. Large-scale euthanasia is the only pragmatic solution for dense settlements.

Q14. What does the line "Without these measures, urban India will keep trading visible menace for invisible neglect" most reasonably imply?

- A. Moving dogs off streets into under-resourced, opaque institutions reduces public fear while perpetuating hidden cruelty, disease, and cost—i.e., danger is displaced, not solved.
 B. Removing dogs from streets automatically eliminates rabies transmission and household medical burdens.
 C. "Invisible neglect" shows shelters are unnecessary; communities should simply coexist with strays.
 D. The phrase relates solely to other species filling ecological niches, not to shelter conditions.

Passage:- 3 "They planted themselves on the landing stage and upon being approached by the police explained they hoped to be able to work their way home on a boat to India from Liverpool," wrote GW Coster, a clerk at the West Derby Union, in a letter to the local Board of Guardians. Since the men, all from Punjab, were destitute, the Board of Guardians was obliged under local law to care for them until they found employment or secured funds to sustain themselves. Another option for the board was to sponsor their repatriation to India. While providing food and accommodation, the board reached out to the High Commissioner for India for guidance. Since the men were eager to return home, the High Commissioner recommended their repatriation and agreed to share the cost of the voyage with the Guardians. However, this incident raised alarm among officials managing Indian affairs in London. "The High Commissioner desires to bring this case to notice as he is anxious not to be faced with a succession of cases of the kind, and that everything possible may, therefore, be done to prevent their recurrence," wrote the Assistant Secretary to the High Commissioner in a letter to the Government of India's Foreign and Political Department. Years earlier, colonial authorities in India had warned subjects against migrating to countries like Cuba in search of manual labour, but such advice was often ignored. From the 1880s, the British government frequently received repatriation requests from Indians stranded in Cuba, as well as claims from Indian families for the assets of relatives who had died on the island. Cuba also drew the Empire's attention due to complaints from the United States and Canada that Indian subjects were using it as a transit point to enter those countries illegally. In addition, reports from the 1910s suggested Cuba was becoming a hub for Indian revolutionaries. Informal Indian migration to Cuba can be traced to the late 19th century. Inspired by the relative success of the Indian indenture system in the West Indies, Spanish plantation owners in Cuba petitioned colonial authorities to allow former indentured labourers from places like Trinidad and Jamaica to move to the island. With pressure building in Cuba to abolish slavery, Indian labour was seen as a viable alternative. In 1881, a proposal to bring Indian workers from the Caribbean was submitted to the colonial authorities in London. But the government of India's Home Department strongly opposed the idea.

[<https://scroll.in/magazine/1085005/why-indians-were-discouraged-from-migrating-to-cuba-in-the-early-20th-century>]

- Q15. Which option best captures the passage's overarching claim and historical through-line?
 A. Humanitarian policy in Britain unambiguously favoured permanent settlement of destitute Indians in Liverpool to strengthen imperial labour markets.
 B. Cuba's labour needs were consistently prioritised by London, culminating in the unrestricted movement of Indian workers from the Caribbean to Cuban plantations.
 C. A Liverpool episode of stranded Punjabis exposes wider imperial anxieties about creating a precedent for

repatriation, set against a longer history of Indian migration to Cuba, illicit transit to North America, revolutionary suspicion, and, ultimately, official resistance to recruiting Indian labour for Cuban estates.
 D. Colonial India enthusiastically promoted free movement to Cuba and only later reversed course due to pressure from Spanish plantation owners.

Q16. In the line "Since the men, all from Punjab, were destitute...", which pair gives the closest synonym and a most appropriate antonym in context?

- A. Synonym: impoverished/penniless; Antonym: solvent/self-sufficient.
 B. Synonym: itinerant/nomadic; Antonym: sedentary/settled.
 C. Synonym: disloyal/treacherous; Antonym: faithful/loyal.
 D. Synonym: transient/temporary; Antonym: permanent/enduring.

Q17. Which statement accurately reflects what the authorities did and advised?

- A. The Board refused to contact the High Commissioner and decided to deport the men without consultation or cost-sharing.
 B. The Board provided food and accommodation and sought guidance; the High Commissioner, noting the men wished to return, recommended repatriation and agreed to share the voyage cost.
 C. The High Commissioner insisted the men remain in Britain and that the Guardians fund permanent housing.
 D. The Board's only legal option was to sponsor repatriation; local care was unlawful without a court order.

Q18. In the sentence quoting the Assistant Secretary –“...not to be faced with a succession of cases of the kind, and that everything possible may...be done to prevent their recurrence”—what does “their recurrence” refer to?

- A. Police approaches to people on landing stages in general.
 B. Further letters being written by clerks to local Boards of Guardians.
 C. Repeat occurrences of similar cases of destitute Indian subjects seeking assistance/repatriation.
 D. Ongoing complaints from the United States and Canada about illegal transit via Cuba.

Q19. Which scenario most closely mirrors the institutional dynamic described regarding Cuban plantation labour and the official response?

- A. A city faces teacher shortages; parents request hiring volunteers; the education ministry immediately authorises unlimited foreign volunteers without scrutiny.

B. A shipping firm seeks cheaper crews; a port authority proposes military conscription; the defence ministry agrees and drafts civilians.

C. A tourist island wants more guides; a private consortium petitions the foreign office to relocate seasonal workers; the home ministry mandates permanent migration pathways.

D. Plantation owners, citing abolition-era pressure, petition imperial authorities to import experienced workers from neighbouring colonies; however, the origin country's central department strongly opposes exposing its subjects to this recruitment.

Q20. Which option best reflects the author's stance and narrative method?

A. An advocacy tract urging immediate mass migration of Indian workers to Cuba to stabilise sugar output.

B. A polemical denunciation of British welfare obligations in Liverpool as a misuse of public funds.

C. A historically grounded, document-driven account that juxtaposes a Liverpool welfare case with broader imperial concerns—repatriation burdens, illegal transit, revolutionary activity—and ends by noting formal opposition to Cuban recruitment.

D. A celebratory story of successful Indian settlement in Britain and Cuba without administrative friction.

Q21. What is the most reasonable inference from the Assistant Secretary's remark that everything possible should be done to prevent a “succession of cases” and “their recurrence”?

A. Officials feared that approving cost-shared repatriation would set an administrative precedent prompting more stranded Indians to seek similar relief, expanding fiscal/coordination burdens.

B. Officials intended to criminalise destitution among migrants and bar all future assistance requests.

C. Officials saw the case as purely local and irrelevant to wider imperial policy.

D. Officials believed Liverpool police had mishandled the approach and wanted disciplinary action.

Passage:- 4 Malaysia has one of the greatest levels of biodiversity of any country on Earth – and it's among just 17 to be listed as a megadiverse country. More than 50% of its land surface area is forested, and around 14% of the country is protected as a national park or nature reserve.

All of which makes Malaysia a spectacular destination for wildlife watching. Around 750 species of bird have been recorded, including no fewer than 10 species of hornbill – among these the iconic rhinoceros hornbill – along with brightly coloured trogons and pittas, white-bellied sea eagles and the great slaty woodpecker, one of the largest woodpecker species in the world

Malaysia's lush tropical rainforests are home to orangutans, gibbons, proboscis monkeys, tapirs and Borneo pygmy elephants – along with more than 300 other species of mammal and a staggering number of amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates. They're also the last refuge of the majestic but critically endangered Malayan tiger, which appears on Malaysia's coat of arms. Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre, just half an hour outside Sandakan, is the world's largest orangutan sanctuary, caring for injured orangutans and pairing orphaned young with older individuals. This is a wonderful place to see these highly intelligent, beautiful, but now critically endangered primates in a semi-wild environment, before they are reintroduced into their natural environment.

However, nothing matches seeing these and other species in the wild, and signing up for a wildlife tour is really the way to go here. Join a trekking tour in the incredible Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary for one of the best chances of seeing orangutans in the wild. The enormous rainforests of Royal Belum state park are the best place in Malaysia to see hornbills – although not far behind is the manmade lake of Tasik Kenyir. Head to Fraser's Hill or the Cameron Highlands to see mountain peacock-pheasant.

If you're up for a spot of hiking, the scope for jungle-trekking in Malaysia's spectacularly wild and unspoilt national parks is simply off the charts. Take Taman Negara national park, for example – a vast, sprawling area of rainforest, forming Malaysia's largest national park. The lush rainforest of Taman Negara is positively ancient – it's estimated to be at least 130 million years old – and in terms of hiking, the park offers everything from breathtaking canopy walkways to a four-day trek across the spine of Mount Tahan, the highest mountain in Peninsular Malaysia. Join a full day's guided walk or, for a more immersive experience, take a guided two-day hike on the Keniam Trail, which includes an overnight stay in a cave.

[<https://www.theguardian.com/discover-the-magic-of-malaysia/2025/may/16/malaysia-outdoor-adventures-jungle-treks-orangutans>]

Q22. Which option best captures the passage's overarching message and organising logic?

- A. Malaysia's wildlife is best appreciated in zoos and rehabilitation centres, which the author argues are superior to field experiences for ethical reasons.
- B. Because Malaysia's biodiversity is overrated and fragmented, the author recommends skipping the country for birding and choosing strictly marine destinations instead.
- C. Malaysia's status as a megadiverse, heavily forested nation underpins an exceptional range of bird and mammal encounters, with the author outlining marquee sites and urging responsibly guided, in-the-wild experiences that surpass sanctuaries in immediacy.
- D. Malaysia's protected-area system has eliminated the need for guided tourism, and independent travel guarantees better sightings than structured tours.

Q23. In the line "They're also the last refuge of the majestic but critically endangered Malayan tiger...", which pair gives the closest synonym and a most appropriate antonym in context?

- A. Synonym: vantage; Antonym: overlook
- B. Synonym: corridor; Antonym: bottleneck.
- C. Synonym: frontier; Antonym: hinterland.

D. Synonym: sanctuary/safe haven; Antonym: exposure/peril.

Q24. Which statement accurately reflects the passage's stated facts?

- A. Sepilok is a small private rescue, not the world's largest orangutan sanctuary, and it releases animals only after mountain training in Cameron Highlands.
- B. Roughly 750 bird species are recorded in Malaysia, including ~10 hornbill species; Royal Belum is the country's top site for hornbills, with Tasik Kenyir close behind.
- C. Taman Negara's rainforest dates to about 13 million years, and Mount Tahan is Borneo's highest peak.
- D. Less than 25% of Malaysia remains forested, though 40% is protected as parks and reserves.

Q25. In "However, nothing matches seeing these and other species in the wild...", to what does "these" most directly refer?

- A. Orangutans discussed in the preceding sentences about Sepilok.
- B. Hornbills mentioned in the birding paragraph.
- C. Borneo pygmy elephants and tapirs listed among mammals.

D. The great slaty woodpecker, singled out as a large woodpecker

Q26. Which scenario most closely mirrors the author's reasoning that sanctuaries can be excellent, yet field sightings with guided tours are unmatched?

A. A marine lab's aquarium tanks provide better coral observations than any reef dive, so the writer advises skipping ocean dives entirely.

B. A botanical garden is adequate for studying rainforest ecology, and therefore jungle treks are unnecessary for serious naturalists.

C. A raptor rehabilitation centre offers close views and education, but guided ridge-top watches during migration deliver the most authentic, varied encounters, so the author recommends both with emphasis on the latter.

D. Zoos guarantee all target species and thus surpass the unpredictability of wild habitats, which the author considers inefficient.

Q27. Which option best captures the author's stance and method? A. Enthusiastic yet grounded natural-history guidance that weaves macro-context (megadiversity, forest cover, protected areas) with site-specific advice (Kinabatangan, Royal Belum, Taman Negara), privileging ethical, guided wild encounters over captive settings. B. A conservation polemic arguing tourism should be banned in Taman Negara to protect ancient forests from hikers.

C. A logistics manual focused on transport schedules between Sandakan and Fraser's Hill, with little ecological context.

D. A sceptical travelogue claiming hornbill sightings are unlikely anywhere except zoos.

Q28. What is the most reasonable inference from the line that Taman Negara's rainforest is "at least 130 million years old" and offers everything from canopy walkways to a four-day Mount Tahan trek?

A. The park's trail network is designed to tier experiences—letting casual visitors sample canopy ecology while enabling committed trekkers to pursue deeper, more strenuous immersion consistent with a landscape of exceptional antiquity.

B. Because the forest is so ancient, wildlife is scarce and viewing is poor, hence the author discourages any guided treks in Taman Negara.

C. The figure implies Malaysia created the rainforest through replanting programmes 130 million years ago, demonstrating unparalleled park engineering.

D. The canopy walkways exist mainly to avoid hornbill disturbance; Mount Tahan treks are prohibited to protect the Malayan tiger.

Passage:- 5 For months, international rights groups, aid organisations and doctors who served in Gaza have warned that the enclave was on the brink of famine. Heartbreaking stories and images of starvation poured out as Gaza's civil defence groups repeatedly told the world that children were dying every day due to malnutrition. But Israel, waging a genocidal war in Gaza for the past 22 months, dismissed these reports as lies, while its western allies did little beyond expressing token concerns. Last week, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), a UN-backed body, confirmed that an entirely "man-made famine" is unfolding in Gaza's largest city and its surrounding areas, the first officially declared famine in West Asia. At least one in five households faces extreme food shortages, while a third or more of all children are acutely malnourished. The IPC also stated that at least two in every 10,000 people die daily from starvation or the deadly combination of malnutrition and diseases. Yet, if anyone expected such a devastating report by a reputed organisation to have had an impact on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's war-thirsty regime, they were mistaken.

Israel has long imposed restrictions on goods entering Gaza, that has been under Israel's blockade since 2007; it tightened those restrictions after Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack. But in March 2025, after Mr. Netanyahu broke a ceasefire, Israel imposed a total three-month blockade on all goods entering Gaza. When it began allowing a limited amount of food, a new U.S. and Israel-backed organisation, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) replaced the previous UN-led food distribution system. The blockade, along with Israel's direct control of food distribution, plunged hundreds of thousands into acute hunger. When desperate, hungry Palestinians rushed to the limited food centres run by the GHF, they were shot down by Israeli troops

and GHF volunteers in the name of crowd control. The UN estimates that more than 1,300 Palestinians have been killed at food centres since May. Despite mounting international outrage and allegations of war crimes, and Hamas's acceptance of the latest ceasefire proposal put forward by Qatar and Egypt, Israel has intensified attacks on Gaza city in preparation for a new offensive. What is unfolding now in Gaza goes far beyond Israel's stated aims of defeating Hamas and releasing hostages. The growing body of evidence points to an intent to destroy Palestinian life and society in Gaza itself. The most brutal of crimes are being committed against 2.3 million people – in full view of the world. The world cannot allow Israel to continue devastating Gaza any further.

[<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/man-made-famine-on-the-state-of-gaza/article69971810.ece>]

Q29. Which option best captures the passage's central claim and concluding injunction?

A. Multiple strands of evidence (IPC metrics, blockade policy, control of aid, killings at food centres) show a man-made famine and a campaign that now targets Palestinian life and society itself; hence, the world must not permit Israel to devastate Gaza further.

B. The situation in Gaza is tragic but primarily due to logistical failures by international organisations, so political responsibility cannot be identified at this stage.

C. The principal issue is the inefficiency of the GHF; replacing it with the UN would immediately resolve the crisis even if Israel's military actions continue unabated.

D. The passage warns of a looming famine but concedes there is no proof that current policies have worsened hunger relative to pre-war conditions.

Q30. In "western allies did little beyond expressing token concerns," which pair offers the closest synonym and the most appropriate antonym in context?

A. Synonym: ceremonial/formalistic; Antonym: diplomatic/neutral.

B. Synonym: perfunctory/nominal; Antonym: substantive/meaningful.

C. Synonym: abundant/plentiful; Antonym: scarce/minimal.

D. Synonym: empathetic/compassionate; Antonym: indifferent/apathetic.

Q31. Which statement accurately reflects details stated in the passage?

A. The IPC refused to declare a famine and said reports were exaggerated propaganda.

B. Fewer than 200 Palestinians have died at food centres since May, according to the UN.

C. After a March 2025 ceasefire breach, Israel imposed a three-month total blockade, later allowing limited food while the GHF replaced the UN-led distribution system.

D. Gaza has been under an Israeli blockade only since 2014, and the UN continued to run food distribution throughout 2025.

Q32. In "When it began allowing a limited amount of food, a new U.S. and Israel-backed organisation, the GHF, replaced the previous UN-led food distribution system," what does "it" most directly refer to?

A. The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF)

B. The United Nations

C. Hamas

D. Israel

Q33. Which scenario most closely mirrors the logic of the passage's narrative linking policy choices to humanitarian outcomes?

A. A government dismisses disease warnings, blocks supplies, replaces neutral health agencies with a loyalist body, then blames chaos when people are killed at distribution points; despite international outrage and a mediation-backed truce offer, it intensifies operations.

B. A city faces a storm; it decentralises relief to neighbourhoods and deaths fall; foreign critics still accuse officials of neglect despite improved outcomes.

C. A hospital overloads; volunteers manage queues

safely and fatalities drop; authorities expand the programme in coordination with the UN.

D. A region lifts import restrictions entirely; queues shrink; an independent audit praises the government's humanitarian record.

Q34. Which option best captures the author's stance and method?

A. A neutral situation report that avoids attributing intentions or making prescriptive appeals.

B. A strongly condemnatory editorial voice that frames the crisis as a man-made famine, attributes responsibility to Israeli policy decisions (blockade, control of aid, lethal crowd control), adduces IPC data, and ends with a normative call for the world to act.

C. A defence of Israeli crowd-control methods as necessary to prevent stampedes, with guarded optimism about the GHF's role.

D. A purely humanitarian logistics brief focusing on warehouse placement and convoy routing without political assessment.

Q35. What is the most reasonable implication of the IPC metrics: "at least one in five households faces extreme food shortages," "a third or more children are acutely malnourished," and "two in every 10,000 die daily from starvation or from malnutrition plus disease"?

A. The crisis has crossed into famine-level catastrophe, with mortality and malnutrition indicating systemic deprivation rather than isolated distribution glitches.

B. Mortality is episodic and localised around a single warehouse and thus cannot reflect broader patterns of deprivation.

C. The figures are compatible with normal seasonal variation in food access in West Asia and do not signify a humanitarian emergency.

D. The metrics imply improvements over previous months because they exclude deaths from bombing or displacement.

Passage:- 6 Could blowing a conch shell help treat sleep apnoea? As a doctor working in sleep medicine, this unexpected news story certainly grabbed my attention. My first reaction was scepticism – sleep specialists don't typically prescribe natural objects found on beaches as medical therapy. But perhaps I was too hasty to dismiss the idea. For those unfamiliar with them, a conch shell is the spiral home of a large sea snail that, when hollowed out, can be blown like a trumpet. This practice isn't new – cultures worldwide have used conch shells for thousands of years in rituals, ceremonies and communication. What's novel is the suggestion that it might help with a serious medical condition affecting millions. We all know someone who snores, but not all snoring is harmless. If your partner notices you sometimes stop breathing during the night, that's cause for concern. You may have obstructive sleep apnoea, a condition where throat muscles relax excessively during sleep, causing the airway to narrow or close completely. These breathing interruptions – called apnoeas – can happen dozens or even hundreds of times per night. The consequences extend far beyond disturbing your partner's sleep. Each pause in breathing jolts your brain out of deeper sleep stages, leaving you exhausted the next day. This isn't merely inconvenient – drowsy drivers cause thousands of accidents annually. The repeated drops in oxygen also strain your heart, increasing risks of high blood pressure and heart disease if left untreated. Standard treatments focus on keeping airways open during sleep. The gold standard is Cpap (continuous positive airway pressure), where a mask delivers steady airflow that acts like an internal splint. We also use oral devices that gently shift the jaw forward, surgical removal of enlarged tonsils or adenoids, and even newer techniques involving tiny electrical impulses to stimulate airway muscles. Lifestyle changes matter, too. Weight loss reduces fatty tissue around the neck that can compress airways, while cutting alcohol and stopping smoking helps maintain firmer airway muscles – both substances make throat tissues floppier and worsen symptoms. So where does the conch shell fit? When you blow through any narrow opening, you're essentially training your upper airway muscles to stay open and firm. This concept, called airway muscle training, has legitimate scientific backing. Studies show that exercises targeting the tongue, soft palate and facial muscles can improve mild to moderate sleep apnoea symptoms.

[<https://scroll.in/article/1085789/conch-shell-exercises-could-one-day-help-treat-sleep-apnoea>]

Q36. Which option best captures the passage's central claim and approach?

- A. A clinician's initial scepticism gives way to a cautious, evidence-aware openness: blowing a conch may plausibly aid airway muscle training as an adjunct for (mild-moderate) sleep apnoea, though standard therapies remain primary.
- B. Natural remedies like conch shells should replace CPAP entirely because they are culturally rooted and therefore safer and more effective.
- C. Because snoring is common and rarely dangerous, conch-blowing is proposed mainly to enhance sleep quality for bed partners rather than to treat apnoea.
- D. The article rejects all non-device or non-surgical measures and concludes lifestyle changes are ineffective for apnoea management.

Q37. In "What's novel is the suggestion that it might help with a serious medical condition...", which pair gives the closest synonym and a most appropriate antonym in this context?

- A. Synonym: ornate; Antonym: plain.
- B. Synonym: new/original; Antonym: familiar/established.
- C. Synonym: speculative; Antonym: factual.
- D. Synonym: symbolic; Antonym: literal.

Q38. Which statement accurately reflects the passage's account of standard care?

- A. CPAP stands for "continuous partial airway pressure," and because it is uncomfortable, it has been abandoned in favour of nerve-stimulating implants for most patients.
- B. Standard care is mainly tonsil surgery; oral devices and CPAP are considered outdated and rarely used.
- C. Standard treatments aim to keep airways open: CPAP delivers steady airflow like an internal splint; clinicians may use oral devices advancing the jaw, tonsil/adenoid surgery, and newer electrical stimulation of airway muscles.
- D. Since lifestyle changes are sufficient for severe cases, device-based or surgical treatments are rarely indicated.

Q39. In "What's novel is the suggestion that it might help with a serious medical condition...", what does the pronoun "it" most directly refer to?

- A. The medical condition of sleep apnoea itself
- B. Cultures worldwide that have used conch shells
- C. The general concept of airway muscle training
- D. The conch shell as blown like a trumpet

Q40. Which scenario most closely mirrors the author's reasoning about conch-blowing and airway muscle training?

- A. Practicing controlled breathing through a small-aperture respiratory trainer strengthens upper-airway musculature, thereby improving symptoms in mild-moderate obstructive sleep apnoea—while remaining an adjunct to primary therapies.
- B. Using noise-masking headphones at night cures apnoea by preventing arousals, so no airway-targeted therapy is necessary.
- C. Drinking herbal tea before bed eliminates oxygen desaturations by relaxing throat tissues, showing that softer muscles prevent airway collapse.
- D. Avoiding all exercise reduces nighttime airflow demands and thus treats apnoea without any devices or training.

Q41. Which option best states the author's stance and method?

- A. Full endorsement of conch-blowing as a replacement for CPAP, relying on tradition over clinical evidence.
- B. Cautious, clinician's perspective: start from scepticism but acknowledge scientific backing for targeted exercises; conch-blowing could fit within airway muscle training for selected patients—not as a wholesale substitute for standard care.
- C. Dismissal of all lifestyle and exercise interventions as pseudoscience.
- D. A purely cultural history of conch shells with no medical claims or implications.

Q42. What is the best inference from "When you blow through any narrow opening, you're essentially training your upper airway muscles to stay open and firm"?

- A. Conch-blowing might function as a targeted strengthening exercise for upper-airway muscles and could improve symptoms in mild-moderate OSA as a supportive adjunct, though it does not negate the need for established treatments.
- B. Any blowing activity is guaranteed to cure all forms of sleep apnoea, including severe cases, making CPAP unnecessary.
- C. Airway collapse occurs because muscles are too firm; hence, relaxation techniques are superior to strengthening.
- D. Only electrical stimulation works; mechanical or behavioural training is ineffective.

Passage:- 7 With Parliament passing the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025, the online gaming industry has been dealt a fell blow. The government's rationale for imposing a complete ban on online money games, including both games of skill and chance, and also prohibiting advertising and promotion of such games, rests on a stated desire to address gaming addiction, mental health issues and financial losses. Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said in Parliament that, according to an estimate, 45 crore people are affected by such games, facing a loss of more than Rs 20,000 crore. Concerns have also been raised over some of these platforms being used for fraud and money laundering. While there can be no disagreement on the seriousness of these problems, and on the need to tackle them, it must be asked whether a ban is the best way out. In an interconnected world, a ban would simply drive such activity to unregulated and/or offshore markets, which may be beyond the jurisdiction of Indian authorities. This will make it harder to address some of the concerns. India's history is replete with examples of how bans, prohibitions and price controls have almost never achieved the stated objectives. The move will also have significant economic implications. As per a report from PwC titled "From sunrise to sunshine", the real money gaming segment brought in Rs 16,500 crore in revenue during 2023, which was expected to reach Rs 26,500 crore by 2028, accounting for a significant share of the online gaming market in India. A complete ban will affect all companies involved in this segment — several online gaming platforms are said to have already suspended their operations following this development — and this will have implications for jobs, both directly and indirectly. The move will also impact government finances. After the GST Council's decision to impose a 28 per cent tax on online gaming, revenues from the segment rose by 412 per cent in six months, reaching Rs 6,909 crore, up from Rs 1,349 crore before that. The ban, which also underlines the capricious nature of policy, is likely to make capital, both domestic and foreign, more circumspect — as per a report from EY, total investments from both domestic and foreign sources added up to Rs 22,931 crore between 2019-20 and December 2023. A more considered approach was called for. A Niti Aayog draft paper in 2020 had noted that stakeholders were in favour of a "light-touch regulatory framework for the fantasy sports industry". A prudent approach would veer towards providing greater regulatory clarity, putting in place mechanisms to address the concerns of the government, ensuring adequate checks and balances in the system and establishing efficient grievance redressal mechanisms.

[https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/us-trump-pressure-test-india-rising-power-strength-10209168/?ref=top_opinion]

Q43. Which option best captures the passage's central argument and policy recommendation?

- A. A sweeping ban on online money games is a poor instrument that will likely off-shore activity, weaken oversight, hurt revenues/investment/jobs, and chill policy credibility; a clearer, light-touch regulatory framework with checks, balances and grievance redressal is preferable.
- B. A total ban is the only proportionate response to addiction, mental health harms and laundering risks; hence advertising and platforms must be shut permanently.
- C. Since GST collections rose 412% after the 28% rate, a ban will barely dent government finances while fully eliminating social harms.
- D. States should permit chance-based games but ban skill-based games, because fraud occurs mainly in the latter.

Q44. Choose the pair that gives the closest synonym and the most appropriate antonym in context.

- A. Synonym: gentle/mild; Antonym: harsh/severe.
- B. Synonym: deadly/grievous; Antonym: benign/beneficial.
- C. Synonym: accidental/unplanned; Antonym: deliberate/intentional.
- D. Synonym: minor/trivial; Antonym: major/weighty.

Q45. Which statement accurately reflects details in the passage?

- A. PwC projected ₹26,500 crore for 2023 and ₹16,500 crore for 2028, showing shrinkage.
- B. The GST Council cut the rate to 18%, after which collections fell by 412% to ₹1,349 crore.

C. The ban covers both games of skill and chance; advertising/promotion is prohibited; GST receipts rose 412% in six months to ₹6,909 crore (from ₹1,349 crore); EY reported ₹22,931 crore of total investments (2019–20 to Dec 2023).

D. Because offshore markets remain within Indian jurisdiction, enforcement will be easier under a ban.

Q46. In the sentence “This will make it harder to address some of the concerns,” what does “This” most directly refer to?

A. The enactment of the 28% GST by the Council.

B. The PwC report projecting future revenues.

C. Parliament’s discussion about mental health and addiction.

D. The shift of activity to unregulated and/or offshore markets beyond Indian jurisdiction when a ban is imposed.

Q47. Which scenario most closely mirrors the passage’s reasoning about why a ban is counter-productive?

A. A state bans online betting; users migrate to offshore, unregulated sites beyond the state’s reach; scams rise, tax base erodes, jobs vanish; experts recommend licensed, well-supervised operations with clear redressal instead.

B. A city caps food prices; shortages disappear and investment surges, proving prohibitions efficiently meet stated aims.

C. A country nationalises a sector and instantly gains private investment while fraud collapses due to strict bans.

D. A curfew is imposed; crime falls permanently with no displacement to neighbouring districts.

Q48. Which option best captures the author’s stance and method?

A. Wholehearted endorsement of a total ban because it decisively cures addiction and laundering.

B. A critical, evidence-driven editorial that warns bans push activity offshore and harm the economy/fiscal flows/investment sentiment, and that urges a prudent, light-touch regulatory pathway with clarity, checks-and-balances and grievance mechanisms.

C. A neutral statistical abstract that avoids policy recommendations.

D. An industry advertorial forecasting unicorn valuations.

Q49. In “The ban, which also underlines the capricious nature of policy...”, pick the closest synonym and a most appropriate antonym for “capricious” in this context.

A. Synonym: frugal; Antonym: lavish.

B. Synonym: lawful; Antonym: illegal.

C. Synonym: erratic/whimsical; Antonym: consistent/steadfast.

D. Synonym: transparent; Antonym: opaque.

Q50. What is the most reasonable implication of the line, “India’s history is replete with examples of how bans, prohibitions and price controls have almost never achieved the stated objectives”?

A. Historical experience is irrelevant because today’s digital economy is unprecedented.

B. A more sweeping and longer ban is likelier to succeed where past bans failed.

C. The evidence is inconclusive; the author proposes waiting for three years before judging outcomes.

D. Past policy failures suggest this ban will likely miss its aims, strengthening the case for regulation over prohibition.

SECTION-B : CURRENT AFFAIRS, INCLUDING GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

Q51. The three new criminal laws—Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA)—came into effect across India on:

- A. January 1, 2024
- B. April 1, 2024
- C. July 1, 2024
- D. November 1, 2024

Q52. India won the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 final. Who was named Player of the Series?

- A. Virat Kohli
- B. Hardik Pandya
- C. Rohit Sharma
- D. Jasprit Bumrah

Q53. Which group of countries were officially admitted as full members of BRICS in 2024–2025?

- A. Argentina, Egypt, Saudi Arabia
- B. Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE, and Indonesia
- C. Turkey, Bangladesh, Brazil
- D. Mexico, UAE, Argentina

Q54. In a reciprocal agreement, which two countries will host BRICS summits in 2026 and 2027 respectively?

- A. China in 2026, India in 2027
- B. South Africa in 2026, Brazil in 2027
- C. Russia in 2026, India in 2027
- D. India in 2026, China in 2027

Q55. The Registrar General of India (RGI) functions under which ministry?

- A. Finance
- B. Home Affairs
- C. Social Justice & Empowerment
- D. Women & Child Development

Q56. Which joint military exercise is held between India and Thailand?

- A. Exercise Maitree
- B. Exercise Yudh Abhyas
- C. Exercise Shakti
- D. Exercise Vajra Prahar

Q57. When is National Space Day celebrated in India, and what does it commemorate?

- A. August 15 – Launch of Gaganyaan mission
- B. August 23 – Chandrayaan-3 successful soft-landing
- C. July 1 – Formation of ISRO
- D. October 4 – First Indian satellite launch

Q58. What is the theme for India's Independence Day in 2025?

- A. Naya Bharat
- B. Viksit Bharat
- C. Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat
- D. Atmanirbhar Bharat

Q59. What was the theme of India's TRIPS 2025 summit at IIT Kanpur?

- A. Innovation for Digital India
- B. Bridging Research, Innovation, and Policy for a Sustainable Future
- C. AI-driven Sustainable Growth
- D. Green Technology & Future Urbanization

Q60. What major trade measure did the U.S. impose on Indian-origin goods in August 2025?

- A. Suspension of cargo flights
- B. 10% surtax on all imports
- C. Ban on Indian electronics
- D. 50% tariff on Indian exports

Q61. Which new naval vessels were commissioned by the Indian Navy on August 26, 2025?

- A. INS Vikrant and INS Vikramaditya
- B. INS Udaygiri and INS Himgiri
- C. INS Kamorta and INS Kiltan
- D. INS Kolkata and INS Kochi

Q62. Which major cybercrime operation led to over 1,200 arrests across Africa and significant seizures?

- A. Operation Firewall
- B. Cyber Safari
- C. Serengeti 2.0
- D. Operation Cloudburst

Q63. A coalition of 27 countries, including the UK and Germany, recently demanded what concerning Gaza?

- A. A ceasefire
- B. Media access for international journalists
- C. Withdrawal of UN peacekeepers
- D. Economic sanctions on Israel

Q64. What significant environmental discovery about exoplanets was highlighted in recent international research?

- A. Earth-like habitability zones
- B. Steam atmospheres over exotic phases of water on sub-Neptunes
- C. Presence of methane lakes on Mars
- D. Oxygen-rich atmospheres on super-Earths

Q65. Which of the following statements correctly reflects the constitutional and legal provisions related to the voting age in India?

- A. Article 326 provides for universal adult suffrage to citizens not less than 21 years of age.
- B. The 42nd Constitutional Amendment, 1976, reduced the voting age from 21 to 18 years.

C. The right to vote is a fundamental right under Part III of the Constitution.

D. The 61st Constitutional Amendment, 1988, reduced the voting age from 21 to 18 years, and the right to vote is a statutory right amendable by ordinary law.

Q66. Recently, the Indian Prime Minister was conferred with Brazil's highest civilian award. Which of the following correctly identifies the award?

- A. Order of Rio Branco
- B. Grand Collar of the National Order of the Southern Cross
- C. Order of the Rising Sun
- D. Order of Prince Henry

Q67. The recently signed Geelong Treaty, a 50-year bilateral defence cooperation agreement, was concluded between which two countries under the AUKUS Pillar I framework?

- A. United States and Australia
- B. Australia and Canada
- C. United Kingdom and New Zealand
- D. Australia and United Kingdom

Q68. Recently, the United States announced its withdrawal from UNESCO. Which of the following statements is correct regarding this move?

- A. This is the first time the US has exited UNESCO.
- B. The US contributes nearly 8% of UNESCO's budget, and its exit may create geopolitical space for powers like China.
- C. The withdrawal was primarily due to budgetary concerns over the US economy.
- D. The move strengthens trust in multilateral institutions and global cooperation.

Q69. Recently, Ukraine became the 125th State Party to the Rome Statute. Which of the following is correct about the International Criminal Court (ICC)?

- A. It was established under the Rome Statute adopted in 1998 and entered into force in 2002.
- B. Its headquarters are located in Geneva, Switzerland.
- C. India is one of the founding members of the Rome Statute.
- D. It is a UN body created under the UN Charter.

Q70. According to the latest Global Peace Index report, which of the following statements is correct?

- A. India is ranked 163rd, making it the least peaceful country.
- B. Iceland is ranked first, while Russia is ranked the least peaceful country at 163rd.
- C. South Asia has been ranked the most peaceful region globally

D. India has shown an improvement in peacefulness and is now in the top 50.

Q71. Recently, the United States enacted a law to establish a regulatory framework for stablecoins, a type of cryptocurrency pegged to assets like the US dollar. What is the name of this Act?

- A. STABLE Act
- B. CRYPTO Act
- C. GENIUS Act
- D. DIGITAL Act

Q72. Which Pacific Island nation led the initiative at the UN General Assembly that resulted in the ICJ delivering an advisory opinion on states' obligations under international law to tackle climate change?

- A. Fiji
- B. Vanuatu
- C. Tuvalu
- D. Samoa

Q73. What is the name of the military operation recently launched by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) targeting Iranian nuclear infrastructure and ballistic missile capability?

- A. Operation Desert Storm
- B. Operation Rising Lion
- C. Operation Iron Fist
- D. Operation Protective Edge

Q74. China recently established the International Organisation for Mediation (IOMed). What is its primary purpose?

- A. To serve as a global alternative to institutions like the ICJ and the Permanent Court of Arbitration
- B. To regulate international trade disputes under the WTO framework
- C. To mediate climate change negotiations under the UNFCCC
- D. To act as a financial oversight body for the BRICS nations

Q75. Who recently became the first Indian woman to win the FIDE Women's World Cup title, defeating Koneru Humpy in the final at Batumi, Georgia?

- A. Tania Sachdev
- B. Dronavalli Harika
- C. Divya Deshmukh
- D. Bhakti Kulkarni

Q76. Under which Constitutional Amendment Act was Sikkim made a full-fledged State of the Union of India?

- A. 34th Amendment Act, 1973
- B. 35th Amendment Act, 1974
- C. 36th Amendment Act, 1975
- D. 42nd Amendment Act, 1976

Q77. Which state was recently declared India's first state to achieve full functional literacy?

- A. Kerala
- B. Mizoram

C. Tripura

D. Himachal Pradesh

Q78. Which of the following statements about the Pulitzer Prize is correct?

A. It is awarded by Harvard University for achievements in literature and science.

B. It was founded by Joseph Pulitzer, a Hungarian-American journalist, and first awarded in 1917.

C. It recognizes only contributions in the field of politics and economics.

D. It was instituted by the United Nations after World War II.

Q79. India was granted observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in 2005. In which year did it become a full member?

A. 2015

B. 2016

C. 2017

D. 2019

Q80. India is the world's largest producer, consumer, and exporter of which spice?

A. Cardamom

B. Pepper

C. Turmeric

D. Clove

SECTION - C: LOGICAL REASONING

Passage 1 (Questions 81-85): Eight friends — Arjun (A), Bhavna (B), Cyrus (C), Divya (D), Eshan (E), Farah (F), Gopal (G) and Hina (H) — sit around a circular table facing the centre; positions are 1-8 clockwise for reference.

1. Arjun sits three places clockwise from Bhavna.
2. Cyrus sits exactly opposite Farah.
3. Gopal sits immediately clockwise of Divya.
4. Hina sits two places anticlockwise from Arjun.
5. Counting clockwise from Bhavna, exactly one person sits between Bhavna and Cyrus.
6. Eshan sits exactly opposite Arjun.
7. Divya sits third clockwise from Hina.
8. Neither Bhavna nor Hina sits opposite Farah.
9. Counting anticlockwise from Eshan, exactly one person sits between Eshan and Gopal.

Q81. Who sits two places clockwise from Hina?

- A. Arjun B. Bhavna
C. Cyrus D. Divya

Q82. When counted clockwise from Bhavna, who sits between Bhavna and Arjun?

- A. Divya alone B. Hina alone
C. Cyrus alone D. Both Hina and Cyrus (in that order)

Q83. How many persons sit between Arjun and Farah when counted clockwise from Arjun?

- A. Exactly two persons B. Exactly three persons
C. Exactly one person D. None, they are adjacent

Q84. Which pair sits directly opposite each other?

- A. Cyrus and Farah B. Arjun and Eshan
C. Divya and Gopal D. Both A and B

Q85. Which of the following gives the clockwise order starting from Bhavna?

- A. Bhavna, Hina, Cyrus, Arjun, Divya, Gopal, Farah, Eshan
B. Bhavna, Cyrus, Hina, Arjun, Gopal, Divya, Farah, Eshan
C. Bhavna, Hina, Arjun, Cyrus, Divya, Gopal, Eshan, Farah
D. Bhavna, Eshan, Farah, Gopal, Divya, Arjun, Cyrus, Hina

Q86. Premises:

1. All harriers are raptors. 2. Some raptors are migratory birds.
3. No migratory birds are nocturnal. 4. All owls are nocturnal.

Which conclusion follows?

- A. Some raptors are not nocturnal.
B. Some owls are migratory birds.

- C. All harriers are nocturnal.
D. Some harriers are migratory birds.

Q87. Premises:

1. All fintech startups are venture-backed firms.
2. Some venture-backed firms are profitable.
3. No profitable firms are insolvent.
4. Some insolvent firms are bootstrapped.

Which conclusion follows?

- A. Some fintech startups are profitable.
B. Some venture-backed firms are not insolvent.
C. All bootstrapped firms are insolvent.
D. No fintech startups are bootstrapped.

Q88. Premises:

1. No ceramic vases are shatterproof items.
2. All museum artifacts are insured.
3. Some shatterproof items are modern. 4. Some ceramic vases are museum artifacts.

Which conclusion follows?

- A. Some museum artifacts are shatterproof.
B. No museum artifacts are shatterproof.
C. Some museum artifacts are not shatterproof.
D. All modern items are shatterproof.

Q89. Premises:

1. All poets are readers.
2. Some readers are critics.
3. No critics are pacifists.
4. Some pacifists are teachers.

Which conclusion follows?

- A. Some poets are critics.
B. Some teachers are critics.
C. No teachers are critics.
D. Some readers are not pacifists.

Q90. Premises:

1. All cloud databases are scalable systems.
2. Some scalable systems are open-source.
3. No open-source systems are proprietary tools.
4. Some cloud databases are proprietary tools.

Which conclusion follows?

- A. Some cloud databases are not open-source.
B. All scalable systems are cloud databases.
C. Some proprietary tools are not scalable systems.
D. Some open-source systems are cloud databases

Q91. Premises:

1. All quantum sensors are precision devices.
2. Some precision devices are battery-powered.
3. No battery-powered devices are zero-emission.
4. All zero-emission devices are recyclable.

Which conclusion follows?

- A. Some precision devices are not zero-emission.
- B. Some quantum sensors are battery-powered.
- C. All recyclable devices are zero-emission.
- D. Some recyclable devices are battery-powered.

Q92. Premises:

- 1. All paralegals are law graduates.
- 2. Some law graduates are researchers.
- 3. No researchers are court clerks.
- 4. Some court clerks are part-time workers.

Which conclusion follows?

- A. Some paralegals are researchers.
- B. Some law graduates are not court clerks.
- C. No paralegals are court clerks.
- D. Some part-time workers are researchers.

Q93. Premises:

- 1. No manual transmissions are autonomous vehicles.
- 2. Some electric cars are autonomous vehicles.
- 3. All autonomous vehicles are connected cars.

Which conclusion follows?

- A. Some electric cars are not connected cars.
- B. No electric cars are manual transmissions.
- C. Some connected cars are electric cars.
- D. All connected cars are autonomous vehicles.

Q94. Premises:

- 1. All city planners are policy analysts.
- 2. Some policy analysts are data scientists.
- 3. No data scientists are lobbyists.
- 4. Some lobbyists are consultants.

Which conclusion follows?

- A. Some city planners are data scientists.
- B. Some consultants are data scientists.
- C. No policy analysts are lobbyists.
- D. Some policy analysts are not lobbyists.

Q95. Premises:

- 1. All heritage buildings are protected sites.
- 2. Some protected sites are coastal areas.
- 3. No coastal areas are noise-free zones.
- 4. Some noise-free zones are bird sanctuaries.

Which conclusion follows?

- A. Some protected sites are not noise-free zones.
- B. All heritage buildings are coastal areas.
- C. Some bird sanctuaries are coastal areas.
- D. No bird sanctuaries are noise-free zones.

Passage: Over a nine-month pilot, City X's transit authority ran autonomous buses on two corridors selected for high CCTV coverage and recently widened lanes. Prior to the pilot, system-wide human-driven buses averaged 3.6 collisions per 100,000 km. During

the pilot, autonomous buses recorded 2.1 collisions per 100,000 km on Corridor A and 1.8 on Corridor B, each with higher pedestrian density than the system median. Safety drivers intervened 0.9 times per 100 km, though many interventions were designated "precautionary." Insurance claim severity on the pilot routes fell by 15% relative to matched months the prior year. Enforcement of speed limits and signal timing was also updated city-wide during the pilot window. On the basis of these results, the authority announced that "autonomous buses are safer overall than human-driven buses."

Q96. Which of the following is required for the authority's conclusion to be warranted?

- A. No enforcement or signal-timing updates materially reduced collision risk on the two pilot corridors during the pilot.
- B. Safety-driver interventions did not themselves prevent crashes that would otherwise have been attributed to autonomy failures.
- C. Risk exposure on the pilot corridors is comparable to the pre-pilot, system-wide baseline after accounting for lane width and pedestrian density.
- D. Insurance claim severity is a reliable proxy for collision frequency across bus operations.

Passage: In Q1, NexKart cut median delivery times from 2.6 days to 1.1 days through new micro-hubs. At the same time, for orders over ₹7,500 it introduced mandatory signature-on-delivery with two reattempts if the customer was unavailable. Overall satisfaction (10-point scale) dropped from 8.2 to 7.4, and Net Promoter Score fell by 9 points. Contact-center logs show a 60% decline in "late delivery" complaints but a 140% rise in "missed delivery" and "inconvenient timing" complaints. Weekend deliveries rose from 18% to 41% of first attempts due to hub staffing. Return rates and damage claims did not change materially.

Q97. Which option best explains how faster deliveries coincided with lower satisfaction?

- A. Users value website interface quality more than speed, and NexKart's app UI did not change.
- B. The signature rule caused more failed first attempts and reattempts, making faster first-attempt delivery feel less convenient overall.
- C. Competitors launched price promotions in Q1 that reframed expectations of value.
- D. More rural customers were included in the Q1 survey sample than in prior quarters.

Passage: University Z admits applicants via Early Action (EA) and Regular Decision (RD). Last year, EA issued 1,200 offers with an 80% yield; RD issued 3,800 offers

with a 40% yield; the target class size was ~2,400 and was met after modest summer melt. This year, the university reduced EA offers to 900 and increased RD offers to 4,200. It also created a “binding priority waitlist” (historical yield ~95%) capped at 5% of the enrolled class; these offers are issued after 1 May and count toward both admits and enrolls. The Dean claims that overall yield (enrolled : total admits, including waitlist admits) will not decline relative to last year.

Q98. Which of the following must hold for the Dean’s claim to be correct?

- A. RD yield must rise above 40% unless the binding priority waitlist contributes at least 5% of the enrolled class.
- B. EA yield must rise above 85% this year, given the reduction in EA offers.
- C. Total admits this year must not exceed last year’s total admits by more than 5%.
- D. The target class size must increase to offset the EA cut.

Passage: An education ministry cites an NGO’s “Radio at Night” program to argue that inexpensive broadcast lessons “efficiently boost learning.” In a quasi-experimental rollout, participating villages improved standardised-test scores by 7% versus 2% in matched non-participants over six months. Attendance among 10–12-year-olds fell by 5% in participant villages. Pre-program data show participant villages had more radio ownership and lower teacher availability than controls. Some control villages reported tuning into the broadcasts. The test was multiple-choice with heavy recall components. The ministry concludes the program is an efficient route to better learning at scale.

Q99. Which finding most undermines the ministry’s conclusion?

- A. Households in participant villages also increased children’s educational TV viewing during the same period.
- B. A follow-up test three months after broadcasts ended found that the initial 7% gain had largely faded.
- C. Within participant villages, households without radios showed negligible gains and the attendance drop was concentrated among them.
- D. In a randomized trial that supplied radios to control villages and replicated the content, score differences versus pure controls were statistically insignificant.

Passage: Province M adopted a revenue-neutral carbon tax in January; by December reported territorial industrial emissions fell 12% year-over-year, while retail electricity prices rose 3%. Neighboring Province N’s

cap-and-trade saw an 8% decline. Critics say M’s drop was mostly due to an unusually mild winter reducing heating demand, plus a large hydro plant that came online in June displacing coal. Patent filings in clean tech by firms headquartered in M rose 25% versus the prior year. The government asserts the tax—not weather or hydro—was the primary driver of emission reductions across the economy.

Q100. Which, if true, most supports the government’s claim?

- A. After controlling for heating-degree days, emissions in weather-insensitive sectors (e.g., cement, steel) also declined significantly in M relative to historical trends.
- B. Province N experienced a manufacturing shift into M during the year, temporarily raising M’s industrial output.
- C. The new hydro plant displaced coal generation equivalent to about 10% of M’s total emissions.
- D. Household surveys recorded increased conservation behaviors following carbon-price notices on utility bills.

Passage: Last year, Ridge County piloted tablet-based instruction in 30 public schools chosen for their reliable Wi-Fi and enthusiastic principals. Baseline standardized scores in these schools were 6 points below the county average. After one term, the tablet schools gained 12 percentile points, while matched control schools gained 9. During the same term, the district also introduced a new standards-aligned item bank that teachers could use for practice quizzes, though usage was optional. Teacher transfers were frozen midyear to stabilize staffing. An audit noted that tablet schools logged twice as many practice quizzes as controls. On the basis of the results, the superintendent announced that tablets, not other factors, drove the learning gains.

Q101. Which of the following must be true for the superintendent’s conclusion to be warranted?

- A. The new item bank’s alignment with the test was equally accessible and equally used across tablet and control schools.
- B. Freezing teacher transfers would have improved scores countywide regardless of the tablet pilot.
- C. The baseline 6-point deficit of tablet schools did not mechanically predispose them to larger short-term gains (regression to the mean).
- D. Principals’ enthusiasm did not increase classroom observation frequency during the term.

Passage: To ease congestion, Midtown banned curbside parking on the two blocks with the densest retail, added a bus-only lane, widened sidewalks, and installed modular planters to slow turning vehicles. Merchants

predicted catastrophe, citing lost “park-once” customers. Three months later, footfall counters showed a 14% increase in unique pedestrian visits and card transaction volumes rose 9%, though average receipt size dipped slightly. Ride-hail pickup zones were marked on side streets, and the transit agency extended bus frequency into late evening. Several storefronts added outdoor seating in the recaptured curb space. Despite the harder car parking, retail activity rose.

Q102. Which option best explains the increase in retail activity despite reduced car parking?

- A. The average receipt size fell because customers bargained more during economic uncertainty.
- B. Faster and more frequent buses plus widened sidewalks brought more pass-by visitors, offsetting the decline in park-once traffic.
- C. Merchants launched a coordinated loyalty program unrelated to the street changes.
- D. The city removed two traffic signals several blocks away, shortening cross-town trips.

Passage: Cognivia, a mid-sized software firm, claims its new mentorship program reduced annual attrition. Historically, first-year attrition averaged 18% with peaks in Q3. After mentorship launched, overall attrition fell to 14% even as the broader tech market saw layoffs. Internal HR risk scores, computed before the program began, tagged 30% of new hires as “high-risk” for attrition. The company randomized mentor assignment among high-risk hires due to mentor scarcity and measured outcomes for a full year. Among high-risk hires, those assigned mentors had 9% attrition versus 20% for high-risk hires on the waitlist; low-risk hires showed no meaningful change. Cognivia concludes the program caused the attrition reduction.

Q103. Which of the following, if true, most strengthens Cognivia’s causal claim?

- A. Exit interviews emphasized lack of growth opportunities more often than compensation.
- B. The mentors selected had above-median performance ratings in the prior review cycle.
- C. Attrition among low-risk hires decreased slightly after a separate learning stipend was introduced.
- D. The randomization produced balanced cohorts on tenure, manager quality, and initial satisfaction across mentored and waitlisted high-risk hires.

Passage: A public-health NGO argues that opening more plant-forward cafeterias in towns lowers obesity. Comparing 40 towns with at least three such cafeterias to 40 matched towns with none, it finds average adult BMI is 1.1 points lower in the former. The report admits that towns with more cafeterias also have higher

household incomes, denser walkable cores, and more gym memberships. It also notes that supermarket shelf space for produce is larger in those towns. When cafeterias temporarily closed during a supplier strike, there was no immediate uptick in BMI, but the strike lasted only six weeks. The NGO concludes that adding plant-forward cafeterias is an effective obesity intervention.

Q104. Which finding most undermines the NGO’s conclusion?

- A. In towns where cafeterias opened most recently, salad sales grew even during winter months.
- B. A two-year randomized incentive program that subsidized cafeteria meals produced no BMI change versus a control group receiving supermarket produce vouchers.
- C. When controlling for income, walkability, gym density, and produce shelf space, the cafeteria-BMI correlation becomes statistically insignificant.
- D. Residents in cafeteria towns report higher nutrition knowledge on surveys than residents in control towns.

Passage: The National Fellowship Board aims to enroll 1,000 scholars annually. Last year it offered 1,600 fellowships with a 62% acceptance rate; an additional 80 candidates were admitted from a small binding waitlist with a 95% acceptance rate, and the program filled exactly 1,000 seats after minor melt. This year, the Board cut initial offers to 1,400, expanded the binding waitlist cap to 15% of enrolled seats, and raised the minimum stipend by 10%. Past data show that stipend increases raise acceptance only among applicants with competing offers, concentrated in the top decile of the applicant pool. The Director asserts that overall acceptance rate (accepts : total offers, including waitlist) will not decline relative to last year

Q105. Which of the following must hold for the Director’s assertion to be correct?

- A. The expanded waitlist will contribute at least 10% of enrolled seats with acceptance rates near 95%.
- B. The stipend increase will raise acceptance sufficiently among top-decile candidates to offset the reduced initial offers without exceeding the 1,000-seat target.
- C. The overall number of offers (initial + waitlist) will not exceed 1,700.
- D. Acceptance among non-top-decile candidates will remain at or below last year’s level.

Passage: Company K piloted a three-days-a-week work-from-home (WFH) policy in Q2 for its sales and support teams across branches with above-median broadband reliability. Before the pilot, average deal-

closing rate was 18% and average call length was 11 minutes system-wide. During Q2, pilot branches reported a 21% closing rate and 9-minute calls, while email response times shortened by 20%. Mid-Q2, marketing deployed a machine-learning lead-scoring model to route “hot” prospects first; simultaneously, pilot branches completed a CRM retraining module that non-pilot branches were scheduled to take in Q3. Support backlog fell 12% in pilot branches, though first-contact resolution held steady. Non-pilot branches showed a modest rise to a 19% closing rate without changes in call length. Executives concluded that the WFH policy, rather than contemporaneous changes, drove the revenue uplift observed in pilot branches.

Q106. Which of the following must be true for the executives’ conclusion to be warranted?

- A. The lead-scoring model and CRM retraining did not disproportionately boost closing rates in the pilot branches relative to non-pilot branches.
- B. The reduction in support backlog primarily reflected fewer product defects rather than staffing differences.
- C. Manager tenure has no material effect on closing rates in either pilot or non-pilot branches.
- D. Employee survey enthusiasm for WFH remained high throughout Q2.

Passage: After introducing a peak-hour congestion charge, City R recorded a 9% decline in inbound vehicles crossing the cordon. Yet average car commute times within the zone increased by six minutes. During the same quarter, two major avenues inside the zone had lane closures for utility works, and delivery firms shifted to earlier runs to avoid the charge’s 8–11 a.m. window, increasing the share of trucks before 8 a.m. The transport agency also retimed signals to give buses and ambulances more priority phases. Bus speeds improved by 14%, and ridership rose. Public commentators labeled the charge a failure because “traffic got worse,” despite the measured drop in entries. City officials argued that the charge had succeeded on access and mode-shift goals.

Q107. Which option best explains higher car commute times despite fewer entering vehicles?

- A. Drivers became more price-sensitive and postponed non-essential trips until after 11 a.m.
- B. Lane closures and a higher share of heavy delivery vehicles reduced effective road capacity, while signal priority lengthened car waits, raising car travel time even as volumes fell.
- C. Increased bus ridership reduced foot traffic near crosswalks, allowing more frequent pedestrian priority cycles.

D. The average car carried fewer passengers due to telework, reducing car-pool lanes’ utilization.

Passage: Coastshire introduced a refundable ₹3 deposit on beverage containers sold within the municipality, redeemable at kiosks and shops. In the six months post-policy, beach-clean counts showed a 32% drop in litter items per 100 meters; inland parks showed a 19% drop. That winter featured two unseasonably large storms that scoured and re-profiled beaches, historically associated with short-term litter displacement. Over the same period, a tourist campaign increased visitor numbers by 11%. A nearby county without a deposit saw a 3% drop at beaches and a 2% rise in parks. Recycling center receipts in Coastshire reported a 61% increase in returned beverage containers, concentrated in deposit-eligible categories. The mayor claimed the deposit policy, not storms or tourism, drove the litter reduction.

Q108. Which of the following, if true, most strengthens the mayor’s causal claim?

- A. Post-policy, total plastic packaging sales (including non-beverage items) fell 4% in Coastshire.
- B. The decline in litter counts in Coastshire was almost entirely in deposit-eligible beverage containers; non-eligible litter categories changed little relative to the neighboring county.
- C. Volunteer group sizes at beach cleans were larger after the deposit policy launched.
- D. The largest beach-profiling storm occurred in the neighboring county, not in Coastshire.

Passage: An ed-tech startup reports that students using its AI math tutor improved their term-end scores by 8 points over non-users in the same schools. Usage was optional, and 43% of students created accounts; among users, median weekly time on the platform was 72 minutes. Prior-term data show that students who later adopted the AI tutor had, on average, higher baseline math self-efficacy and more supportive home study environments. In three schools with limited device availability, teachers scheduled lab blocks in which entire classes cycled through the tutor; in those classes, the user-non-user score gap shrank to 2 points. The company concludes the tutor is the primary driver of the observed 8-point advantage. District administrators are considering a district-wide contract based on these results.

Q109. Which finding would most undermine the company’s conclusion?

- A. In classes randomly assigned to mandatory tutor use for one term, score gains were indistinguishable from classes randomly assigned to business-as-usual

practice with teacher-curated worksheets.

B. Students who used the tutor also tended to enroll in after-school math clubs at higher rates than non-users.

C. Homes with tablets reported greater parental oversight of homework after the tutor's introduction.

D. In teacher-scheduled lab blocks, average weekly tutor time was only 45 minutes per student.

Passage: A pharmaceutical trial compared a low dose (LD), a high dose (HD), and placebo (PL) for a chronic condition. The pre-registered primary endpoint improved by a clinically meaningful margin for LD versus PL; HD did not outperform LD on the primary endpoint. Secondary endpoints showed similar patterns. Adverse events (AEs) were dose-related: HD had significantly more AEs than LD; LD had slightly more than PL but within acceptable ranges. Pharmacokinetic assays confirmed that LD achieved target receptor occupancy in most patients, while HD achieved near-maximal occupancy. The sponsor claims the results "support selecting the minimum effective dose for Phase 3." Regulators noted that subgroup analyses were underpowered and exploratory.

Q110. Which of the following is most strongly supported by the passage?

A. HD should be abandoned because it is ineffective compared to PL on all endpoints.

B. The overall benefit-risk profile of LD is superior to that of HD, given comparable efficacy and higher AE rates at HD.

C. The lack of HD superiority to LD is due to underpowered subgroup analyses.

D. Receptor occupancy is not a valid pharmacodynamic marker for this drug class.

Statements: Over the winter term, the city retrofitted 80 primary schools (out of 100) with MERV-13 air filters; the remaining 20 retained standard filters. Across 12 weeks, mean absence rates fell by 18% in retrofitted schools and by 5% in non-retrofitted schools. That season's influenza burden was milder than the three-year average, and the retrofitted schools were located in districts with older buildings and historically higher baseline absenteeism.

Proposed Conclusions:

I. The filter retrofit caused the majority of the observed reduction in absences.

II. Retrofitting all public buildings would be an efficient public-health investment.

Q111. Which conclusion can be properly inferred?

a) Only I follows

b) Only II follows

c) Both I and II follow

d) Neither I nor II follows

Statements: A lender introduced a machine-learning screen that reduced the approval rate from 62% to 49%; among approved customers the 12-month default rate fell from 8% to 5%. Average loan size and net interest margin on performing loans remained constant; marketing spend was unchanged. Management concludes profitability increased because defaults among approved loans declined.

Assumptions/Arguments Offered by Management:

The conclusion presumes that the expected profit forgone on newly rejected but would-have-repaid borrowers does not exceed savings from avoided defaults, and that rejection does not depress cross-sell revenue meaningfully.

Q112. Which assumption must be true for management's profitability claim to hold?

a) The new screen does not raise per-application processing cost by more than 1%.

b) Among the marginally rejected applicants, expected profit (interest minus expected loss and recovery costs) was non-positive.

c) The share of approved borrowers buying ancillary products (cards, insurance) increased post-screen.

d) Average bureau scores of approved borrowers increased by at least 30 points.

Statements: After raising the posted adult ticket price by 20% and discontinuing student discounts, the city museum recorded a 12% rise in annual attendance while average revenue per visitor fell by 9%. In the same year, the museum launched a mobile "household pass" with a fixed annual fee that granted unlimited entry and free late-night guided tours for pass-holders. A competing gallery closed for renovation that year.

Paradox / Tension: Higher posted prices normally reduce attendance and raise revenue per visitor; the opposite was observed.

Q113. Which option best resolves the paradox?

a) The household pass attracted frequent repeat visitors whose many entries pulled down revenue per visit despite the higher posted price.

b) The competing gallery's closure shifted high-spend tourists to the museum, explaining the attendance jump.

c) Ending student discounts increased the adult share of visitors, who typically spend more per visit.

d) The 20% ticket hike increased per-visit revenue among first-time visitors.

Statements: Hospitals adopting a telemedicine heart-failure program reported 15% fewer 30-day readmissions than non-adopters. Early adopters also had better nurse-to-patient ratios and dedicated cardiology units. Mid-year, a cyberattack randomly forced roughly half of adopters offline for six weeks, while the other adopters continued uninterrupted.

Health-Department Conclusion: Telemedicine itself reduced readmissions.

Q114. Which finding most strengthens the department's causal claim?

- a) During the cyberattack window, adopters forced offline saw readmissions revert toward pre-adoption levels, while unaffected adopters maintained the reduction.
- b) Non-adopters began a medication-reconciliation initiative during the same quarter.
- c) Average patient severity scores declined statewide in that quarter.
- d) Hospitals with better nurse ratios generally have lower readmissions irrespective of telemedicine.

Statements: A utility rolled out smart meters with time-of-use pricing; summer peak demand fell 7% versus the prior summer. That period also featured the coolest summer in a decade and a 2% GDP contraction. A neighboring utility without time-of-use pricing reported a 6.5% peak drop.

Utility's Conclusion: Smart meters and pricing caused the peak reduction.

Q115. Which, if true, most undermines the utility's conclusion?

- a) After weather-normalization and adjustment for economic activity, the utility's peak drop is statistically indistinguishable from the neighbor's.
- b) Customers with smart meters report increased conservation behaviors in surveys.
- c) Off-peak demand at the utility rose 5% compared to the prior summer.
- d) The marketing campaign for the new tariffs had unusually low click-through rates.

(Q116-119). Read the following principles and answer the fact-scenarios that follow:

Principle 1: Under the rule in *Rylands v. Fletcher*, a person who brings onto their land a dangerous substance is strictly liable if it escapes and causes harm, even if they exercised all due care. Exceptions exist where the escape is due to an Act of God, plaintiff's own fault, or unforeseeable acts of a third party.

Principle 2: Absolute liability (*MC Mehta v. Union of India*) applies when an enterprise engaged in hazardous activity causes harm. Unlike strict liability, no exceptions are allowed.

Principle 3: State-run enterprises handling hazardous substances are equally bound by absolute liability. Sovereign immunity is not a defence in industrial accident cases. The state can therefore not claim that these actions were in the performance of official functions to absolve itself from liability.

Q116. Facts: Arjun constructed a large artificial lake on his farmland for commercial fishing. During unprecedented rainfall (not seen in 200 years), the embankment collapsed and water gushed into neighbouring houses, destroying property. Residents sued Arjun for damages. Arjun argued that the rainfall was an unforeseeable natural event beyond human control. Is Arjun liable under strict liability?

- (A) Yes, because he stored a dangerous substance (large volume of water) and it escaped.
- (B) No, because the collapse was caused by an unprecedented natural event, an Act of God defence.
- (C) Yes, because the plaintiff's loss was foreseeable once he created the lake.
- (D) No, because natural disasters always absolve liability, irrespective of precautions.

117. Facts: Shakti Fertilizers stored ammonia gas in underground tanks. An earthquake measuring 6.5 caused a leak, killing 30 villagers. The company argued it was a natural disaster and that tanks were built to international safety standards. Is the company liable?

- (A) No, because the leak resulted from an earthquake, an Act of God.
- (B) Yes, because absolute liability admits no defence once hazardous substances escape.
- (C) No, because international safety standards were followed.
- (D) Yes, but only if negligence in storage is proven.

Q118. Facts: Ravi Industries ran a chlorine plant. A disgruntled ex-employee sabotaged the safety valves at night, leading to a chlorine leak. Several workers died. The company argued that sabotage by a third party breaks the chain of causation.

Question: Is Ravi Industries liable?

- (A) No, because sabotage by a third party breaks the chain of causation.
- (B) No, because criminal acts of others are unforeseeable.
- (C) Yes, because under absolute liability, enterprises remain liable even if harm is caused by sabotage.
- (D) Yes, but only if negligence by the company in

securing the premises is proven.

Q119. Facts: A state-owned pesticide factory leaked toxic gas, affecting thousands. The State claimed immunity, arguing it was performing a sovereign function through its public sector undertaking. Is the State immune from liability?

- (A) Yes, because sovereign functions enjoy immunity in tort law.
- (B) No, but damages will be capped since it is a public enterprise.
- (C) Yes, but only if negligence by officials is disproved.
- (D) No, because sovereign immunity does not apply to hazardous industrial activities under absolute liability.

Q120. Principle: The doctrine of Basic Structure, evolved in *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala* (1973), limits Parliament's amending power under Article 368. While Parliament may amend any constitutional provision, it cannot destroy or alter the fundamental features of the Constitution. Core features include democracy, rule of law, secularism, separation of powers, and judicial independence.

Facts: The 130th Constitutional Amendment conferred upon Parliament the exclusive power to appoint judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts, eliminating the judiciary's consultative role. Is the amendment valid?

- (A) Yes, because Parliament can amend any provision.
- (B) No, because judicial independence is part of the Basic Structure.
- (C) Yes, because residuary powers cover judicial appointments.
- (D) No, because state ratification was required.

Q121. Principle: Article 19(1)(a) guarantees speech, restricted under Article 19(2) only if the restriction is reasonable and has a proximate nexus with grounds such as security, public order, or morality. Vague, speculative justifications are invalid.

Facts: A filmmaker released a documentary on corruption in defence procurement. The government banned it, claiming it would "erode the morale of armed forces" and potentially affect national security. Critics argued that the ban was speculative censorship of legitimate criticism. Is the ban valid?

- (A) No, because restrictions require a direct, proximate link to disorder.
- (B) Yes, because defence is a 19(2) ground.
- (C) Yes, because defence criticism may be censored.
- (D) No, because freedom of speech is absolute.

Q122. Principle: Mens rea and actus reus must coincide, but liability arises if mens rea develops while a continuing act is ongoing.

Facts: Vijay, reversing his car, accidentally rolled onto Prakash's foot. Initially unaware, he later realised it and, irritated by Prakash's shouting, refused to move for two minutes. Is Vijay guilty?

- (A) No, because initial act lacked mens rea.
- (B) Yes, because intent superimposed on the continuing act creates liability.
- (C) No, because Prakash did not suffer permanent injury.
- (D) Yes, but only if Vijay had intent at the start.

Q123. Principle: Consent obtained through deception or false promise is not valid in law. Consent must be free, informed, and voluntary.

Facts: Suresh persuaded Ananya to sexual intercourse, promising marriage. Later, evidence showed he never intended to marry her from the beginning. Is Suresh guilty of rape?

- (A) Yes, because consent obtained by false promise of marriage is not valid.
- (B) No, because Ananya initially consented.
- (C) Yes, but only if lack of intent to marry from the beginning is proven.
- (D) No, because false promises do not invalidate consent.

Q124. Principle: In India, international treaties and conventions do not automatically have the force of domestic law unless incorporated through parliamentary legislation (Article 253, *Jolly George Varghese v. Bank of Cochin*). However, in the absence of domestic legislation, courts may interpret fundamental rights in harmony with India's international obligations, provided there is no conflict with express statutory provisions.

Facts: The Union of India signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which recognises the right to housing as part of the right to life. However, Parliament has not enacted a specific law to give direct effect to this right. A group of slum dwellers in Delhi, evicted by the municipal corporation for encroaching on public land, approached the Supreme Court claiming that the eviction violated their "right to housing" under the ICESCR. The government argued that international treaties have no domestic force without enabling legislation. Can the slum dwellers succeed in their claim?

- (A) Yes, because international covenants automatically override domestic law once India signs them.
- (B) No, because without parliamentary legislation, treaties cannot be enforced in Indian courts.

(C) Yes, because international obligations can guide judicial interpretation of Article 21, even without domestic legislation.

(D) No, because the right to housing is not recognised under the Indian Constitution.

Q125. Principle: Under the Indian Penal Code (Sections 120A–120B), a criminal conspiracy is an agreement between two or more persons to commit an illegal act, or to commit a legal act by illegal means. The actus reus is the agreement itself; performance is not necessary. Proof may be circumstantial, but there must be a “meeting of minds.” Mere knowledge or presence is insufficient—there must be intentional participation.

Facts: Neha, Raj, and Imran frequently discussed their frustrations with new government tax policies. During several private meetings, they toyed with the idea of “showing the government a lesson.” Raj suggested setting fire to government tax offices. Imran laughed but said nothing, while Neha agreed to provide petrol. A week later, petrol bombs were discovered in Raj’s garage. The police charged all three with conspiracy. Imran claimed he had never agreed, and was merely present when Raj and Neha plotted. Can Imran be convicted of conspiracy?

(A) Yes, because mere presence during conspiratorial discussions makes him part of the plan.

(B) No, because he never expressly agreed or contributed, and silence without participation is not conspiracy.

(C) Yes, because laughter implies tacit agreement to the illegal plan.

(D) No, because conspiracy requires overt acts, not just agreements.

Q126. Principle: Section 66C of the Information Technology Act criminalises dishonest or fraudulent use of another person’s digital identity (passwords, electronic signatures, biometric identifiers). Liability requires (i) fraudulent intention, and (ii) use of someone else’s credentials for personal gain or harm to another.

Facts: Sneha, a student, discovered her friend Pooja’s online banking password while borrowing her laptop. Sneha, struggling with debt, used the password to transfer ₹50,000 from Pooja’s account into her own. To conceal the act, Sneha also changed Pooja’s registered mobile number with the bank so she would not receive alerts. Pooja discovered the fraud a month later and complained. Sneha claimed it was only a “temporary borrowing” and she intended to repay the money. Is Sneha criminally liable?

(A) Yes, because fraudulent use of another’s credentials constitutes identity theft, irrespective of repayment intent.

(B) No, because she intended to return the money, so dishonest intention was absent.

(C) Yes, but only civilly liable, since cybercrimes do not attract imprisonment.

(D) No, because consent to use the laptop implied consent to access passwords.

Q127. Principle: Doctors must obtain informed consent before treatment. Consent requires disclosure of material risks, alternatives, and consequences. Even if treatment is beneficial, performing without consent (except in emergencies) is actionable. Courts emphasise patient autonomy under Article 21 (*Samira Kohli v. Dr. Prabha Manchanda*).

Facts: Reena, 25, visited Dr. Batra for removal of ovarian cysts. She signed consent only for cyst removal. During surgery, Dr. Batra discovered early signs of cervical cancer and performed a partial hysterectomy without informing Reena’s family. Reena survived but lost her reproductive ability. She sued for negligence. Was Dr. Batra negligent?

(A) Yes, because surgery beyond the scope of consent violates patient autonomy absent emergency.

(B) No, because doctors may act in patient’s best interests without consent.

(C) Yes, because hysterectomy without informed consent is always unlawful, even in emergencies.

(D) No, because general surgical consent covers all necessary interventions.

Q128. Principle: Articles 15(4) and 15(5) permit affirmative action for socially/economically backward classes, but reservations must comply with constitutional limits. The Supreme Court capped reservations at 50%, except in exceptional circumstances. Reservations must also be backed by empirical data of backwardness and underrepresentation.

Facts: The State of X enacted a law reserving 75% of seats in medical colleges for residents of the state, citing “youth migration” as justification. Petitioners challenged the law as violative of equality under Article 14. The State argued that it was necessary to prevent brain drain. Is the law valid?

(A) Yes, because states may give preference to local candidates to prevent migration.

(B) No, because 75% reservation exceeds the constitutional 50% cap and lacks exceptional justification.

(C) Yes, because state autonomy in education permits wide discretion.

(D) No, because all reservations are unconstitutional under Article 14.

Q129. Principle: Defamation occurs when a false statement harms reputation. However, communications made in good faith on occasions of qualified privilege (such as job references, parliamentary debates, or legal proceedings) are protected, provided they are not malicious. Truth and fair comment are additional defences.

Facts: During a confidential background check, Mr. Verma, an ex-employer, told a new company that his former employee, Shalini, had “a habit of mismanaging funds,” although no disciplinary inquiry had ever found her guilty. She was also regarded as a formidable employee in her past employment. Shalini was denied the job and sued Verma for defamation. Verma argued that his statements were protected by qualified privilege since they were made during an employment reference. Can Verma rely on qualified privilege?

- (A) Yes, because job references are privileged communications.
- (B) No, because privilege applies only in legal proceedings.
- (C) Yes, because privilege applies even if the statement is false.
- (D) No, because qualified privilege fails if malice is proven.

130. Principle: A public nuisance is an unreasonable interference with public rights (e.g., health, safety, comfort of community). Unlike private nuisance, which affects individuals, public nuisance affects the public at large. Defences like “public benefit” do not apply if substantial harm is proven.

Facts: A cement factory in City Z ran continuously, emitting fine dust that spread across several kilometres. Residents developed respiratory illnesses, and water supplies were contaminated. The factory argued it was a major employer, providing thousands of jobs, and that public benefit outweighed inconvenience. Is the factory liable for public nuisance?

- (A) Yes, because community health damage constitutes substantial public nuisance.
- (B) No, because public benefit outweighs inconvenience.
- (C) No, because industries enjoy immunity for essential economic activity.
- (D) Yes, but only if negligence in pollution control is proven.

Q131. Principle: False imprisonment occurs when someone’s liberty is unlawfully restrained, even briefly. However, detention may be justified if there is reasonable suspicion or statutory authority. Detention without such basis is actionable, regardless of intent.

Facts: At a luxury mall, security detained Kavita for two hours on suspicion of shoplifting after a sensor alarm

beeped. She repeatedly asked to leave, but was locked in a back room until police arrived. The police found no stolen goods. Kavita sued the mall for false imprisonment. The mall argued it had the right to detain shoplifters. Was Kavita’s detention lawful?

- (A) Yes, because security guards have wide powers to detain suspected shoplifters.
- (B) No, because detention without reasonable evidence amounts to false imprisonment.
- (C) Yes, because good faith belief is sufficient, even without evidence.
- (D) No, because all detentions by private parties are unlawful.

Q132. Principle: Criminal liability requires that the defendant’s act is the operative and substantial cause of harm. A new, intervening act (*novus actus interveniens*) may break the chain of causation if unforeseeable and sufficient to cause harm independently.

Facts: Anil stabbed Bhaskar, causing a serious but non-fatal wound. Doctors at a local hospital negligently left a surgical instrument inside Bhaskar’s abdomen. He died of septicemia. Anil argued that the negligent medical treatment, not his stabbing, caused death. Is Anil guilty of culpable homicide?

- (A) Yes, because his stabbing was the operative cause despite negligent treatment.
- (B) No, because negligent medical treatment was an intervening cause.
- (C) Yes, but only guilty of causing grievous hurt, not homicide.
- (D) No, because doctor’s negligence absolves him completely.

Q133. Principle: The presumption of innocence is a cardinal principle under Article 21 and criminal jurisprudence. Pre-trial detention must be an exception, not the rule. Courts balance liberty with risks of absconding, tampering with evidence, and gravity of offence. Bail cannot be denied merely as punitive detention.

Facts: Farhan, accused of insider trading, was denied bail repeatedly for two years despite no trial commencing. The prosecution argued that financial crimes are “grave” and denying bail would deter others. Farhan’s counsel argued that prolonged incarceration without trial violated his right to liberty. Should bail be granted?

- (A) Yes, because prolonged pre-trial detention violates presumption of innocence.
- (B) No, because financial crimes are grave and deterrence is necessary.
- (C) Yes, but only if he furnishes extraordinary sureties.
- (D) No, because economic offences automatically justify

denial of bail.

(Q134-136): Six days (Mon-Sat), six food trucks—A, B, C, D, E, F—one per day. Each serves a distinct cuisine: Indian, Italian, Lebanese, Japanese, Mexican, Vegan.

1. A is scheduled immediately before B.
2. C is on Wednesday and is not Italian.
3. D is neither Monday nor Saturday.
4. E is on a later day than F.
5. B is either Friday or Saturday.
6. Japanese is two days after Indian. There is a Vegan stall on Monday.
7. Mexican is on the same day as E.
8. Indian is on Tuesday.

Q134. Which truck serves Japanese, and on which day?

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| A. A – Thursday | B. B – Friday |
| C. D – Tuesday | D. F – Monday |

Q135. Which cuisine is paired with truck C, and on what day?

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| A. Vegan – Monday | B. Italian – Friday |
| C. Indian – Tuesday | D. Lebanese – Wednesday |

Q136. On which day does the Mexican cuisine appear?

- | | |
|-----------|-------------|
| A. Monday | B. Tuesday |
| C. Friday | D. Saturday |

(Q137-139): Eight friends — Kabir, Leela, Mohan, Nisha, Omar, Pooja, Rohan, Tara — sit around a circular table facing the centre.

1. Mohan sits immediately clockwise of Leela.
2. Nisha sits two places clockwise from Leela.
3. Pooja sits immediately clockwise of Nisha.
4. Rohan sits immediately clockwise of Pooja.
5. Omar sits exactly opposite Mohan.
6. Tara sits exactly opposite Nisha.
7. Kabir sits immediately anticlockwise of Leela.

Q137. Which pair sits directly opposite each other?

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| A. Leela and Tara | B. Nisha and Kabir |
| C. Pooja and Rohan | D. None of the above. |

Q138. Counting clockwise from Kabir, how many persons sit between Kabir and Pooja?

- | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|
| A. 2 | B. 3 | C. 4 | D. 5 |
|------|------|------|------|

Q139. Which option gives the clockwise order starting from Leela?

- | |
|---|
| A. Leela, Mohan, Nisha, Pooja, Rohan, Omar, Tara, Kabir |
| B. Leela, Mohan, Pooja, Nisha, Rohan, Omar, Tara, Kabir |
| C. Leela, Kabir, Tara, Omar, Rohan, Pooja, Nisha, Mohan |
| D. Leela, Mohan, Nisha, Pooja, Omar, Rohan, Tara, Kabir |

(Q140-142): Eight friends — Anita, Bharat, Chirag, Deepa, Eklavya, Farida, Gaurav, Heena — sit in a straight line in positions 1-8 from left to right, all facing North.

1. Chirag sits immediately to the right of Gaurav.
2. Anita sits immediately to the right of Chirag.
3. Bharat sits immediately to the right of Anita.
4. Exactly one person sits between Bharat and Farida.
5. Deepa sits between Bharat and Farida.
6. Eklavya occupies an extreme end.
7. Heena sits immediately to the left of Eklavya.
8. Gaurav occupies the other extreme end.

Q140. Who sits at the extreme right end?

- | | |
|-----------|------------|
| A. Gaurav | B. Eklavya |
| C. Heena | D. Farida |

Q141. How many persons sit between Chirag and Heena?

- | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|
| A. 3 | B. 4 | C. 2 | D. 5 |
|------|------|------|------|

Q142. Which pair sits together (adjacent)?

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| A. Deepa and Heena | B. Anita and Bharat |
| C. Chirag and Deepa | D. Farida and Eklavya |

(Q143-145): Six residents — Alia (A), Bharat (B), Charu (C), Deepak (D), Esha (E), Farhan (F) — live on distinct floors of a dorm (1 = ground ... 6 = top). Each heads one distinct campus committee: Logistics, Treasury, Tech, Wellness, Publicity, Outreach.

1. Charu heads Publicity and lives on a higher floor than Deepak, who heads Treasury.
2. The Tech lead lives on the 3rd floor and the Wellness lead lives one floor above Tech.
3. Farhan is neither Tech nor Wellness and lives immediately above the Publicity lead.
4. Alia lives on floor 1 and heads Logistics.
5. Bharat does not head Treasury or Wellness.

Q143. Which floor does Charu live on?

- | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| A. 4th | B. 3rd | C. 5th | D. 6th |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|

Q144. Who heads the Wellness committee?

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| A. Deepak | B. Esha |
| C. Farhan | D. Bharat |

Q145. Who lives on the 3rd floor, and what committee do they head?

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| A. Alia – Logistics | B. Deepak – Treasury |
| C. Bharat – Tech | D. Charu – Publicity |

Q146. Ravi starts from his home, walks 3 km north, then takes a left turn and walks 4 km. He then takes another left turn and walks 3 km, after which he turns right and walks 2 km. How far is Ravi from his starting point, and in which direction with respect to the start?

- A. 2 km, East B. 4 km, East
C. 2 km, West D. 6 km, West

Q147. Meena starts facing east. She walks 5 km forward, turns right, and walks 3 km. She then turns right again and walks 7 km, followed by another right turn and walks 3 km. Finally, she turns left and walks 2 km. In which direction is Meena facing now, and how far is she from the starting point?

- A. Facing West, 4 km away
B. Facing West, 5 km away
C. Facing North, 2 km away
D. Facing East, 4 km away

Q148. Statements: In Quarter 3, the Metro Police Department revised its incident taxonomy: “non-injury assaults” were reclassified as “public disturbances,” which no longer count toward the “serious incidents” KPI reported to the mayor’s office. Patrol staffing, patrol hours, and hotspot locations remained unchanged. After the change, the city reported a 24% decline in “serious incidents.” Officials announced that the city had “become substantially safer.” The reported decline in the KPI is treated as evidence of a real decline in violent harm, even though category definitions—and not underlying behavior—changed. The conclusion rests on the assumption that the KPI still measures the same construct of “serious harm” post-change. Which scenario is most analogous in its logic to the officials’ inference?

- a) A university lowers the GPA threshold for “Dean’s List,” sees a 30% rise in honorees, and concludes student ability has increased.
b) A factory upgrades sensors that catch more defects, reports a higher defect rate, and concludes quality has worsened.
c) A hospital adds a new therapy, mortality falls with no change to coding or case mix, and it concludes the therapy is effective.
d) A retailer moves headphones from “Electronics” to “Accessories,” observes “Electronics” revenue fall, and concludes demand for electronics is down overall.

149. Statements: The state’s “Skills4All” job-training scheme reported that participants were 10 percentage points more likely to be employed six months after completion than non-participants in the same districts. Participation required passing a motivation interview and basic numeracy screen.

During the evaluation window, two large industrial parks opened in the same districts, adding entry-level vacancies. Program leaders concluded the scheme caused the observed employment gains. Leaders implicitly assume selection into training does not bias comparisons, and that concurrent labor-demand shocks did not primarily drive the outcome. Which finding most strongly undercuts the causal claim?

- a) In districts where intake slots were lotteried among eligible applicants, employment gains for lottery-winners (trained) were statistically indistinguishable from lottery-losers (untrained).
b) Employers reported that trained candidates performed better in interviews than non-participants.
c) The largest employment gains among participants were in the two districts with the fastest-growing industrial parks.
d) Participants, on average, had higher baseline employment rates than non-participants before training began.

150. Statements: Tech firm Oriole shifted to a four-day, 32-hour workweek while keeping salaries constant. In the subsequent quarter, output per employee rose 8% year-over-year. In the same week the policy began, Oriole laid off the bottom 5% of performers and paused two low-margin product lines. Executive leadership announced, “The four-day week increased productivity.” Management treats the productivity gain as attributable to schedule change rather than to compositional upgrades (layoffs) or mix effects (pruning low-margin work). They also assume demand stability and no unusual seasonality. Which assumption must be true for the attribution to the four-day week to be warranted?

- a) No exogenous demand shock (e.g., viral marketing) raised output in that quarter compared to the prior year.
b) The workforce reduction and product pauses did not account for most of the 8% productivity increase relative to what would have occurred without the schedule change.
c) Employee self-reported well-being improved significantly after the policy change.
d) Competitors that did not change schedules saw flat productivity over the same quarter.

SECTION A: - ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Passage 1:

Q1. Correct option: A (Difficulty: Hard) Line reference: L1, L5–L7, L13–L16. The passage opens by asserting that experience shapes the brain (L1, L5–L7) and culminates in a reflective caution about digital applications' impact on cognition (L16), framed by evidence of use-dependent growth and underuse-related “shutting down” (L13–L14).

Option A synthesizes these strands: lifelong experience-dependence, the risks of underuse, and a call to reflect on digital disruption.

Why not B? It contradicts L11–L12, where adult brains do show plasticity; the author does not dismiss concerns.

Why not C? The text explicitly extends beyond vision: taxi-driver spatial memory (L9–L11) and speech therapy in late life (L12).

Why not D? The author urges reflection, not prohibition or technophobia (see the measured “pause and ponder” in L16).

Q2. Correct option: C (Difficulty: Hard) Line reference: L7. “Plasticity” is used to mean the brain's malleability/adaptiveness—its structure/functions shaped by experience.

Option C nails the context: synonym “malleability/adaptiveness” and antonym “rigidity/fixity,” which would deny experience-driven change.

Why not A? “Elasticity” can be metaphorically near, but “neurogenesis” (new neuron formation) is not an antonym of plasticity; it's a different process entirely.

Why not B? The passage rejects the “childhood-only” limitation (L11–L12). “Maturation” isn't the conceptual opposite of plasticity.

Why not D? “Transparency/opacity” are semantic mismatches in this neuroscientific context.

Q3. Correct option: D (Difficulty: Hard) Line reference: L6, L14. The text shows that circuits can become functionally “dead” despite intact anatomy (L6) and warns that underuse can “shut down” regions (L14).

Option D captures this: use-dependent functional atrophy (“use-it-or-lose-it”).

Why not A? “Irreversible death at any age” overstates the claim and ignores L12's rehabilitation example (speech therapy aiding recovery).

Why not B? The author urges caution, not inevitability of universal harm.

Why not C? Immediate erasure after any reduction is an exaggeration; the passage emphasizes sustained deprivation/underuse, not instant loss.

Q4. Correct option: B (Difficulty: Medium-Hard) Line reference: L11–L12. “This also explains” (L12) most directly refers to the demonstrated adult plasticity shown just before (L11): repeated activation → structural change. That insight explains how therapy can drive recovery.

Why not A? Bus drivers are a contrast group; their routine (L10) is not the antecedent of “this.”

Why not C? The author questions the static/decline assumption (L8) by presenting contrary evidence.

Why not D? The street count (L9) is background detail, not the explanatory mechanism for speech recovery.

Q5. Correct option: A (Difficulty: Hard) Line reference: L3–L4, L10–L11. The animal studies show deprivation → reduced function (L3–L4), whereas taxi drivers show practice-driven, time-correlated enlargement (L10–L11). Option A maps both: calculator reliance = underuse → fluency decline (deprivation analogue), abacus training = intensive practice → measurable strengthening (experience-dependent growth) proportional to hours.

Why not B? It posits a paradox (more reading yet worse vocabulary; improvement without study) unsupported by the passage's use-dependence logic.

Why not C? Rest without training leading to superior performance contradicts the practice-benefit relationship.

Why not D? Avoidance improving outcomes ignores the central theme that engagement drives capability.

Q6. Correct option: D (Difficulty: Medium-Hard) Line reference: L16 (with context from L13–L14). The author urges us to “pause and ponder” digital apps' cognitive effects (L16), grounded in evidence that experience sculpts the brain (L13) and underuse can “shut down” functions (L14).

Option D reflects this cautious, reflective stance—mindful agency, not panic or cheerleading.

Why not A? There is no ban-the-tech rhetoric.

Why not B? No celebration; the tone is cautionary.

Why not C? The final paragraph is normative—it invites deliberation, not mere summary.

Q7. Correct option: A (Difficulty: Medium-Hard) Line reference: L10. The study found local enlargement of the posterior hippocampus, with changes strongly correlating to time navigating without aids; bus drivers, who repeat fixed routes, showed no changes (L10). Option A reproduces these specifics.

Why not B? It misidentifies the region (anterior vs posterior) and reverses which group changed.

Why not C? The correlation with navigation time is

explicit; equality across groups is false.

Why not D? The passage says nothing about spinal cord neurogenesis; it confines findings to hippocampal structure.

Passage 2:

Q8. Correct option: C (Difficulty: Hard; Line: L19, with support from L12–L18) The essay argues that the Court's two orders expose systemic inadequacies (L2–L3, L7) and that humane policy must ensure safe public access (L13), institutional compassion (rehoming, shelters, humane euthanasia where necessary: L14), and legislative overhaul (replace 1960 Act, classifications, mandated standards: L15–L16), plus costing, veterinary cadre, waste management, and anti-abandonment penalties (L17–L18). The warning that, absent these, India will "trade visible menace for invisible neglect" (L19) clinches the thesis.

Why not A? It rejects shelters outright and subordinates safety; the author supports regulated shelters and safe public spaces (L13, L16).

Why not B? The author says ABC updates (2023) are insufficient without 70% sterilisation (L6) and calls for new statute (L15).

Why not D? The author rebuts objections to shelters by asserting they can work if properly resourced (L9–L10), not that they are unworkable.

Q9. Correct option: A (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L14) "Compassion is not annulled..." (L14) uses annulled to mean "made null/invalidated." Thus synonym = nullified/invalidated; antonym = affirmed/upheld—i.e., compassion remains valid even if dogs are removed from roads.

Why not B? "Softened/hardened" concerns intensity, not validity; it misses the legal/operative sense of annul.

Why not C? "Celebrated/mourned" is an affective contrast irrelevant to the operative validity in context.

Why not D? "Delayed/expedited" is temporal, not about voiding/validating a principle.

Q10. Correct option: B (Difficulty: Medium; Lines: L2–L3) The passage states the Court on August 11, 2025 ordered rounding up and confinement (L2) and eleven days later allowed release after vaccination and deworming, retaining aggressive or rabid dogs (L3).

Why not A? It invents a date and bans any release, contradicting L3's conditional release.

Why not C? L4–L5 say India bears one of the heaviest rabies burdens, with real family costs, not low burden.

Why not D? ABC update year is 2023 (L6), and coverages have not crossed 70% in major cities (L11), the opposite of the claim.

Q11. Correct option: C (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L11) In "if canine facilities are in squalor — which may have motivated the Court to change course — ..." (L11), the which clause most directly refers to the squalor itself—the poor conditions of canine facilities possibly prompting the Court's reversal.

Why not A or B? Neglect and fragmentation are listed as causes of squalor later in the sentence, not the thing that "may have motivated" the Court.

Why not D? Cattle institutions are mentioned separately as a contrast/example (L10), not as the antecedent of "which."

Q12. Correct option: D (Difficulty: Hard; Lines: L15–L18) The recommended architecture: replace the outdated 1960 Act (L15), classify dogs (adoptable/shelter-bound/unfit) and mandate minimum-standard municipal shelters (L16), count strays and cost upkeep realistically (L17), and buttress with a national veterinary cadre, better waste management, and penalties for abandonment (L18).

Option D mirrors these planks in order. Why not A? Criminalising feeding and ad-hoc rescues lack classifications, standards, or costing—contrary to L16–L18.

Why not B? Outsourcing to NGOs without legal architecture or enforcement ignores the statutory and systemic supports the author demands (L15–L18).

Why not C? Minimal vaccination plus mass release repeats the weaknesses already flagged (L6–L7) and omits systemic supports (L15–L18).

Q13. Correct option: C (Difficulty: Medium; Lines: L1, L7, L12–L16) The author calls the Court's attempt "earnest, even if inadequate" (L1) and praises the August 11 order for acknowledging inadequacy in dense settlements (L7). He insists cultural perspectives matter (L12) but cannot override safe public access (L13), urging a new statute, classifications, and standards (L15–L16). That is a balanced, reform-oriented stance embedding safety and compassion within institutions.

Why not A? The author does not dismiss cultural perspectives; he situates them within rights (L12–L13).

Why not B? It misreads the reversal as proof of harmlessness and endorses status quo ABC, which the author finds inadequate (L6–L7, L15).

Why not D? He endorses humane euthanasia only for incurably aggressive/ill animals (L14), not mass euthanasia.

Q14. Correct option: A (Difficulty: Medium–Hard; Lines: L19 with support from L11) "Trading visible menace for invisible neglect" (L19) implies that without systemic reforms, moving dogs off streets into underfunded,

opaque facilities simply displaces harm: fear/injuries in public may fall, but hidden cruelty, disease, and costs persist (cf. squalor risk, L11). Option A captures this displacement logic. Why not B? The passage never claims removal automatically solves rabies or family burdens; it demands comprehensive supports (L15–L18). Why not C? The line warns against neglect in shelters, not against shelters per se. Why not D? Ecological-niche worries appear earlier (L11) but L19's contrast is about visibility vs neglect, not solely niche dynamics.

Passage 3:

Q15. Correct option: C (Difficulty: Hard; Line: L7) The core arc threads a local Liverpool welfare-and-repatriation case into larger imperial anxieties about precedent ("succession of cases...prevent their recurrence," L7), then situates this against decades-long patterns: warnings about Cuba (L8), repatriation claims (L9), illegal-transit complaints (L10), revolutionary concerns (L11), and finally the opposition to recruiting Indian labour for Cuba (L16).

Option C integrates these strands: a case study revealing systemic worries and policy resistance across the empire. Why not A? No evidence of promoting permanent settlement in Liverpool; the Board was obliged to care or repatriate (L2–L3), not to settle labour markets.

Why not B? London did not prioritise Cuban labour; the narrative culminates in opposition from the Government of India's Home Department (L16).

Why not D? The text shows the reverse: Spanish planters petitioned (L13), but Indian authorities resisted (L16); there's no enthusiastic promotion of free movement by colonial India.

Q16. Correct option: A (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L2) "Destitute" in context denotes extreme poverty and lack of means, triggering legal obligations for care (L2). Thus the best synonym is impoverished/penniless, and the antonym is solvent/self-sufficient. Why not B? "Itinerant/nomadic" relates to movement patterns, not economic incapacity that activates welfare duties. Why not C? "Disloyal/treacherous" concerns allegiance, not material condition. Why not D? "Transient/temporary" is a duration attribute; again, unrelated to financial means or legal eligibility for assistance.

Q17. Correct option: B (Difficulty: Easy-Medium; Line: L5) The passage states that, after providing food and accommodation and seeking guidance (L4), the High Commissioner recommended repatriation because the men wished to return and agreed to share the cost (L5). Option B tracks these steps precisely. Why not A? The

Board did contact the High Commissioner (L4), and there is no unilateral deportation without consultation or cost share. Why not C? The High Commissioner did not insist on the men staying; he endorsed repatriation (L5). Why not D? Local care was lawful and actually provided (L2, L4); repatriation was an option (L3), not the only lawful path.

Q18. Correct option: C (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L7) "Their recurrence" refers to a feared succession of cases of the kind (L7)—i.e., similar episodes of destitute Indian subjects requiring assistance/repatriation. The Assistant Secretary's phrasing expressly links recurrence to the category of cases, not to letters or police encounters. Why not A? The anxiety is not about general police approaches but about the case-type repeating (L7). Why not B? Letters are merely vehicles; the concern is the substantive recurrence of like cases. Why not D? Complaints from the US/Canada appear later (L10) and relate to Cuba; L7 addresses the Liverpool-type welfare/repatriation precedent.

Q19. Correct option: D (Difficulty: Hard; Line: L16) Spanish planters petitioned to import Indian labour (L13–L15), but the Government of India's Home Department strongly opposed the plan (L16). Option D mirrors this: private economic pressure + petition → central governmental opposition to exposing subjects to such recruitment. Why not A? Authorisation "without scrutiny" runs counter to the described opposition (L16). Why not B? Conscription is alien to the facts and miscasts civil labour as military service. Why not C? Mandating permanent migration pathways in response to a private consortium reverses the documented governmental stance (opposition, L16).

Q20. Correct option: C (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L9) The piece is archival and balanced: it juxtaposes a Liverpool case with empire-wide concerns—repatriation claims from Cuba (L9), illegal-transit complaints (L10), revolutionary fears (L11)—and closes on policy resistance to Cuban recruitment (L16). Option C captures this evidence-driven weave. Why not A? No advocacy for mass migration to Cuba; the narrative shows governmental opposition (L16). Why not B? There's no fiscal polemic against welfare; the Board's obligations are neutrally described (L2–L4). Why not D? Neither Britain nor Cuba is portrayed as frictionless settlement zones; the text emphasises administrative anxieties and contested proposals.

Q21. Correct option: A (Difficulty: Medium-Hard; Line: L7) The Assistant Secretary seeks to avoid a "succession of cases" and prevent their recurrence (L7), signalling

fear of setting a precedent that could multiply similar claims, with cost-sharing and coordination implications for imperial offices. Option A states this administrative-precedent logic.

Why not B? There's no intent to criminalise destitution; the Board remains obliged to assist (L2).

Why not C? The very act of flagging the case to the Government of India's department shows it is not merely local (L7).

Why not D? The text does not imply police discipline; the concern is policy recurrence, not misconduct.

Passage 4:

Q22. Correct option: C (Difficulty: Hard; Line: L3 with support from L1-L2, L9-L15) The passage anchors Malaysia's megadiversity (L1) and forest/protected-area footprint (L2), then argues this makes it spectacular for wildlife watching (L3). It proceeds to marquee taxa and sites (L4-L12) and emphasises that in-the-wild, guided experiences surpass sanctuary visits for immediacy (L9-L10, L15-L16). Option C synthesises these threads. Why not A? The text praises Sepilok (L7-L8) but explicitly states that nothing matches wild sightings (L9). Why not B? The author affirms—not downplays—biodiversity and recommends multiple terrestrial sites (L10-L12, L15-L16). Why not D? It never claims guided tourism is unnecessary; rather, it endorses guided tours (L9-L10, L16).

Q23. Correct option: D (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L6) "Refuge" contextually denotes a place of safety/shelter for the Malayan tiger. "Sanctuary/safe haven" is the closest synonym; the antonym is exposure/peril, the opposite condition for a critically endangered species. Why not A? "Vantage/overlook" concern viewpoint, not protection. Why not B? "Corridor/bottleneck" are movement/flow terms; not core to "refuge" as safety. Why not C? "Frontier/hinterland" are spatial-political, not safety vs danger.

Q24. Correct option: B (Difficulty: Easy-Medium; Lines: L4, L11) The passage explicitly says around 750 bird species, with 10 hornbill species (L4), and calls Royal Belum the best place to see hornbills, with Tasik Kenyir close behind (L11). Why not A? Sepilok is "the world's largest orangutan sanctuary" (L7); Cameron Highlands is mentioned for mountain peacock-pheasant (L12), not orangutan release. Why not C? Taman Negara is "at least 130 million years old" (L15), not 13 million; Mount Tahan is the highest in Peninsular Malaysia (L15), not Borneo. Why not D? Figures invert the text: forest >50% (L2) and protected ~14% (L2), not the reverse.

Q25. Correct option: A (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L9 with antecedent in L7-L8) "These" in L9 follows directly after the Sepilok paragraph (L7-L8) about orangutans; the author then contrasts sanctuary viewing with seeing these (i.e., orangutans) in the wild. Why not B? Hornbills appear in L4 and are revisited later (L11), but "these" is deictically tied to the immediately preceding subject. Why not C/D? Elephants and tapirs (L5) and the great slaty woodpecker (L4) are not the immediate antecedents of "these" in the discourse structure.

Q26. Correct option: C (Difficulty: Medium-Hard; Lines: L7-L9, L10, L16) The author values Sepilok (L7-L8) but insists wild encounters outshine sanctuary viewing (L9), recommending guided tours (L10, L16). Option C mirrors this duality: centres provide close education, while guided field experiences deliver authenticity and diversity. Why not A/D? Both reject the text's hierarchy by claiming captive settings surpass wild experiences—contrary to "nothing matches" (L9). Why not B? Suggests treks are unnecessary; the author champions treks and guided hikes (L13-L16).

Q27. Correct option: A (Difficulty: Medium; Lines: L1-L3, L9-L16) The tone is enthusiastic yet grounded: macro context (megadiversity, forest cover, protected areas—L1-L2) linked to site-specific guidance (Kinabatangan, Royal Belum, Fraser's Hill, Taman Negara—L10-L16). It privileges wild, guided encounters over captive ones (L9-L10). Why not B? No ban is urged; hiking is encouraged (L13-L16). Why not C? The piece is not a transport manual; it's natural-history guidance. Why not D? The author explicitly points to dependable hornbill zones (L11).

Q28. Correct option: A (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L15) By stressing ancient age (≥130 million years) and offering a spectrum of experiences (canopy walkways to multi-day Mount Tahan treks), the text implies a tiered design: casual exposure to canopy ecology and deeper immersion for committed trekkers, matching the forest's scale/antiquity. Why not B? The author never says wildlife is scarce or discourages guided treks; instead they encourage them (L16). Why not C? The age claim is ecological/geological, not a replanting programme. Why not D? No such prohibitions are stated; the walkways/treks are presented as available (L15-L16).

Passage 5:

Q29. Correct option: A (Difficulty: Hard; Line: L18) The passage culminates in a prescriptive appeal—"The world cannot allow Israel to continue devastating Gaza any further" (L18)—after laying out evidence: IPC's formal

famine declaration (L4–L6), blockade and direct control of aid (L9–L11), killings at food centres (L12–L13), escalation despite outrage and a ceasefire acceptance (L14), and an alleged intent to destroy Palestinian society (L16). Option A alone synthesises that evidentiary chain into a thesis plus injunction. Why not B? The piece does assign responsibility repeatedly (L8–L13, L16) and is not agnostic. Why not C? It is not a narrow administrative critique of the GHF; the policy frame is broader (blockade, control, lethal force, L9–L13). Why not D? The text asserts policies have worsened hunger, not merely warned of it (L9–L11).

Q30. Correct option: B (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L3) “Token concerns” (L3) means perfunctory/nominal expressions lacking meaningful effect; the fitting antonym is substantive/meaningful. Thus B matches both the contextual synonym and the antonym. Why not A? “Ceremonial/formalistic” is close, but “diplomatic/neutral” is not the opposite of token; it describes stance, not depth/impact. Why not C? “Abundant/plentiful” contradicts the sense; the passage critiques insufficiency, not excess. Why not D? “Empathetic/compassionate” misreads tone—“token” criticises superficiality, not empathy level; “indifferent/apathetic” isn’t the precise antonym of token’s lack of substance.

Q31. Correct option: C (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L9) The text says that in March 2025 Israel imposed a total three-month blockade (L9), and later, upon allowing limited food, the GHF replaced the UN-led distribution (L10). C reproduces these facts. Why not A? L4 explicitly says the IPC confirmed a man-made famine; it did not refuse. Why not B? L13 states more than 1,300 deaths at food centres since May, not fewer than 200. Why not D? Blockade since 2007 (L8), and UN distribution was replaced (L10), so both claims are false.

Q32. Correct option: D (Difficulty: Easy; Line: L10) In “When it began allowing a limited amount of food...” (L10), the antecedent is Israel, the only subject controlling entry and then easing to permit limited food. Why not A? The GHF appears as a consequence of that allowance; it did not do the allowing. Why not B? The UN was the previous distributor and is not the actor here. Why not C? Hamas is not the grammatical antecedent in this sentence and is not said to control inbound goods.

Q33. Correct option: A (Difficulty: Hard; Line: L14) Option A parallels the passage’s causal chain: warnings → blockages and control (L9–L11) → lethal distribution sites (L12–L13) → international outrage + mediation-

backed truce (Qatar/Egypt) yet intensified operations (L14). It captures the policy → harm → condemnation → escalation arc.

Why not B/C/D? Each reverses or sanitises causality—showing improved outcomes, independent audits, or safe queue management—contradicting the text’s account of worsening harm and escalation (L11–L14).

Q34. Correct option: B (Difficulty: Medium-Hard; Line: L4) The voice is editorial and accusatory, not neutral: a man-made famine is declared (L4–L6); Israeli policies (blockade, control of aid, lethal force) are indicted (L9–L13); the piece assigns intent to destroy (L16) and ends with a normative call (L18). Option B alone captures tone (condemnatory), method (data + moral argument), and purpose (prescriptive). Why not A? The text is plainly not neutral (L16, L18). Why not C? It does not defend crowd-control or GHF; it condemns killings and replacement of UN mechanisms (L10–L13). Why not D? The piece is deeply political and moral, not a logistics brief (L4–L6, L9–L18).

Q35. Correct option: A (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L6) The IPC’s mortality rate “two in every 10,000 daily” (L6), alongside “one in five households extreme shortages” and “a third or more children acutely malnourished” (L5), indicates a Stage-5-type humanitarian collapse in plain terms: mortality and malnutrition consistent with a famine-level emergency. A states that the pattern reflects systemic deprivation, fitting the passage’s “man-made famine” framing (L4). Why not B? The data are population-level, not a single-site anomaly (L5–L6). Why not C? The text says this is the first officially declared famine in West Asia (L4), not seasonal variation. Why not D? The metrics do not imply improvement and the option adds an irrelevant exclusion; the passage stresses worsening conditions (L9–L14).

Passage 6:

Q36. Correct option: A (Difficulty: Hard; Line: L23 with support from L3–L4, L16–L18, L24) The passage charts a clinician’s movement from scepticism (L3) to cautious openness (L4) and anchors the plausibility of conch-blowing in airway muscle training with scientific backing (L23) and evidence that exercises can help mild-moderate OSA (L24). It simultaneously keeps standard treatments central (L16–L18). Why B? Overstates: nowhere does the author recommend replacing CPAP; CPAP remains the gold standard (L17). Why C? Minimises danger; OSA is serious with neurocognitive and cardiometabolic risks (L13–L15). Why D? Contradicted by L19–L20 (lifestyle helps) and L23–L24 (exercises have backing).

Q37. Correct option: B (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L7) “Novel” here means new/original; its antonym in this context is familiar/established. The sentence contrasts long-standing cultural use (L6) with a new therapeutic suggestion (L7).

Why A? “Ornate/plain” describes style, not temporal/innovative status. Why C? “Speculative/factual” concerns evidentiary status, not newness. Why D? “Symbolic/literal” concerns meaning type, not novelty.

Q38. Correct option: C (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L17 with support from L16, L18) The text defines standard care as keeping the airway open (L16). CPAP delivers steady airflow acting like an internal splint (L17); options also include oral appliances (jaw advancement), tonsil/adenoid surgery, and electrical stimulation methods (L18). Why A? Misdefines CPAP (“partial”) and falsely claims abandonment; CPAP is “gold standard” (L17). Why B? Mischaracterises priorities; CPAP and oral devices remain central (L16–L18). Why D? Lifestyle helps (L19–L20) but is not said to suffice for severe OSA; the text keeps device/surgical options in play (L16–L18).

Q39. Correct option: D (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L7) The clause “the suggestion that it might help” points back to the conch shell used as a trumpet (i.e., the practice of blowing it) introduced in L5 and framed as novel when tied to therapy (L7). Why A? The condition doesn’t “help” itself. Why B? Cultures are not the referent; the novelty is therapeutic application, not anthropological usage. Why C? “Airway muscle training” is named later (L23) as a concept; the pronoun precedes that label and refers to the conch-blowing practice.

Q40. Correct option: A (Difficulty: Medium-Hard; Line: L22 with support from L23–L24) L22 explains that blowing through a narrow opening trains upper-airway muscles; L23 states this training has scientific backing; L24 notes improvements in mild-moderate OSA. Option A mirrors this mechanism → evidence → adjunct framing. Why B? Headphones don’t address airway patency; apnoea is not mere noise-arousal. Why C? Relaxes tissues—the passage warns alcohol/smoking make tissues floppier (L20), worsening symptoms. Why D? Avoiding exercise has no mechanistic link to preventing airway collapse; the text recommends training, not deconditioning (L22–L24).

Q41. Correct option: B (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L23 with support from L3–L4, L16–L18, L24) The author’s

tone is clinical and cautious: from scepticism (L3) to measured openness (L4), grounded in scientific backing (L23) and modest outcome claims (improvements in mild-moderate OSA, L24). CPAP remains the gold standard with other options listed (L16–L18). Why A? Overclaim: no replacement of CPAP is advocated; CPAP is affirmed (L17). Why C? Opposite: targeted exercises are explicitly supported (L23–L24). Why D? The piece is not cultural only; it makes medical claims and mechanisms (L22–L24).

Q42. Correct option: A (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L22 with support from L24) From L22’s mechanism—blowing trains upper-airway muscles—and L24’s evidence—exercises can improve mild-moderate OSA—the reasonable inference is that conch-blowing could serve as a targeted adjunct. It does not supplant standard therapy. Why B? Guarantees/cure claims are absent; severity gradation matters (L24). Why C? Misreads physiology: collapse relates to insufficient tone; relaxation can worsen it (cf. L20). Why D? Behavioural/mechanical training is explicitly supported (L23–L24); electrical stimulation is only one option (L18).

Passage 7:

Q43. Correct option: A (Difficulty: Hard; Line: L15–L17) The thesis rejects prohibition as the optimal tool (L5, L6–L8) and foregrounds multiple costs: economic (L9–L11), fiscal (L12–L13), and investment-sentiment/policy-credibility (L14). The culminating recommendation is regulation rather than a ban—“more considered/prudent approach... light-touch... clarity, checks, redressal” (L15–L17). A alone synthesises these strands. Why not B? It endorses prohibition despite the passage’s explicit doubts (L5, L6–L8) and contrary economic/fiscal evidence (L9–L14). Why not C? Misreads GST data; the author says revenues rose 412% post-28% GST (L13) and warns a ban will hurt finances (L12). Why not D? The ban covers both skill and chance (L2); the option reverses this and invokes a rationale not in the text.

Q44. Correct option: B (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L1) “Fell blow” is idiomatic for deadly/grievous; the natural antonym is benign/beneficial, the opposite of ruinous impact. B aligns with the collocation and tone of L1. Why not A? Inverts sense (gentle ≠ fell); “harsh/severe” is the synonym, not the antonym. Why not C? “Accidental/unplanned” addresses intent, not severity. Why not D? “Minor/trivial” is antonymic but lacks a matching strong synonym; the pair doesn’t fit the idiom.

Q45. Correct option: C (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L2, L13, L14)

C faithfully compiles facts: ban covers skill + chance; ad/promo prohibited (L2); GST receipts rose 412% to ₹6,909 cr from ₹1,349 cr (L13); EY investments ₹22,931 cr (L14). Why not A? Inverts PwC numbers—text says ₹16,500 cr (2023) rising to ₹26,500 cr (2028) (L10). Why not B? Rate is 28%, not 18%; collections rose, not fell (L13). Why not D? Offshore markets are beyond jurisdiction, harder to police (L6–L7), the opposite of the claim.

Q46. Correct option: D (Difficulty: Easy; Line: L6–L7) “This” refers to the immediately preceding causal condition: a ban driving activity to unregulated/offshore markets beyond Indian jurisdiction (L6), which “will make it harder to address” concerns (L7). Why not A/B/C? None is the antecedent in the syntactic/logic chain; the referent is the offshoring of activity due to the ban, not GST, PwC projections, or parliamentary debate.

Q47. Correct option: A (Difficulty: Hard; Line: L6–L8, L9–L13, L17) The passage’s core logic is prohibition → offshoring/illegality → weaker oversight + worse harms → fiscal/economic damage → argue for regulated clarity. A mirrors that chain precisely and culminates in a supervised/licensing alternative (cf. L17). Why not B/C/D? They claim prohibitions/nationalisation/curfews cleanly achieve aims without displacement or harm—contradicting L6–L8 and the cautionary thrust of the piece.

Q48. Correct option: B (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L15–L17) The tone is a critical, evidence-driven editorial: it flags social harms (L2–L4) yet argues bans underperform (L6–L8) and impose economic/fiscal/investment costs (L9–L14).

The prescriptive close urges a prudent, light-touch regulatory design with clarity, checks, and grievance redressal (L15–L17). Why not A? The author explicitly questions bans (L5–L8). Why not C? It is not neutral; it advocates a path (L17). Why not D? No boosterism; the tone is policy-analytic, not promotional.

Q49. Correct option: C (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L14) “Capricious” policy = erratic/whimsical, unsettling investors; the antonym is consistent/steadfast policy, which would inspire confidence. C fits the investment-sentiment warning in L14.

Why not A/B/D? These address unrelated axes (spending legality/opacity), not volatility vs reliability of policymaking.

Q50. Correct option: D (Difficulty: Medium; Line: L8) By saying history is replete with failed bans/prohibitions/controls (L8), the author implies the current ban will likely miss its aims, strengthening the case for regulatory solutions. D captures that inference and links it to the passage’s concluding recommendations (L15–L17). Why not A? The author relies on historical analogy to argue policy, not dismiss it. Why not B? Recommends more ban, contrary to the lesson drawn (L8). Why not C? The author does not propose dormancy; they actively prescribe regulatory architecture (L17).

SECTION B: - CURRENT AFFAIRS (INCLUDING GENERAL KNOWLEDGE)

Q51. Answer: C. July 1, 2024 [Difficulty: Easy]
Explanation: These three laws, replacing the IPC, CrPC, and Evidence Act, were enacted to create a citizen-centric legal framework and came into force on July 1, 2024

Options A and B predate the actual implementation.
Option D is too late, post the effective date.

Q52. Answer: D. Jasprit Bumrah [Difficulty: Easy]
Explanation: India clinched the title in the 2024 T20 World Cup, with Jasprit Bumrah earning Player of the Series honours.

Q53. Answer: B. Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE, and Indonesia [Difficulty: Medium] Explanation: BRICS expanded in 2024 to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE, and Indonesia joined in January 2025

Q54. Answer: A. China in 2026, India in 2027 [Difficulty: Easy] Explanation: India and China agreed to support each other's BRICS summits: China will back India's hosting in 2026, and India will reciprocate in 2027

Q55. Answer: B. Home Affairs [Difficulty: Medium] Explanation: The Registrar General of India (RGI) operates under the Ministry of Home Affairs

Q56. Answer: A. Exercise Maitree [Difficulty: Medium] Explanation: Exercise Maitree is the long-standing joint military drill between India and Thailand

Q57. Answer: B. August 23 – Chandrayaan-3 successful soft-landing [Difficulty: Medium] Explanation: National Space Day in India is celebrated on August 23, commemorating the Chandrayaan-3 successful soft-landing on the Moon

Q58. Answer: A. Naya Bharat [Difficulty: Easy] Explanation: The national theme for India's 79th Independence Day in 2025 was "Naya Bharat", reflecting the vision of a developed India.

Q59. Answer: B. Bridging Research, Innovation, and Policy for a Sustainable Future [Difficulty: Medium] Explanation: The TRIPS 2025 (Technology, Research, Innovation, and Policy Summit) at IIT Kanpur carried the theme: Bridging Research, Innovation, and Policy for a Sustainable Future

Q60. Answer: D. 50% tariff on Indian exports [Difficulty: Easy] Explanation: The U.S. imposed an additional 25% tariff, making the total duty 50% on Indian-origin goods,

citing India's increased imports of Russian oil.

Q61. Answer: B. INS Udaygiri and INS Himgiri [Difficulty: Medium] Explanation: The Indian Navy commissioned two advanced stealth frigates—INS Udaygiri and INS Himgiri—at Vizag, marking the first simultaneous induction of such warships from different shipyards

Q62. Answer: C. Serengeti 2.0 [Difficulty: Hard] Explanation: Interpol's "Serengeti 2.0" operation (June–August 2025) resulted in 1,209 arrests, recovery of nearly US\$97.4 million, and seizure of costly crypto-mining equipment across Africa and the UK.

Q63. Answer: B. Media access for international journalists [Difficulty: Medium] Explanation: The Media Freedom Coalition urged Israel to grant journalists immediate access to Gaza, citing safety and transparency concerns during escalating conflict.

Q64. Answer: B. Steam atmospheres over exotic phases of water on sub-Neptunes [Difficulty: Hard] Explanation: Researchers modeled "steam worlds"—sub-Neptune exoplanets with steamy atmospheres over phases of water neither liquid nor gas, expanding our understanding beyond our solar system

Q65. Answer: D [Difficulty: Medium]
Explanation:

Option D is correct: Article 326 provides for universal adult suffrage, and the 61st Constitutional Amendment, 1988, reduced the voting age from 21 to 18 years. Moreover, the right to vote is a statutory right, not a fundamental right, and can be amended by ordinary law of Parliament.

Option A is incorrect: The voting age is 18, not 21.

Option B is incorrect: It was the 61st Amendment, not the 42nd, that reduced the age. Option C is incorrect: Right to vote is a statutory right, not a fundamental right.

Q66. Answer: B. Grand Collar of the National Order of the Southern Cross [Difficulty: Medium]

Explanation:

Option B is correct: The Indian PM was awarded Brazil's highest civilian honor, the Grand Collar of the National Order of the Southern Cross.

Option A (Order of Rio Branco) is another Brazilian order but not the highest civilian award.

Option C (Order of the Rising Sun) is Japan's honor.

Option D (Order of Prince Henry) is Portugal's civilian award.

Q67. Answer: D. Australia and United Kingdom [Difficulty: Medium]

Explanation:

Option D is correct: The Geelong Treaty is a landmark 50-year defence cooperation agreement signed between Australia and the UK under AUKUS Pillar I.

Option A: The US is a founding member of AUKUS but not part of this bilateral treaty.

Option C: UK-New Zealand ties are strong but not under AUKUS Pillar I.

Option B: Australia-Canada are both Commonwealth nations, but no such defence treaty exists under AUKUS.

Q68. Answer: B. The US contributes nearly 8% of UNESCO's budget, and its exit may create geopolitical space for powers like China. [Difficulty: Medium]

Explanation:

Option B is correct: The US exit marks its third withdrawal from UNESCO, and as it contributes ~8% of the body's budget, the decision is expected to create space for China's influence while weakening multilateralism.

Option A is incorrect: This is the third US exit, not the first.

Option C is incorrect: The reason cited was UNESCO's "woke and divisive causes" and "anti-Israel bias," not purely budgetary.

Option D is incorrect: The move weakens, rather than strengthens, trust in multilateral institutions.

Q69. Answer: A. It was established under the Rome Statute adopted in 1998 and entered into force in 2002. [Difficulty: Easy]

Explanation:

Option A is correct: The ICC was established by the Rome Statute (1998, effective 2002) as the first permanent international court to prosecute crimes such as genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and aggression.

Option B is incorrect: The ICC headquarters are in The Hague, Netherlands, not Geneva.

Option C is incorrect: India is not a party to the Rome Statute.

Option D is incorrect: The ICC is not a UN body; it is an independent institution, though it has a cooperative relationship with the UN.

Q70. Answer: B. Iceland is ranked first, while Russia is ranked the least peaceful country at 163rd [Difficulty: Medium].

Explanation:

Option B is correct: The Global Peace Index ranked Iceland as the most peaceful nation (first place), while

Russia ranked 163rd as the least peaceful.

Option A is incorrect: India is ranked 115th, not 163rd.

Option C is incorrect: South Asia is the second least peaceful region, not the most peaceful.

Option D is incorrect: India's rank (115th) keeps it far from the top 50, showing deterioration in peace levels.

Q71. Answer: C. GENIUS Act [Difficulty: Hard]

Explanation:

Option C is correct: The GENIUS Act was passed in the US to regulate stablecoins, such as Tether (USDT), which is pegged to the dollar.

Option A (STABLE Act): A different proposal, not the current law.

Option B (CRYPTO Act) and Option D (DIGITAL Act): Not actual legislations related to stablecoins.

Q72. Answer: B. Vanuatu [Difficulty: Medium]

Explanation:

Option B is correct: The Pacific Island nation of Vanuatu, supported by over 130 countries, spearheaded the request to the UNGA in 2023 to seek an ICJ advisory opinion on climate obligations.

Option A (Fiji), C (Tuvalu), and D (Samoa) are also Small Island Developing States (SIDS) active in climate advocacy but did not lead this particular ICJ initiative.

Q73. Answer: B. Operation Rising Lion [Difficulty: Hard]

Explanation:

Option B is correct: The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) launched Operation Rising Lion, a major strike against Iran's nuclear and missile programs.

Option A (Operation Desert Storm): Refers to the 1991 Gulf War led by the US.

Option C (Operation Iron Fist): A generic term, not linked to this event.

Option D (Operation Protective Edge): Was an Israeli operation in Gaza (2014), not against Iran.

Q74. Answer: A. To serve as a global alternative to institutions like the ICJ and the Permanent Court of Arbitration [Difficulty: Hard]

Explanation:

Option A is correct: China established the IOMed as a global dispute resolution mechanism, projecting it as an alternative to traditional institutions like the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA).

Option B: WTO already has a Dispute Settlement Body; IOMed is not related to trade regulation.

Option C: Climate change disputes are mediated under UNFCCC, not IOMed.

Option D: BRICS has its own New Development Bank (NDB) but not IOMed.

Q75. Answer: C. Divya Deshmukh [Difficulty: Medium]

Explanation:

Option C is correct: Divya Deshmukh made history by becoming the first Indian woman to win the FIDE Women's World Cup, defeating Koneru Humpy in Batumi, Georgia.

Option A (Tania Sachdev) and Option D (Bhakti Kulkarni) are top Indian chess players but have not won this title.

Option B (Dronavalli Harika) is a strong Indian GM but hasn't claimed the Women's World Cup either.

Q76. Answer: C. 36th Amendment Act, 1975 [Difficulty: Hard]

Explanation:

Option C is correct: Sikkim became a full-fledged State of India through the 36th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1975.

Option B (35th Amendment Act, 1974): Earlier gave Sikkim the status of an Associate State under Article 2A.

Option A (34th Amendment Act, 1973): Concerned land reforms in Kerala, not Sikkim.

Option D (42nd Amendment Act, 1976): Known as the "Mini-Constitution," it brought major structural changes but not Sikkim's statehood.

Q77. Answer: B. Mizoram [Difficulty: Medium]

Explanation:

Option B is correct: The Chief Minister of Mizoram officially declared the state as fully literate, making it the first in India to achieve full functional literacy.

Option A (Kerala): Known as the first state to achieve universal literacy earlier, but not functional literacy in this context.

Option C (Tripura) and Option D (Himachal Pradesh) have high literacy rates but have not achieved full functional literacy.

Q78. Answer: B. It was founded by Joseph Pulitzer, a Hungarian-American journalist, and first awarded in 1917. [Difficulty: Medium]

Explanation:

Option B is correct: The Pulitzer Prize was established by Joseph Pulitzer (Hungarian-American journalist and newspaper publisher) and first awarded in 1917. It is administered by Columbia University, New York City.

Option A is incorrect: It is not awarded by Harvard University.

Option C is incorrect: It recognizes journalism, letters, and music—not politics/economics specifically.

Option D is incorrect: It predates WWII and was not instituted by the UN.

Q79. Answer: C. 2017 [Difficulty: Easy]

Explanation:

Option C is correct: India, along with Pakistan, was elevated from observer status (2005) to full membership of the SCO in 2017.

Options A and B: India was still an observer during these years.

Option D: Too late—by 2019 India was already a full member

Q80. Answer: C. Turmeric [Difficulty: Medium]

Explanation:

Option C is correct: India holds the distinction of being the largest producer, consumer, and exporter of turmeric, often referred to as the "golden spice."

Option A (Cardamom): India is a major producer but not the largest globally (Guatemala leads in exports).

Option B (Pepper): Vietnam is the largest producer and exporter, not India.

Option D (Clove): Indonesia dominates clove production, not India.

SECTION C: - LOGICAL REASONING

Q81) Answer: A (Easy)

Detailed Explanation (8-9 lines). From the statement "Hina sits two places anticlockwise from Arjun," H is positioned at A-2. Equivalently, Arjun is two places clockwise from Hina (reverse the move around a circle). Hence the person two clockwise from Hina must be Arjun. You can also confirm within the fully derived layout (shown below in later explanations): B-H-C-A-D-G-F-E (clockwise from Bhavna). From Hina at the second position, two steps clockwise land on Arjun. Why others fail: Bhavna is one step anticlockwise from Hina in the final arrangement, not two clockwise; Cyrus is immediately clockwise of Hina (only one step), and Divya is three steps clockwise, not two.

Q82) Answer: D (Medium) Detailed Explanation. Using the consistent arrangement (clockwise): B-H-C-A-D-G-F-E. Counting clockwise from Bhavna (B) to Arjun (A) passes Hina then Cyrus in that order. Therefore both Hina and Cyrus sit between B and A clockwise. Why others fail:

A (Divya alone) is at A+1 position, not between B and A.

B (Hina alone) omits Cyrus, who also lies between.

C (Cyrus alone) omits Hina, who also lies between.

Q83) Answer: A (Medium)

Detailed Explanation. From the same arrangement, starting at Arjun and moving clockwise to Farah, the intervening seats are Divya and Gopal – that's exactly two persons. Structural reason: the clues force Cyrus opposite Farah and Eshan opposite Arjun, pinning the arcs so that A and F are separated by two clockwise seats. Why others fail: three persons is too many; one person is too few; adjacency contradicts the fixed opposites implied by the constraints.

Q84) Answer: D (Medium)

Detailed Explanation. Opposites forced by the clues are: Cyrus ↔ Farah (given), Arjun ↔ Eshan (given), Bhavna ↔ Divya, and Hina ↔ Gopal (these follow once the circle is completed consistently). Thus A (C, F) and B (A, E) are each true; C (D, G) is false (they are adjacent, not opposite). Therefore the only correct selection is D ("Both A and B").

Q85) Answer: A (Hard) Detailed Explanation. One consistent resolution (up to rotation) that satisfies all ten statements is: B-H-C-A-D-G-F-E (clockwise). Sketch of deductions:

Put B at 1 (without loss). "Arjun three clockwise from Bhavna" → A at 4.

"Counting clockwise from Bhavna, exactly one between

B and C" → C at 3.

"Cyrus opposite Farah" → F at 7.

"Hina two anticlockwise from Arjun" → H at 2.

"Divya third clockwise from Hina" → D at 5.

"Gopal immediately clockwise of Divya" → G at 6.

"Eshan opposite Arjun" → E at 8.

Check the non-opposite condition for B/H vs F, and the $E \leftrightarrow G$ anticlockwise spacing; both hold. Only Option A matches this order exactly; B/C/D misplace one or more neighbors/opposites.

Q86. Answer: A (Easy) Detailed Explanation:

From Premise 2, there exist some raptors that are migratory birds ("some R are M" gives existence).

Premise 3 says no migratory birds are nocturnal (M and N are disjoint). So those "some R that are M" are not nocturnal.

Therefore, some raptors are not nocturnal ($\therefore$ "some R are not N") – this is exactly option A. The "middle term" here is migratory birds, linking raptors to (not) nocturnal via Premise 3.

Why B fails: Premise 4 makes all owls nocturnal ($O \subseteq N$) while Premise 3 makes migratory birds disjoint from nocturnal; hence no owl can be a migratory bird, so we cannot assert "some owls are migratory birds."

Why C fails: We have no link from harriers to nocturnal; indeed Premises 2-3 support the existence of raptors not nocturnal, so asserting all harriers (a subset of raptors) are nocturnal contradicts the direction of information.

Why D fails: From "All harriers are raptors" (Premise 1) and "Some raptors are migratory birds" (Premise 2), we cannot distribute the "some" to the harriers subset; it could be the "some raptors" that are migratory are not harriers. So "Some harriers are migratory birds" does not follow.

Q87. Answer: B (Medium) Detailed Explanation:

Premise 2 gives existence: some venture-backed firms are profitable ($V \cap P \neq \emptyset$).

Premise 3: no profitable firms are insolvent ($P \subseteq \neg I$).

Combine: some venture-backed firms are profitable, and profitable firms are not insolvent $\Rightarrow$ some venture-backed firms are not insolvent – option B. The middle term profitable bridges venture-backed to not-insolvent.

Why A fails: From "All fintech startups are venture-backed" (Premise 1) and "Some venture-backed are profitable" (Premise 2), we cannot conclude the "some profitable" are fintech startups; they could be other venture-backed firms.

Why C fails: Premise 4 only says some insolvent firms

are bootstrapped ($I \cap B \neq \emptyset$). It does not say all bootstrapped are insolvent; the converse does not follow.

Why D fails: There is no premise linking fintech startups and bootstrapped firms; we cannot assert no F are B without a disjointness premise between V and B or similar.

Q88. Answer: C (Hard) Detailed Explanation:

Premise 4 provides existence: some ceramic vases are museum artifacts ($C \cap M \neq \emptyset$).

Premise 1: no ceramic vases are shatterproof ($C \subseteq \neg S$).

Therefore, those some items that are both ceramic vases and museum artifacts are not shatterproof $\Rightarrow$ some museum artifacts are not shatterproof – option C. The term ceramic vases functions as the bridge between museum artifacts and not shatterproof.

Why A fails: We do not have any premise asserting that any museum artifacts are shatterproof; Premise 1 actually blocks that for the ceramic subset.

Why B fails: We cannot universalize; only the ceramic-vase subset of museum artifacts is proven non-shatterproof. Other museum artifacts might be shatterproof; Premise 3 even says some shatterproof items are modern, and they could be museum artifacts.

Why D fails: Premise 3 says some shatterproof items are modern ($S \cap \text{Modern} \neq \emptyset$). It does not say all modern items are shatterproof; reversing “some” to “all” is invalid.

Q89. Answer: D (Medium) Detailed Explanation:

□ Premise 2 gives existence: some readers are critics ($R \cap C \neq \emptyset$).

Premise 3: no critics are pacifists ($C \subseteq \neg Q$).

Therefore, those some readers who are critics are not pacifists $\Rightarrow$ some readers are not pacifists – option D. The middle term critics links readers to “not pacifists.”

Why A fails: From “All poets are readers” (Premise 1) and “Some readers are critics” (Premise 2), the “some” could be non-poet readers; we cannot assert “some poets are critics.”

Why B fails: Premise 4 says some pacifists are teachers. Since Premise 3 says no critics are pacifists, those teachers (from Premise 4) cannot simultaneously be critics by that route; nothing else connects teachers to critics.

Why C fails: We cannot universalize to “no teachers are critics”; we only learned that the pacifist teachers (from Premise 4) are not critics (due to Premise 3). Other teachers could still be critics.

Q90. Answer: A (Hard) Detailed Explanation:

□ Premise 4: some cloud databases are proprietary tools ($D \cap P \neq \emptyset$).

Premise 1: all cloud databases are scalable systems ($D \subseteq S$) – helpful context but not yet decisive.

Premise 3: no open-source systems are proprietary tools ($O \subseteq \neg P$), equivalently all proprietary tools are not open-source ($P \subseteq \neg O$).

Combine Premises 4 and 3: those some cloud databases that are proprietary are not open-source $\Rightarrow$ some cloud databases are not open-source – option A.

Why B fails: Nothing states all scalable systems are cloud databases; Premise 1 only provides the subset the other way (cloud DBs $\subseteq$ scalable), not equality.

Why C fails: From Premises 4 and 1, those proprietary cloud databases are indeed scalable; so we get some proprietary tools are scalable systems, not not scalable. Hence C contradicts the derived possibility.

Why D fails: Premise 2 says some scalable systems are open-source; but without a link that any cloud databases are among those open-source systems (and Premise 4 actually points to proprietary cloud DBs), we cannot assert some open-source systems are cloud databases.

Q91. Answer: A (Difficulty: Hard) Detailed Explanation:

□ From Premise 2, there exists at least one precision device that is battery-powered (“Some PD are BP” asserts existence).

Premise 3 says no battery-powered devices are zero-emission ($BP \subseteq \neg ZE$). Hence the specific PD from Premise 2 is not zero-emission.

Therefore, some precision devices are not zero-emission $\Rightarrow$ option A follows. Here battery-powered is the middle term linking PD to not-ZE via Premise 3.

Premise 4 ($ZE \subseteq R$) is background: it doesn’t change that $BP \cap ZE = \emptyset$.

Why B fails: From Premise 1 ($QS \subseteq PD$) and Premise 2 (“some PD are BP”), it does not follow that the “some PD” are QS; they could be other PD (illicit particular-to-subset inference).

Why C fails: Premise 4 gives $ZE \subseteq R$, not its converse; “All recyclable are ZE” is an illicit converse.

Why D fails: From Premise 3 we only know $BP \cap ZE = \emptyset$; nothing says $BP \subseteq R$. Even with $ZE \subseteq R$, BP could or could not be recyclable—we cannot assert existence of BP that are R.

Q92. Answer: B (Difficulty: Hard) Detailed Explanation:

Premise 2: Some law graduates are researchers ($LG \cap R \neq \emptyset$).

Premise 3: No researchers are court clerks ($R \subseteq \neg CC$).

Combining, those specific law graduates who are researchers are not court clerks $\Rightarrow$ Some law graduates are not court clerks (option B). Here researchers is the middle term bridging LG to not-CC.

Premise 1 ($PL \subseteq LG$) and Premise 4 (some CC are PT) are

consistent but not needed to derive B.

Why A fails: From $PL \subseteq LG$ and "Some LG are R", we cannot transfer the "some" down to PL; the "some LG" could all be non-paralegal law grads.

Why C fails: We can only infer some LG are not CC; universal "No paralegals are court clerks" needs a link between PL and CC that we don't have.

Why D fails: Premise 4 talks about court clerks who are PT, while Premise 3 makes R disjoint from court clerks; nothing connects PT directly to R to assert existence of PT that are R.

Q93. Answer: C (Difficulty: Hard) Detailed Explanation:

□ Premise 2: Some electric cars are autonomous vehicles ($EC \cap AV \neq \emptyset$).

Premise 3: All autonomous vehicles are connected cars ($AV \subseteq CC$).

Therefore those some electric cars that are AV are also connected cars $\Rightarrow$ Some connected cars are electric cars (option C). The middle term autonomous vehicles links EC to CC.

Why A fails: We would need $EC \cap \neg CC \neq \emptyset$, but Premise 2 + 3 only guarantee $EC \cap CC \neq \emptyset$; nothing asserts any EC outside CC.

Why B fails: No link from electric cars to manual transmissions; Premise 1 only says $MT \cap AV = \emptyset$, not that EC and MT are disjoint.

Why D fails: From Premise 3 we know $AV \subseteq CC$; the converse "All CC are AV" is not given, so universalizing is invalid.

Q94. Answer: D (Difficulty: Medium) Detailed Explanation:

□ Premise 2: Some policy analysts are data scientists ($PA \cap DS \neq \emptyset$).

Premise 3: No data scientists are lobbyists ($DS \subseteq \neg L$).

Therefore, those some policy analysts who are data scientists are not lobbyists $\Rightarrow$ Some policy analysts are not lobbyists (option D). Here data scientists is the middle term linking PA to not-L.

Premise 1 ($CP \subseteq PA$) and 4 (some L are C) do not alter this existential deduction.

Why A fails: From $CP \subseteq PA$ and "Some PA are DS", we cannot infer that any of those "some PA" are CP; the particular may lie outside CP.

Why B fails: Premise 4 gives some lobbyists are consultants; since $DS \cap L = \emptyset$ (Premise 3), those identified consultants (who are lobbyists) cannot be DS; there's no other bridge from C to DS.

Why C fails: We only proved some PA are not L; we lack grounds to claim no PA are L (unwarranted universalization).

Q95. Answer: A (Difficulty: Hard) Detailed Explanation:

Premise 2: Some protected sites are coastal areas ($PS \cap CA \neq \emptyset$).

Premise 3: No coastal areas are noise-free zones ($CA \subseteq \neg NFZ$).

Hence, those some protected sites that are coastal are not noise-free $\Rightarrow$ Some protected sites are not noise-free zones (option A). Here coastal areas acts as the middle term linking PS to not-NFZ.

Premise 1 ($HB \subseteq PS$) and 4 (some NFZ are BS) are consistent but not needed for the deduction.

Why B fails: From $HB \subseteq PS$ and only "some PS are CA," we cannot jump to "all HB are CA."

Why C fails: Premise 4 says some NFZ are BS; with Premise 3, NFZ is disjoint from CA, so those particular BS are not CA; nothing ensures any BS are CA.

Why D fails: Premise 4 expressly states some NFZ are BS, contradicting the universal negative "No BS are NFZ"; thus D cannot follow.

Q96. Answer: C (Medium) - The authority compares pilot-corridor collision rates to a system-wide pre-pilot baseline to infer "safer overall." For that inference to hold, exposure must be comparable: the pilot corridors' risk profile (lane width, pedestrian density, sightlines, turn complexity, etc.) must be appropriately normalized against the baseline. Option C states precisely this comparability requirement; without it, lower collisions could merely reflect safer infrastructure or selection effects, not autonomy.

Why A is wrong: City-wide enforcement and signal timing changed during the pilot; these might matter, but even if they did, their system-wide nature could equally reduce the baseline risk elsewhere. What we must assume is representativeness/comparability, not the absence of any enforcement effect.

Why B is wrong: Interventions preventing crashes would still count toward system safety; many AV evaluations treat the safety driver as part of the system. The conclusion "safer overall" does not require assuming interventions never averted crashes.

Why D is wrong: Severity and frequency can diverge (e.g., fewer crashes but more severe, or vice versa). The authority's claim rests on frequency; no necessity to treat severity as a proxy.

In sum, without Option C's comparability, the authority's conclusion could be an artifact of corridor selection and infrastructure differences rather than autonomy.

Q97. Answer: B (Hard)

We must reconcile faster delivery with lower satisfaction and shifts in complaint types. Option B explains that mandatory signature-on-delivery for high-

value orders increases the probability of a failed first attempt, triggering reattempts and coordination hassles; with weekend first-attempts rising, availability mismatches grow. This produces more “missed delivery” and “inconvenient timing” complaints even as “late delivery” complaints plunge, thereby lowering overall satisfaction despite speed gains.

Why A is wrong: UI salience could matter, but nothing in the logs ties satisfaction decline to app issues; moreover, the composition of complaints moved specifically toward delivery-attempt failures.

Why C is wrong: Competitors’ promotions might affect value perception, yet the complaint taxonomy pinpoints operational frictions (missed attempts), not price envy.

Why D is wrong: A sampling shift could affect absolute scores, but the operational pattern (late ↓, missed ↑) maps directly to the policy change; mere rural oversampling doesn’t predict that signature-specific complaint profile.

Therefore, B directly resolves the paradox by aligning the changed policy with the observed complaint mix and satisfaction drop.

Q98. Answer: A (Easy) - Last year’s mix (EA 1,200 @ 80% = 960; RD 3,800 @ 40% = 1,520) yielded ~2,480 enrolls before melt, roughly meeting a ~2,400 target after a modest decline—an overall yield near 50% (2,480/5,000). This year, with fewer high-yield EA admits (900) and more lower-yield RD admits (4,200), the weighted average yield will tend to fall unless compensated. Because the binding priority waitlist is capped at 5% of the enrolled class (and thus limited in how much it can raise the average), the Dean’s “no decline” claim can hold only if (i) RD yield exceeds 40% or (ii) the binding waitlist contributes at least its 5% cap to pull the blended yield back up. That is exactly Option A.

Why B is wrong: EA already has very high yield; raising it to 85% adds at most 45 extra enrolls (0.05×900), too marginal to guarantee no decline given the large RD pool. Not necessary.

Why C is wrong: The count of admits is not the issue; the weighted yield is. You could exceed last year’s admits yet keep or raise yield if RD yield rises; conversely, you could admit fewer but with worse yield and still decline.

Why D is wrong: The Dean’s claim concerns yield, not class size; increasing the target class does nothing to preserve percentage yield unless mix/yields change.

Thus, the must-have condition is the contingent improvement/compensation captured in A.

Q99. Answer: D (Hard) - The ministry’s causal and efficiency claims hinge on the broadcast program

driving score gains. Option D presents a randomized study that directly varies radio access/content and finds no significant gain versus controls. Randomized evidence trumps quasi-experimental rollouts by eliminating selection and confounding (e.g., preexisting radio ownership, differing teacher availability), thereby undercutting the ministry’s causal inference and its efficiency narrative.

Why A is wrong: Increased educational TV among participants introduces a confound suggesting other inputs may explain gains; this weakens causality somewhat, but not as decisively as a null RCT showing no effect when the program is isolated.

Why B is wrong: Fade-out challenges durability, not whether short-run gains were efficiently produced. The ministry argued “efficient boost,” which could, in theory, be short-term yet still efficient.

Why C is wrong: Heterogeneous effects (gains concentrated among radio-owners; attendance drops among non-owners) question equity and net social benefit, but they do not most undermine the core claim that the broadcast caused average gains.

Therefore D most powerfully weakens by replacing observational associations with causal null results.

Q100. Answer: A (Medium)

To credit the carbon tax (and not weather or new hydro) as the primary cause, we need evidence of broad-based reductions not explained by heating demand or power-mix shifts. Option A shows that after controlling for weather, weather-insensitive heavy industries (cement, steel) also exhibit significant declines versus trend. That pattern is exactly what a price on carbon would predict (internalized emissions costs), and it cannot be attributed to a mild winter; it also sits outside the electricity-sector effect of the hydro plant.

Why B is wrong: If manufacturing shifted into M, that would raise output and make reductions harder, not easier—this complicates attribution but doesn’t directly support the tax as primary cause.

Why C is wrong: Quantifying hydro’s displacement (10%) actually strengthens the alternative explanation that the power-sector change drove the decline; it undercuts, not supports, the tax-as-primary claim.

Why D is wrong: Self-reported conservation is noisy, prone to desirability bias, and concentrated in households; it doesn’t isolate impacts in industrial emissions (the bulk of the 12% decline).

Hence A best strengthens the government’s attribution to the carbon tax.

Q101. Answer: C — (difficult) - The superintendent attributes the extra 3-point gain (12 vs 9) to tablets.

For that causal leap to hold, the observed improvement cannot be a statistical artifact of the treated group starting below average and naturally drifting upward (regression to the mean). Option C asserts exactly this necessity: that the baseline deficit did not mechanically predispose larger short-term gains. Without that, the conclusion is undercut because low-baseline groups often exhibit outsized early movement independent of the treatment. Option A is not necessary: unequal usage of the item bank could itself be the mechanism by which tablets worked (tablets might have increased practice frequency), so equal usage is not required for causation. Option B is too broad: even if freezing transfers improved scores countywide, that common shock would affect both groups; it does not explain the difference-in-gains unless it differentially helped tablet schools, which B does not assert. Option D is plausible but not required; increased observations might raise scores via coaching, but the superintendent's claim could still be true even if principals observed more, so long as that effect is mediated by or enabled through the tablet rollout (e.g., dashboard data prompting visits). Therefore, preventing the regression-to-mean alternative (C) is the necessary assumption to preserve the tablets-cause-gain inference.

Q102. Answer: B — (medium)

The paradox is that removing curbside parking (seemingly harming drivers) coincided with higher retail activity. Option B resolves it by showing that the policy shifted the access mix: faster, more frequent buses and wider sidewalks increased the flow of non-driving customers (transit riders and pedestrians), while outdoor seating likely captured spontaneous foot traffic. The higher unique pedestrian count and more transactions (with slightly smaller baskets) fit a pattern of more visits, lower average spend per visit—exactly what you'd expect from increased pass-by traffic. Option A is irrelevant to access channels and provides no mechanism connecting street design to more customers. Option C posits a loyalty program but offers no evidence; even if present, we'd still need to explain the pedestrian counter increase and the timing with street changes. Option D concerns signals several blocks away and lacks a direct link to these two retail blocks' walk/transit improvements; it also does not predict increased pedestrian counts. Thus B most plausibly integrates all observed shifts—more visitors, more transactions, slightly smaller tickets—by channel substitution toward transit and walking.

Q103. Answer: D — (difficult)

Causation requires ruling out baseline differences and contemporaneous shocks. Option D confirms that

randomization worked, balancing tenure, manager quality, and initial satisfaction across mentored and waitlisted high-risk hires. Given the large differential (9% vs 20% attrition) within the randomized high-risk cohort, balanced covariates make mentorship the most credible cause. Option A identifies a common theme in exits but does not connect mentorship to reduced attrition; it's diagnostic, not causal. Option B notes mentor quality but without showing how that quality is distributed across treatment and control; if high-rated mentors cluster in certain teams or if mentees differ, confounding remains. Option C introduces a second intervention affecting low-risk hires, which could muddy overall attrition trends rather than strengthen the specific mentorship effect among high-risk hires. By establishing internal validity (balanced groups via randomization) where the effect is observed, D most directly fortifies the causal claim that mentorship—not selection—reduced attrition among those most likely to leave and thereby pulled down the firm's overall rate.

Q104. Answer: C — (medium)

The NGO's inference is observational and vulnerable to confounding (income, walkability, gym density, produce availability). Option C shows that once key confounders are controlled, the cafeteria-BMI link vanishes, strongly suggesting cafeterias are not the active cause of lower BMI; rather, healthier towns host both more cafeterias and lower BMI for other reasons. Option A is consistent with demand but does not address causality on BMI. Option B, a randomized incentive vs produce vouchers, is informative but ambiguous: if both arms ate healthier, equal BMI is not dispositive; moreover, vouchers may be a strong counterfactual intervention, not a true “no-treatment” control, muddying direct inference about cafeterias alone. Option D shows higher nutrition knowledge in cafeteria towns, which could itself be a confound causing both cafeteria entry and lower BMI; it does not undermine the NGO's claim as directly as C does. Because C demonstrates statistical insignificance after controlling for salient covariates, it most cleanly breaks the causal link the NGO proposes and thereby weakens the conclusion.

Q105. Answer: B — (easy)

Last year: 1,600 initial offers $\times$ 62% = 992 acceptances, plus ~76 acceptances from the binding waitlist (95% of 80), totaling ~1,068 before melt and ending at exactly 1,000. This year: fewer initial offers (1,400) mechanically lowers expected acceptances unless acceptance rates rise or the expanded binding waitlist (capped at 15% of enrolled seats $\approx$ 150) backfills. The only pathway consistent with not reducing the overall acceptance rate while also not overshooting 1,000 seats is that the

stipend bump selectively lifts acceptance among those likeliest to respond—top-decile candidates with competing offers—thereby improving the weighted acceptance rate on the reduced initial pool, with the binding list used as a precise buffer. Option B captures this requirement explicitly. Option A could help, but it is not necessary: the Board might hit 1,000 with fewer than 10% from the waitlist if initial acceptance rises enough due to the stipend. Option C arbitrarily caps total offers; the assertion concerns rates, not counts—exceeding 1,700 could still preserve or raise the rate depending on mix. Option D imposes a condition on non-top-decile candidates that is irrelevant if the marginal lift from the top decile suffices; their acceptance could even rise slightly without affecting the conclusion. Therefore, B states the must-hold mechanism: a targeted acceptance lift among the responsive segment that offsets reduced initial offers while respecting the 1,000-seat cap.

Q106. Answer: A — (difficult)

To credit WFH as the driver of higher closing rates in pilot branches, we must rule out contemporaneous changes that asymmetrically advantaged those branches. Option A states precisely this necessity: the lead-scoring model and CRM retraining (both introduced during the pilot window, and with retraining available to pilots sooner) did not disproportionately boost pilot branches' closing rates relative to non-pilot branches. If they did, then the observed improvement could be attributable to those changes rather than to WFH, defeating the attribution. Option B is irrelevant to sales causality: whether backlog fell due to defects or staffing does not establish the sales closing-rate mechanism. Option C is too strong and not necessary; managers' tenure might matter, yet if tenure were balanced across pilot and non-pilot branches, or if its effect were small relative to the gain, the WFH conclusion could still stand without asserting "no effect." Option D (high WFH enthusiasm) could explain morale, but the executives' claim concerns causation of revenue uplift, not employee sentiment; WFH could drive performance even if enthusiasm waned, and high enthusiasm does not secure causal identification. The indispensable assumption is the non-differential impact (or controlled impact) of the other Q2 interventions across pilot and non-pilot branches—captured only by A. Without it, the attribution to WFH is invalid because the pilot bundled multiple confounded changes whose effects could masquerade as "WFH gains."

Q107. Answer: B — (medium)

The paradox is fewer vehicles crossing the cordon yet longer car commutes. Option B resolves this by

pointing to capacity-reducing factors: lane closures remove lanes; a higher share of heavy delivery trucks early in the peak lowers effective flow rates; and signal priority for buses/ambulances reallocates green time away from cars. Together, even with fewer vehicles, the service rate of the road network for private cars falls, producing longer car travel times. This also aligns with observed bus speed gains and ridership increases. Option A (trip postponement) could shift demand temporally but doesn't explain higher average car times within the charged window. Option C misreads the direction: if bus ridership increased, the claim about reduced foot traffic contradicts the typical link between transit and pedestrian flows; and it does not connect to car travel time mechanisms. Option D mentions car-pool lanes and telework but offers no network-level reason for longer car trips in the presence of lower volumes; fewer car-pool users do not inherently lengthen general traffic unless lanes were reallocated, which D does not assert. B integrates all stated interventions—lane closures, truck mix, and signal priority—into a coherent explanation that reconciles the data without challenging the reduced entries.

Q108. Answer: B — (easy)

To strengthen the causal claim, we want evidence that directly ties the deposit to the specific litter categories it targets, while ruling out storms, tourism, or generic cleanup effects. Option B does exactly that: it shows the decline in Coastshire is concentrated in deposit-eligible beverage containers, with non-eligible categories changing little relative to the neighbor. This category-specific pattern is the signature of a deposit-driven effect and is hard to reconcile with storms (which would move all loose items), tourism (which would likely raise beverage litter if anything), or bigger volunteer crews (which should reduce all categories similarly). Option A (overall plastic sales down 4%) is weak and broad—non-beverage plastics are outside the deposit; a small sales dip cannot explain a 32% litter drop. Option C (more volunteers) threatens validity: it suggests measurement bias or cleanup effort as the driver, not policy; it does not strengthen causality. Option D (storm location) is orthogonal: even if the biggest storm hit the neighbor, Coastshire still had storms; without the category pattern, storms could remain a confound. Only B furnishes targeted, difference-in-differences style evidence consistent with a deposit mechanism and inconsistent with the main alternative explanations.

Q109. Answer: A — (difficult)

The reported 8-point user advantage is susceptible to self-selection: adopters had higher baseline self-efficacy and better home support.

Option A nullifies the causal claim by showing that when usage is randomized and mandatory (thus eliminating selection), gains are statistically indistinguishable from a credible business-as-usual control (teacher-curated worksheets). This directly challenges “the tutor caused the 8-point lift,” indicating the observed gap likely reflects who chose the tutor, not what the tutor did. Option B (club enrollment) signals another confound but is correlational and does not decisively attribute the 8 points to non-tutor inputs. Option C (parental oversight) similarly indicates background advantages among users; again, it hints at selection but lacks the experimental force of A. Option D (45 minutes in lab) explains why the gap is smaller in scheduled blocks but does not undermine the core claim; lower dose could reduce effect size even if the tool worked. Only A replaces correlation with a randomized comparison showing no effect relative to an active control, thereby most powerfully weakening the company’s causal interpretation and cautioning against a district-wide contract based solely on the observational gap.

Q110. Answer: B – (medium)

From the passage: LD outperforms PL on the primary endpoint; HD does not beat LD; AEs are dose-related, with more AEs at HD than LD. These facts jointly imply that efficacy is comparable ($LD \approx HD$ on primary/secondary endpoints) while toxicity is worse at HD. Therefore, the benefit-risk trade-off is better for LD than for HD—exactly what B states—and this inference is independent of the underpowered subgroup caveat (which concerns who benefits, not the aggregate comparison presented). Option A overreaches: the passage never says HD is ineffective versus placebo; it says HD does not outperform LD, not that HD equals PL. Option C asserts a cause (underpowered subgroups) for the lack of HD superiority without evidence; the text calls subgroups exploratory, not explanatory. Option D is unwarranted: receptor occupancy tracked dose as expected (LD reached target, HD near-maximal), so the marker behaves plausibly; nothing here invalidates it. Thus B is the strongest supported inference because it logically follows from the stated efficacy equivalence ($HD \approx LD$) and higher AE burden at HD, making LD the rational Phase-3 dose from a benefit-risk perspective.

Q111. Answer: d) Neither I nor II follows – (difficult)

The data show a larger decline in absences in retrofitted schools (–18%) relative to non-retrofitted (–5%), but several confounds remain: a milder influenza season (system-wide downward pressure), nonrandom placement of filters in older buildings with higher baselines (opening the door to regression to the mean),

and potential differences in health practices correlated with building age or district management. From these facts alone, we cannot conclude that the majority of the reduction is caused by filters (Claim I); at best, filters are consistent with the difference, but causation requires stronger identification (e.g., randomized assignment or robust controls). Claim II is a sweeping policy generalization to “all public buildings” and to “efficiency,” neither of which is supported: cost data, heterogeneous building types, and non-school usage patterns are missing; moreover, external validity from older-school districts to all public buildings is unproven. Why a) Only I follows is wrong: The difference-in-differences is suggestive but not dispositive; baseline imbalance and mild-flu season jointly mean filters may explain some part but not demonstrably the majority.

Why b) Only II follows is wrong: Efficiency claims need cost-effectiveness evidence and generalizability; neither is provided.

Why c) Both follow is wrong: Each claim independently fails: I fails on causality identification; II fails on external validity and cost.

Why d) is right: With unresolved confounds and absent cost/generalisation evidence, neither conclusion is logically compelled by the matrix; the correct stance is epistemic restraint.

Q112. Answer: b) Among the marginally rejected applicants, expected profit was non-positive – (difficult) Profitability rises only if savings from fewer defaults among approved loans exceed lost contribution from now-rejected borrowers who would have repaid (plus any second-order cross-sell effects). Option (b) states a necessary condition: the marginal rejects (those flipped from “approve” to “reject” by the new screen) must not be profit-positive in expectation. If they were profit-positive, then rejecting them destroys profit that could offset or exceed savings from avoided defaults, jeopardizing the profitability claim.

Why a) is wrong: Processing cost per application could even rise modestly while profitability still improves, if net credit losses fall enough; thus (a) is not necessary.

Why c) is wrong: More cross-sell among approveds would help, but management’s conclusion did not rely on such an increase, nor is it necessary; profitability could improve without cross-sell lift if avoided losses dominate.

Why d) is wrong: Higher average bureau scores among approveds are correlated with lower default but are neither sufficient nor necessary for profitability; the key is marginal expected profit, not an average score shift.

Why b) is right: It encodes the indispensable opportunity-cost check—lost interest from true-positive rejects cannot exceed saved losses from fewer

false positives—without which the “defaults down $\Rightarrow$ profit up” inference is invalid.

Q113. Answer: a) Pass-holders’ repeat entry pulled down per-visit revenue – (difficult)

We must explain higher attendance alongside lower revenue per visit despite a posted price increase. Option (a) posits that the household pass (flat annual fee, unlimited entries, and free late-night tours) attracted high-frequency visitors. This mechanism increases headcount (many visits by the same households) while diluting revenue per visit (the flat fee is amortized over many entries), perfectly reconciling the pattern even in the presence of higher list prices for non-pass entrants. The free tours further incentivize additional visits without extra revenue, compounding the average decline.

□ Why b) is wrong: Shifting high-spend tourists would tend to raise revenue per visit, the opposite of what we see; it does not address the per-visit decline.

□ Why c) is wrong: More adults and fewer students should raise per-visit revenue (students pay less or were discounted), again opposite to the observation.

□ Why d) is wrong: It focuses only on first-time visitors; even if their per-visit revenue rose, the aggregate average fell, which d) cannot explain without the repeat-entry dilution that (a) provides.

Why a) is right: It offers a coherent substitution in pricing architecture—flat-fee, high-frequency usage—that simultaneously increases attendance and depresses average revenue per head, resolving the paradox.

Q114. Answer: a) Offline adopters reverted; unaffected maintained gains – (difficult)

Causality requires disentangling telemedicine from hospital quality advantages (nurse ratios, cardiology units). Option (a) uses an exogenous shock (random cyberattack) that suspended telemedicine in a subset of adopters, creating a natural experiment. If readmissions rebounded in the forced-offline adopters while staying low in uninterrupted adopters, that within-adopter divergence strongly implicates telemedicine as the active ingredient, not static hospital quality. This is a powerful difference-in-differences pattern conditional on prior adoption.

□ Why b) is wrong: Non-adopters starting a reconciliation initiative complicates cross-group comparisons but does not preferentially support telemedicine; if anything, it gives non-adopters tools to improve.

Why c) is wrong: A statewide decline in severity would reduce readmissions everywhere, weakening the unique attribution to telemedicine.

Why d) is wrong: It restates a baseline confound (better

nurse ratios) that threatens attribution rather than strengthening it.

Why a) is right: It provides time-series evidence tied to an exogenous interruption among the same hospitals, isolating the telemedicine mechanism and powerfully buttressing the department’s claim.

Q115. Answer: a) Weather-/economy-normalization erases the difference – (difficult)

The utility attributes a 7% peak drop to meters and time-of-use pricing. Option (a) shows that once we normalize for weather (coolest summer) and macroeconomic contraction, the utility’s peak reduction is statistically indistinguishable from the neighbor’s 6.5% decline without pricing—suggesting common exogenous factors explain the change. This directly undercuts the causal inference by demonstrating the effect survives no better than a control lacking the intervention.

□ Why b) is wrong: Self-reported conservation is subjective and compatible with no actual difference once normalized; it does not undermine the alternative explanations.

Why c) is wrong: A rise in off-peak demand is consistent with load shifting, not necessarily a reduction in peak attributable to pricing; it neither targets the key comparison nor refutes exogenous drivers.

Why d) is wrong: Low ad engagement does not speak to actual tariff salience (bills, SMS, in-home displays) or to weather/economy; it is at best weakly diagnostic.

Why a) is right: It replaces raw year-over-year comparison with a counterfactual-aware analysis; if, after proper controls, the treated and untreated regions look the same, the original causal claim is substantially weakened.

Q116. Answer: (B)

Explanation: The Act of God defence applies when damage is caused by natural forces so unprecedented that no reasonable foresight or care could prevent it. Here, a 200-year unprecedented rainfall qualifies. Therefore, Arjun is not liable.

(A) Incorrect: Strict liability is not absolute; exceptions apply.

(C) Incorrect: Foreseeability does not extend to unprecedented natural events.

(D) Incorrect: Not all natural disasters qualify, only those unforeseeable and irresistible.

Difficulty: Hard

Q117. Answer: (B)

Explanation: Absolute liability is stricter than strict liability—no defence applies, even for acts of God or third-party interference. By storing hazardous

substances, Shakti Fertilizers bore complete responsibility.

(A) Incorrect: Act of God is a defence only in strict liability, not absolute liability.

(C) Incorrect: Compliance with safety standards does not absolve liability.

(D) Incorrect: Proof of negligence is unnecessary; liability is automatic.

Difficulty: Hard

Q118. Answer: (C)

Explanation: Absolute liability is unaffected by sabotage or third-party interference. Since the enterprise engaged in inherently dangerous activity, liability remains fixed.

(A) Incorrect: Third-party interference is a defence only to strict liability.

(B) Incorrect: Foreseeability is irrelevant to absolute liability.

(D) Incorrect: Negligence is unnecessary for absolute liability.

Difficulty: Hard

Q119. Answer: (D)

Explanation: The Supreme Court in MC Mehta held that even State-run enterprises cannot claim sovereign immunity in hazardous activities. Absolute liability applies to all operators equally.

(A) Incorrect: Sovereign immunity does not cover hazardous activities.

(C) Incorrect: Negligence is irrelevant in absolute liability.

(B) Incorrect: Damages are not capped merely because the operator is state-owned.

Difficulty: Hard

Q120. Answer: (B)

Explanation: Judicial independence forms part of the Basic Structure. Any amendment undermining it is unconstitutional.

Difficulty: Hard

Q121. Answer: (A)

Explanation: The ban on the documentary cannot be sustained because Article 19(2) permits restrictions on free speech only when there is a direct and proximate nexus between the expression and the harm sought to be prevented. In Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015), the Supreme Court clarified that vague or speculative claims of possible disturbance are not enough—the restriction must address speech that either incites violence or has a clear, imminent danger of public disorder.

Here, the government's justification that the film would "erode the morale of the armed forces" is too abstract and remote. Criticism of corruption in defence procurement is legitimate political expression and part of democratic accountability. It does not create an immediate risk of mutiny, violence, or public disorder. Therefore, the restriction fails the test of reasonableness and proportionality under Article 19(2).

(A) is wrong because although "security of the State" is a valid ground, the connection must be concrete and proximate, not hypothetical.

(C) is wrong because the State cannot censor mere criticism of its decisions; only speech that directly threatens security can be restricted.

(D) is wrong because free speech is not absolute—it is subject to Article 19(2), but this case doesn't satisfy those grounds.

Difficulty: Hard

Q122. Answer: (B)

Explanation: In Fagan v. Metropolitan Police Commissioner (1969), mens rea arising during a continuing act satisfied concurrence. Here, Vijay's act of keeping the car on Prakash's foot continued until he reversed. When mens rea formed (deliberate refusal), the act was still ongoing, making him liable.

(A) is wrong because liability doesn't vanish if mens rea forms later.

(C) is wrong: injury severity is irrelevant to concurrence.

(D) is wrong because initial intent is not essential if act continued.

Difficulty: Hard

Q123. Answer: (C) Expanded Explanation: Courts (e.g., Deepak Gulati v. State of Haryana 2013) distinguish between breach of promise and false promise. Consent is vitiated only if it is shown the accused never intended marriage from the start—then deception invalidates consent, making intercourse rape under Section 375 IPC. If intent existed initially but later failed, it is not rape but breach of promise.

(A) is too broad: not every false promise vitiates consent.

(B) is wrong: apparent consent is irrelevant if induced by fraud.

(D) is wrong: false promises can invalidate consent if initial intention is absent.

Difficulty: Hard

Q124. Answer: (C)

Explanation: While treaties are not self-executing in India (Jolly George Varghese), courts have often used them as interpretive aids when construing fundamental rights (e.g., Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan, 1997, which relied on CEDAW). The right to life under Article 21 has

been expansively interpreted to include dignity, shelter, and livelihood (Olga Tellis). Hence, even in the absence of enabling legislation, courts may harmonise constitutional rights with India's international commitments, provided they do not contradict domestic law.

(A) is wrong: treaties do not automatically override Indian law.

(B) is incomplete: though direct enforcement requires legislation, courts can still interpret rights in line with treaties.

(D) is wrong: the SC has read shelter into Article 21 in multiple cases.

Difficulty: Hard

Q125. Answer: (B)

Explanation: Criminal conspiracy under Section 120A IPC requires agreement. Presence or passive acquiescence is insufficient. Imran's silence without overt or tacit agreement does not prove mens rea. Courts insist on evidence of participation beyond passive attendance.

(A) is wrong: presence is not participation.

(C) is wrong: laughter alone doesn't prove agreement.

(D) is wrong: conspiracy is complete on agreement, no overt act needed (except when conspiracy is only to commit legal act by illegal means).

Difficulty: Hard

Q126. Answer: (A)

Explanation: Section 66C IT Act penalises fraudulent use of another's credentials with dishonest intent. Sneha used Pooja's password to siphon money and changed alerts to conceal it. Her intent to "repay later" is irrelevant—dishonesty includes temporary deprivation.

(B) is wrong: repayment intent doesn't erase fraudulent use.

(C) is wrong: cybercrimes attract criminal penalties, including imprisonment.

(D) is wrong: laptop access ≠ consent to banking password.

Difficulty: Hard

Q127. Answer: (A)

Explanation: Unless immediate emergency exists, doctors must seek informed consent. Acting in "best interests" is insufficient without disclosure. Here, cancer treatment was not an immediate emergency.

Difficulty: Hard

Q128. Answer: (B)

Explanation: Indra Sawhney v. Union of India capped reservations at 50%, absent exceptional circumstances. The state's justification ("preventing brain drain") is

socio-economic but not extraordinary under equality jurisprudence. Thus, 75% quota violates Article 14.

(A) is wrong: state preference is permissible only within 50%.

(C) is wrong: state autonomy isn't unlimited.

(D) is wrong: reservations are not unconstitutional per se.

Difficulty: Hard

Q129. Answer: (D) Explanation: Qualified privilege covers good faith communications in employment references, but malice negates it (Horrocks v. Lowe). Mr. Verma acted with personal grudge, showing malice. Hence, privilege defence fails.

(A) is wrong: privilege isn't absolute.

(C) is wrong: privilege doesn't protect knowingly false statements.

(B) is wrong: privilege extends beyond legal proceedings.

Difficulty: Hard

Q130. Answer: (A) Explanation: Public nuisance (IPC s.268; tort law) is substantial interference with public rights. Community health harm outweighs economic utility (Ratlam Municipality v. Vardhichand). Public benefit cannot excuse damage to health and environment.

(B) is wrong: "public benefit" ≠ defence.

(C) is wrong: industries have no blanket immunity.

(D) is wrong: nuisance liability doesn't require proof of negligence.

Difficulty: Hard

Q131. Answer: (B) Expanded Explanation: False imprisonment arises when liberty is unlawfully restrained. Detention must rest on reasonable suspicion. Mere alarm beep without corroboration doesn't justify two hours of confinement. Good faith belief alone is insufficient.

(A) is wrong: guards' power is limited.

(C) is wrong: good faith ≠ reasonable suspicion.

(D) is wrong: private detention isn't always unlawful, but must be reasonable.

Difficulty: Hard

Q132. Answer: (A) Explanation: In R v. Smith and R v. Cheshire, courts held original assailant remains liable unless medical treatment is so grossly negligent it becomes sole cause. Here, stabbing remained operative cause; negligence was contributory but not sole. Anil is guilty of homicide.

(B) is wrong: negligence didn't break chain.

(C) is wrong: hurt liability understates causal connection.

(D) is wrong: doctor's negligence doesn't absolve assailant.

Difficulty: Hard

Q133. Answer: (A) Expanded Explanation: Article 21 guarantees liberty; pre-trial detention must be exceptional. In *Nikesh Tarachand Shah v. Union of India* and *Hussainara Khatoon*, the SC stressed "bail is the rule, jail the exception." Denial merely for deterrence or gravity, without trial progress, violates presumption of innocence.

(B) is wrong: gravity is relevant but cannot justify indefinite custody.

(C) is wrong: extraordinary sureties ≠ justification for prolonged denial.

(D) is wrong: economic offences don't automatically warrant denial.

Difficulty: Hard

Q134. Answer: A – Thursday (Medium) Explanation: Indian is fixed on Tuesday (8). Japanese is two days after Indian (6) → Thursday. Since A is immediately before B (1) and B is Friday or Saturday (5), the only way to place A right before B while keeping Japanese on Thursday is A on Thursday, B on Friday. Thus A–Thursday is Japanese.

Q135. Answer: D – Lebanese – Wednesday (Medium) Explanation: C is on Wednesday (2) and is not Italian (2). From the placements: Vegan is Monday (6), Indian Tuesday (8), Japanese Thursday (6→8), and Mexican goes with E (7) which will be Saturday (see Q136). That leaves Italian and Lebanese for Wednesday and Friday. Because C is not Italian, C must be Lebanese on Wednesday; consequently, Friday takes Italian (with B).

Q136. Answer: D – Saturday (Easy) Explanation: From Q134, A–Thu and B–Fri. With Vegan–Mon, Indian–Tue, C–Wed, the only remaining day is Saturday. Clue (7) says Mexican is on the same day as E, and (4) requires E later than F–Saturday is the latest available day, so E–Saturday and hence Mexican–Saturday.

Q137. Answer: D (Easy)

Explanation: From (1)–(4), you get the consecutive block Leela → Mohan → Nisha → Pooja → Rohan in that order. Statement (5) fixes Omar opposite Mohan, and (6) fixes Tara opposite Nisha. With (7) placing Kabir immediately before Leela (anticlockwise), the full circle becomes Kabir – Leela – Mohan – Nisha – Pooja – Rohan – Omar – Tara. Opposite pairs are then (Leela,Rohan), (Mohan,Omar), (Nisha,Tara), (Pooja,Kabir). No option matches one of these guaranteed opposite pairs. A (Leela,Tara) are not opposite; B (Nisha,Kabir) are not

opposite; C (Pooja,Rohan) are adjacent, not opposite.

Q138. Answer: B (Easy)

Detailed Explanation: Using the derived order Kabir – Leela – Mohan – Nisha – Pooja – Rohan – Omar – Tara, start at Kabir and move clockwise to Pooja. The people strictly between them are Leela, Mohan, Nisha – exactly 3. Hence B. Options A/C/D miscount the intervening seats.

Q139. Answer: A (Easy)

Detailed Explanation: From (1)–(4), immediately clockwise after Leela comes Mohan, Nisha, Pooja, Rohan. From (5) & (6), Omar must be opposite Mohan and Tara opposite Nisha, leaving Kabir immediately anticlockwise of Leela by (7). Thus the clockwise cycle beginning at Leela is Leela → Mohan → Nisha → Pooja → Rohan → Omar → Tara → Kabir, which is Option A. B swaps Nisha and Pooja; C runs the reverse direction and breaks adjacencies; D swaps Omar/Rohan positions relative to Pooja.

Q140. Answer: B (Medium)

Detailed Explanation: From (6), Eklavya is at an extreme; from (7), Heena is immediately to his left, so they must occupy the right end pair (... Heena, Eklavya). From (8), Gaurav is at the other extreme, i.e., the left end. Filling the central block via (1)–(5) gives the final order Gaurav – Chirag – Anita – Bharat – Deepa – Farida – Heena – Eklavya. Hence the extreme right is Eklavya.

Q141. Answer: B (Medium)

Detailed Explanation: In the final order Gaurav (1) – Chirag (2) – Anita (3) – Bharat (4) – Deepa (5) – Farida (6) – Heena (7) – Eklavya (8), the people strictly between Chirag (2) and Heena (7) are Anita (3), Bharat (4), Deepa (5), Farida (6) – four persons. Thus B is correct. The other counts misread the spacing.

Q142. Answer: B (Medium)

Detailed Explanation: From the constructed line, adjacent pairs include (Gaurav,Chirag), (Chirag,Anita), (Anita,Bharat), (Bharat,Deepa), (Deepa,Farida), (Farida,Heena), (Heena,Eklavya). Among the options, only Anita and Bharat are listed as an adjacent pair, so B is correct. A are separated by Farida; C are separated by Anita and Bharat; D are separated by Heena.

Q143. Answer: C. 5th (Medium) Explanation: Tech=3rd and Wellness=4th (Clue 2). Alia=1st (Clue 4). Farhan is immediately above Publicity and is not Tech/Wellness (Clue 3), so Publicity must be 5th and Farhan 6th. Charu is the Publicity lead (Clue 1) ⇒ Charu on 5th. Deepak (Treasury) must be below Charu ⇒ 2nd fits. All

placements now match the table above.

Q144. Answer: B. Esha (Easy) Explanation: Tech sits on 3rd (Clue 2). Wellness is one floor above Tech $\Rightarrow$ 4th. With Alia fixed on 1st (Logistics) and Deepak on 2nd (Treasury), the 4th-floor resident is Esha, so Esha = Wellness. Farhan is neither Tech nor Wellness (Clue 3), and Bharat can't be Wellness (Clue 5).

Q145. Answer: C. Bharat - Tech (Medium) Explanation: From Clue 2, Tech = 3rd floor. Bharat is barred from Treasury and Wellness (Clue 5), leaving Tech as the only match for him once Deepak=Treasure(2nd) and Esha=Wellness(4th) are set. Therefore Bharat on 3rd heading Tech.

Q146. Answer: D. 2 km, West (Medium)

Explanation:

Step 1: Ravi moves 3 km north.

Step 2: Turns left $\rightarrow$ faces west, walks 4 km.

Step 3: Turns left again $\rightarrow$ faces south, walks 3 km. Now vertically, he is back at the same east-west line as the starting point.

Step 4: Turns right (from south $\rightarrow$ west), walks 2 km.

Final position: Net displacement = 6 km west of the vertical line through start, but also returned to starting latitude. Starting point (0,0); final (-6,0). Distance = 6 km. Distance = 6 units west.

Q147. Answer: A. Facing South, 4 km away (Hard)

Explanation:

□Start at (0,0), facing east.

□Step 1: 5 km east $\rightarrow$ (5,0).

□Step 2: Turn right (south), 3 km $\rightarrow$ (5,-3).

□Step 3: Turn right (west), 7 km $\rightarrow$ (-2,-3).

□Step 4: Turn right (north), 3 km $\rightarrow$ (-2,0).

□Step 5: Turn left (from north $\rightarrow$ west), 2 km $\rightarrow$ (-4,0).

Final coordinates: (-4,0). Facing West. Distance from origin = $\sqrt{(-4)^2 + 0^2} = 4$ km. Hence West, 4 km.

Q148. Answer: a) - (difficult)

The core structure: change the measurement rule $\rightarrow$ observe a favorable change in the metric $\rightarrow$ infer underlying reality improved. In the police case, reclassifying "non-injury assaults" out of the "serious incidents" denominator produces an accounting drop without any established change in actual victimization or patrol efficacy.

□Why (a) is correct: Lowering the GPA threshold inflates the count of "Dean's List" students by definitional fiat. Concluding that ability has risen mistakes a category change for a substantive improvement—precisely

the KPI fallacy in the policing passage. The logical skeleton matches: relabeling/threshold shift $\Rightarrow$ metric movement $\Rightarrow$ unwarranted causal claim about true quality/safety.

Why (b) is incorrect: Here, detection capability improves, moving the metric against the evaluator's interest (defect rate rises). The inference "quality worsened because defects rose" could actually be false because of surveillance bias—but it is the opposite direction of the city's case (they made the metric easier; (b) makes measurement stricter). The mapping is not isomorphic.

Why (c) is incorrect: Mortality declines with no coding change or case-mix shift; inferring effectiveness could still be premature (needs controls), but it does not hinge on redefinition of the metric. The flaw type differs (causal attribution without randomization), not the taxonomy manipulation in the original.

Why (d) is tempting but wrong: Reclassifying product categories and inferring "electronics demand is down" from a departmental revenue dip can mirror reclassification error. However, in retail, departmental demand composition could genuinely shift if accessories cannibalize electronics or if total store demand falls; the analogy is weaker unless it's stipulated that total revenue stayed constant and only categorical placement changed. Option (a) is the cleaner structural twin: a threshold change manufacturing an apparent improvement. Hence, (a) best captures the officials' reasoning error grounded in metric redefinition rather than real-world change.

Q149. Answer: a) - (difficult)

To undermine the causal claim, we want evidence that, when selection bias and local demand shocks are neutralized, the program's effect disappears. Option (a) provides exactly that: in districts where scarce seats were allocated by lottery among eligible applicants, trained and untrained groups are ex ante comparable. If their employment outcomes are statistically indistinguishable, the headline 10-point gap from observational comparisons is likely driven by selection (motivation, baseline skills) or contemporaneous hiring booms, not by the training itself. This is classic internal-validity evidence.

□Why (b) is incorrect: Better interview performance among trained candidates could coexist with no net employment lift if hiring constraints bind, firms favor experience, or the marginal productivity signal is weak. It does not directly negate causality; if anything, it mildly supports it.

□Why (c) is weaker: Concentration of gains where industrial parks boomed suggests demand confounding, which does erode causal claims—but it remains

correlational and is compatible with a program that helped participants capture those new jobs. It's not as dispositive as a randomized no-effect.

□ Why (d) is weaker: Baseline employment differences indicate selection, but without a design that equalizes observables and unobservables, we cannot quantify the bias. It raises suspicion; it doesn't decisively refute causality. Because (a) replaces observational comparisons with a quasi-experimental counterfactual showing no treatment effect, it most powerfully weakens the leaders' attribution.

Q150. Answer: b) – (difficult)

Oriole's claim – “the four-day week increased productivity”—competes with composition and mix explanations: culling the bottom 5% and pausing low-margin lines can raise output/employee even if individual-hour efficiency is unchanged. The necessary assumption is that these non-schedule changes did not account for most of the observed 8% gain relative to the but-for world without the schedule shift. That is exactly what (b) states. If layoffs and product pruning explain the bulk of the improvement, the schedule attribution collapses.

Why (a) is not necessary: An exogenous demand bump (viral marketing) could raise throughput, but productivity (output per employee) can still rise from the schedule change via focus/deep-work gains; conversely, even with a demand bump, attribution might still hold if analysts adjust for it. It's useful to rule out, but not logically required for the claim to be true.

□ Why (c) is not necessary: Well-being is instrumentally relevant but orthogonal to causal identification; productivity could rise without self-reported well-being moving (measurement error, lag, or stoicism), so (c) isn't required.

Why (d) is not necessary: Competitor flat productivity is context, not a logical prerequisite. Oriole's internal mix/selection could differ; the claim doesn't rely on industry-relative statements. Thus, the indispensable bridge between correlation and causation is the exclusion (or bounded contribution) of composition/mix effects—captured only by (b)—without which the schedule attribution is ungrounded.



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