

Ramasamy
Periyar



100 Years
**SELF
RESPECT
MOVEMENT**

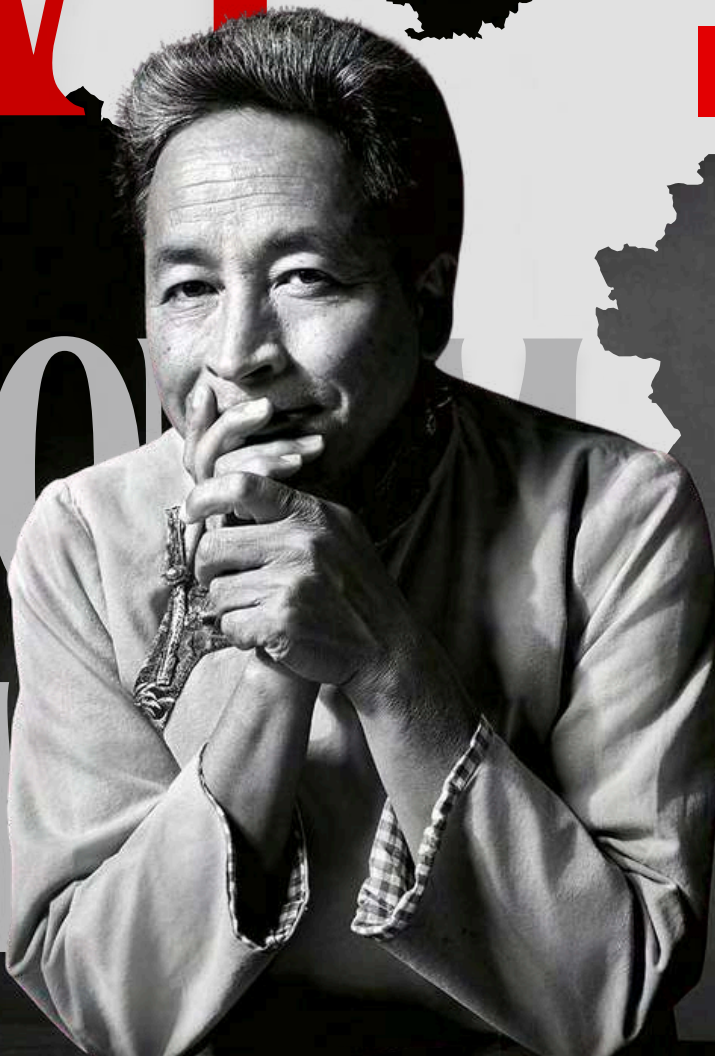
Schedule

CLAT
Tathya

OCTOBER 2025



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



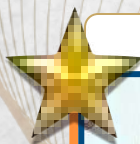
Vidisha Singh



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

Navigate.
Prepare.
Lead.
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

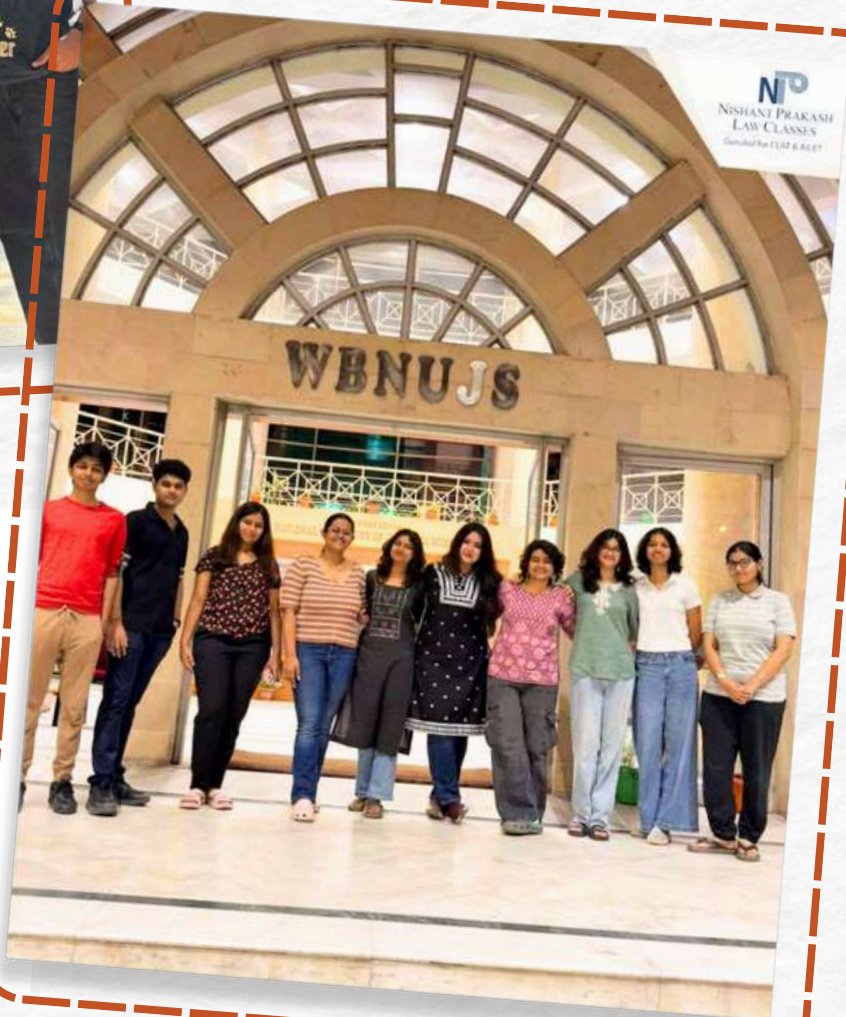
(Left to Right)

**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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GST 2.0 WITH NEXT-GEN REFORMS

ECONOMY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

- The **56th GST Council** approved **GST 2.0** with a broad **two-slab regime** of **5%** (merit) and **18%** (standard), along with a **40% demerit** rate for super-luxury, sin and demerit goods.
- The Council decided that most revised rates would be **effective September 22, 2025**, and confirmed that individual **health insurance** and **life insurance** for individuals would be **GST-exempt**.
- The Union Finance Minister stated that the decisions were reached **by consensus** after a 10.5-hour meeting and that rate rationalisation is accompanied by **process reforms** to ease refunds and registration.

Structure and Coverage of GST 2.0

- **GST 2.0** replaces the earlier four-slab system of **5%/12%/18%/28%** with two principal slabs of **5%** and **18%**, while retaining a **40%** demerit rate for specified super-luxury and sin goods such as tobacco and cigarettes.
- The reform includes corrections of **inverted duty** structures in sectors such as **textiles** and **fertilisers**, and introduces automated measures to **ease compliance** for businesses, including MSMEs.

Effective Date and Administrative Steps

- All service and goods rate changes, other than for tobacco-related products, are scheduled to take effect **from 22 September 2025**.
- The roadmap provides **automatic registration** within **three working days** for applicants identified by system-based analytics, and **system-based refunds** including provisional refunds for **zero-rated supplies** and supplies with **inverted duty** structure.

What is GST?

Nature & Purpose

- Goods and Services Tax (GST) is a comprehensive, multi-stage, destination-based indirect tax that subsumes most indirect taxes levied by the Centre and States.
- It is levied on every value addition throughout the supply chain but collected at the point of consumption (destination).
- GST replaced a complex system of indirect taxes such as excise duty, service tax, VAT, CST, octroi, and entry tax.
- It aims to create a unified national market, ensure ease of doing business, and reduce cascading of taxes (tax on tax).

Evolution of GST in India

- **2000:** The concept of GST was first proposed by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Government, forming an Empowered Committee of State Finance Ministers headed by Asim Dasgupta.
- **2006:** The Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram announced in the Budget that GST would be introduced from April 1, 2010.
- **2011:** The Constitution (115th Amendment) Bill for GST was introduced but lapsed due to lack of consensus.
- **2014:** The Constitution (122nd Amendment) Bill was reintroduced in Parliament.
- **2016:** The Bill was passed by both Houses of Parliament, leading to the Constitution (101st Amendment) Act, 2016, which empowered both Centre and States to levy GST.
- **July 1, 2017:** GST was officially launched, marking a historic reform in India's indirect tax regime.

Types of GST in India- CGST, SGST & IGST

CGST

Central GST or CGST that is collected by the Central Government

SGST

State GST or SGST that is collected by the State Government

IGST

IGST or Integrated GST that is collected by the Central Government

Types of GST in India: To ensure tax sharing between the Centre and States, India adopted a dual GST model, comprising four types:

- **CGST (Central Goods and Services Tax):** Levied by the Central Government on intra-state supply of goods and services.
- **SGST (State Goods and Services Tax):** Levied by the State Government on intra-state supply of goods and services.
- **IGST (Integrated Goods and Services Tax):** Levied by the Central Government on inter-state supplies and imports, later shared between Centre and destination State.
- **UTGST (Union Territory Goods and Services Tax):** Levied on intra-UT supplies in Union Territories without legislature (e.g., Chandigarh, Andaman & Nicobar Islands).

GST Council

- The **Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council** is a constitutional body established under **Article 279A of the Constitution of India**. It serves as the apex policy-making body for all matters related to the implementation, administration, and structure of GST in India.
- The GST Council was constituted to ensure **cooperative federalism** by bringing the Union and the States together on a common platform to make joint decisions regarding the Goods and Services Tax system.
- The **Chairperson of the GST Council is the Union Finance Minister of India**. The Union Minister of State for Finance or Revenue and the Finance Ministers of all States and Union Territories with legislatures are its members.



- The Council is responsible for making recommendations to the Union and the States on tax rates, exemptions, threshold limits, model GST laws, special provisions for specific States, and principles of levy and apportionment of GST.
- The decisions of the GST Council are taken through **a voting mechanism in which the Central Government has one-third of the total votes, while all the State Governments collectively have two-thirds of the total votes.**
- A decision in the Council requires **a three-fourths majority of the weighted votes of the members present and voting.**
- The Council also establishes mechanisms to resolve disputes between the Centre and the States or among the States regarding the implementation of GST.
- The objective of the GST Council is to ensure uniformity in tax laws, procedures, and rates across India, promoting a harmonised and efficient indirect tax system that benefits both the government and the taxpayers.

Impacts of GST Since 2017

Revenue Performance and Fiscal Assessment

- India's gross GST collection rose from **₹11.37 lakh crore in 2020-21** to **₹22.08 lakh crore in 2024-25**, indicating a near-doubling over five years, with an average monthly collection of about **₹1.84 lakh crore** in 2024-25.
- The government reported record monthly collections of **₹2.10 lakh crore in April 2024** and **₹2.37 lakh crore in April 2025**, reflecting improved compliance and a broadened base.
- The Union government assessed the net **revenue implication** of the GST 2.0 package at approximately **₹48,000 crore** on the **2023-24** consumption base, while stating that the proposal is designed to be **fiscally sustainable**.

Compliance and Ease-of-Doing-Business Measures

- **E-way bills, e-invoicing** (phased, now mandatory for businesses above specified turnover thresholds), and risk-based analytics continue as core anti-evasion tools under the reformed regime.
- Automated **registration, risk-based refunds, and classification simplification** under the two-slab schedule aim to reduce working capital blockages and the volume of disputes, particularly in **automotive, food processing** and **textiles**.
- Threshold-based exemptions for **small businesses** remain an integral part of the framework to limit compliance burden on micro and small enterprises.

Expected Economy-wide Effects (as stated by authorities)

- The Council and the Union government stated that the rate cuts on **mass-consumption** goods and critical inputs will lower **cost-of-living**, support **agriculture** and **manufacturing**, and encourage higher **formalisation**.
- Industry bodies publicly indicated that they would pass through the benefits of the reductions to consumers, which is expected to **lift demand** and support **jobs**.



Historic Diwali Gift for the Nation

NEXT-GEN GST REFORM

for Ease of Living & to build *Aatmanirbhar Bharat*

From farmers to enterprises, from households to businesses,
the Next-Gen GST brings happiness for all!

Save Big on Daily Essentials

Items	From	To
Hair Oil, Shampoo, Toothpaste, Toilet Soap Bar, Tooth Brushes, Shaving Cream	18%	5%
Butter, Ghee, Cheese & Dairy Spreads	12%	5%
Pre-packaged Namkeens, Bhujia & Mixtures	12%	5%
Utensils	12%	5%
Feeding Bottles, Napkins for Babies & Clinical Diapers	12%	5%
Sewing Machines & Parts	12%	5%

Uplifting Farmers & Agriculture

Items	From	To
Tractor Tyres & Parts	18%	5%
Tractors	12%	5%
Specified Bio-Pesticides, Micro-Nutrients	12%	5%
Drip Irrigation System & Sprinklers	12%	5%
Agricultural, Horticultural or Forestry Machines for Soil Preparation, Cultivation, Harvesting & Threshing	12%	5%

Relief in Healthcare Sector

Items	From	To
Individual Health & Life Insurance	18%	Nil
Thermometer	18%	5%
Medical Grade Oxygen	12%	5%
All Diagnostic Kits & Reagents	12%	5%
Glucometer & Test Strips	12%	5%
Corrective Spectacles	12%	5%

Automobiles made affordable

Items	From	To
Petrol & Petrol Hybrid, LPG, CNG Cars (not exceeding - 1200 cc & 4000mm)	28%	18%
Diesel & Diesel Hybrid Cars (not exceeding - 1500 cc & 4000mm)	28%	18%
3 Wheeled Vehicles	28%	18%
Motor Cycles (350 cc & below)	28%	18%
Motor Vehicles for transport of goods	28%	18%

Affordable Education

Items	From	To
Maps, Charts & Globes	12%	Nil
Pencils, Sharpeners, Crayons & Pastels	12%	Nil
Exercise Books & Notebooks	12%	Nil
Eraser	5%	Nil

Save on Electronic Appliances

Items	From	To
Air Conditioners	28%	18%
Television (above 32") (including LED & LCD TVs)	28%	18%
Monitors & Projectors	28%	18%
Dish Washing Machines	28%	18%

PROCESS REFORMS

Registration

Automatic registration within 3 working days for applicants:
 • Identified by the system based on data analysis
 • Who determines that he would not pass Input Tax Credit exceeding ₹2.5 Lakh per month and opts for the Scheme

Refund

Sanction of Provisional Refunds by proper officer, through system based risk evaluation for:
 • Zero Rated Supplies
 • Supplies with Inverted Duty Structure



“The next generation of GST reforms are a gift for every Indian this Diwali. Taxes for the general public will be reduced substantially. Our MSMEs & small entrepreneurs will get huge benefit. Everyday items will become cheaper and this will also give a new boost to the economy.”

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

Next-Gen GST - Better & Simpler !

Please visit CBIC website 'www.cbic.gov.in' for detailed information

Sector-wise Rate Outcomes after 2.0 reforms

- **Daily essentials:** Hair oil, shampoo, toilet soap bars, toothbrushes, toothpaste and shaving cream move **from 18% to 5%**. Butter, ghee, cheese and dairy spreads move **from 12% to 5%**. Pre-packaged namkeens and mixtures, utensils, feeding bottles, clinical diapers and sewing machines also reduce **from 12% to 5%**.
- **Healthcare and diagnostics:** Individual **life insurance** and **health insurance** for individuals become **Nil** from **18%**. Corrective spectacles reduce **from 12% to 5%**. Medical-grade oxygen, diagnostic kits and reagents reduce **from 12% to 5%**, and specified life-saving and rare-disease drugs receive **Nil** rate reductions as notified.
- **Education materials:** Maps, charts and globes reduce **from 12% to Nil**. Exercise books and notebooks reduce **from 12% to Nil**; pencils, sharpeners, crayons and erasers are also rationalised to **Nil** as listed.
- **Agriculture and inputs:** Tractors reduce **from 12% to 5%**; tractor tyres and parts reduce **from 18% to 5%**. Drip-irrigation systems and sprinklers reduce **from 12% to 5%**. Inputs for fertilisers such as **sulphuric acid, nitric acid** and **ammonia** reduce **from 18% to 5%**.
- **Automobiles and parts:** Petrol, petrol-hybrid, LPG and CNG cars not exceeding **1,200 cc** (petrol) or **4,000 mm** length shift **from 28% to 18%**; diesel and diesel-hybrid cars not exceeding **1,500 cc** or **4,000 mm** length also shift **to 18%**. Motorcycles of **350 cc and below** reduce **from 28% to 18%**; three-wheeled vehicles and most auto parts move to **18%**. Super-luxury and other demerit vehicles fall under the **40%** demerit rate; **electric vehicles** continue at **5%**.
- **Electronic appliances:** **Tax on Air conditioners** reduces **from 28% to 18%**. **Televisions above 32"**, including LED/LCD, reduce **from 28% to 18%**; monitors, projectors and **dishwashers** also reduce **from 28% to 18%**.
- **Renewable energy:** Devices for **renewable energy** reduce **from 12% to 5%** to promote green adoption.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Which meeting of the GST Council approved the launch of GST 2.0, marking a major reform in India's indirect tax regime?
(a) 52nd GST Council (b) 54th GST Council
(c) 55th GST Council (d) 56th GST Council
- Which tax rate structure was approved under GST 2.0 by the 56th GST Council, creating a simplified two-slab system?
(a) 8% and 20% (b) 12% and 28%
(c) 5% and 18% (d) 10% and 18%
- Which special rate was retained in GST 2.0 as an additional levy on sin goods, super-luxury items, and demerit products apart from the 5% and 18% standard slabs?
(a) 40% demerit (b) 22% demerit
(c) 30% demerit (d) 28% demerit
- Which date was decided by the 56th GST Council for most of the revised GST 2.0 rates to come into effect?
(a) September 15, 2025 (b) September 22, 2025
(c) October 1, 2025 (d) October 15, 2025
- Which services were confirmed as GST-exempt by the 56th GST Council along with the decision to make revised GST 2.0 rates effective from September 22, 2025?
(a) Educational services and digital content
(b) Railway services and metro projects
(c) Health insurance and life insurance
(d) Hotel accommodation and catering services
- Which earlier GST rate structure of four slabs was rationalised into two primary slabs under GST 2.0?
(a) 3%/9%/15%/21% (b) 5%/12%/18%/28%
(c) 7%/14%/20%/25% (d) 10%/16%/22%/30%
- Which products were specifically cited as examples of sin goods to be taxed at the 40% demerit rate under GST 2.0?
(a) Alcoholic beverages
(b) Tobacco and cigarettes
(c) Soft drinks and chocolates
(d) Luxury cars
- Which sectors saw the correction of inverted duty structures under GST 2.0 to ease compliance and improve input tax credit flow?
(a) Textiles and fertilisers
(b) Automobiles and electronics
(c) Steel and cement
(d) Telecom and IT services
- How many working days will it take for applicants identified as genuine by system-based analytics to receive automatic GST registration under GST 2.0?
(a) One working day (b) Three working days
(c) Five working days (d) Seven working days
- Which revised GST rate now applies to daily essentials such as hair oil, shampoo, soap bars, toothpaste, butter, ghee, cheese, dairy spreads, utensils, and clinical diapers under GST 2.0?
(a) 12% (b) 18% (c) 28% (d) 5%
- Which category of vehicles not exceeding 1,200 cc engine capacity (for petrol) or 4,000 mm in length was shifted from the 28% GST slab to the 18% GST slab under GST 2.0?
(a) Diesel cars and compact vehicles
(b) Petrol, petrol-hybrid, LPG and CNG cars
(c) Electric cars and battery vehicles
(d) Luxury SUVs and imported sedans
- Which category of devices had their GST rate reduced from 12% to 5% under GST 2.0 to encourage green adoption and sustainability?
(a) Electronic gadgets (b) Agricultural machinery
(c) Renewable energy (d) Industrial chemicals
- Which constitutional amendment introduced the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India, subsuming multiple central and state levies into a unified tax framework?
(a) 101st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2017
(b) 100th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2015
(c) 102nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2018
(d) 103rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2019
- Which article of the Constitution provides for the establishment of the GST Council, chaired by the Union Finance Minister with State finance ministers

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

as members?

- (a) Article 280
- (b) Article 279A
- (c) Article 368
- (d) Article 246A

15. Which institution serves as the technology backbone for GST, enabling processes such as

taxpayer registration, return filing, payment, and compliance analytics?

- (a) Central Board of Direct Taxes
- (b) Ministry of Corporate Affairs
- (c) National Payments Corporation of India
- (d) GST Network

SOLUTIONS

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

2 PM SVANIDHI 2.0 EXTENSION

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

- The Union Cabinet approved the restructuring and time-extension of **PM SVANidhi** for street vendors, moving the lending **cut-off from 31 December 2024 to 31 March 2030**, with a total outlay of ₹7,332 crore and an estimated coverage of 1.15 crore beneficiaries, including 50 lakh first-time borrowers.
- The urban housing mission **PMAY-U 2.0** marked one year with a nationwide “**PMAY-U Awas Diwas**” on 17 September 2025 and launched **Angikaar 2025** (4 September–31 October 2025) to accelerate verification, sanction, construction, and handover of houses across 5,000+ Urban Local Bodies.

What is a PM SVANidhi?

- The **PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi** is a **Central Sector scheme of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** that provides collateral-free working-capital loans to urban street vendors **whose livelihoods were hit by the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020**, and it now stands extended until **31 March 2030**.
- The restructured design aims to reach 1.15 crore vendors by 2030, and it explicitly expands geographical coverage beyond statutory towns to census towns and peri-urban areas in a graded manner to capture vendors outside earlier municipal limits.
- As of 30 July 2025, lenders had disbursed 96 lakh loans amounting to ₹13,797 crore to 68 lakh unique vendors, demonstrating sustained uptake of the credit line across successive tranches.

PM SVANidhi: Loan Structure, Incentives, and Digital Push

- The first-tranche loan ceiling is revised from ₹10,000 to ₹15,000, and the second-tranche ceiling is revised from ₹20,000 to ₹25,000, while the third tranche remains at ₹50,000, thereby enabling step-up working capital for compliant borrowers.
- Timely or early repayment qualifies beneficiaries for a 7% per-annum **Interest Subsidy** credited via Direct Benefit Transfer on a periodic (quarterly) basis, and early repayment attracts no prepayment penalty under the scheme.
- Beneficiaries who fully repay the second loan are eligible for a UPI-linked **RuPay Credit Card** to facilitate immediate access to revolving credit for business or urgent personal needs, and adoption of digital payments is incentivised through cashback up to ₹1,600 on retail and wholesale transactions.
- The scheme strengthens “**SVANidhi se Samridhi**” through monthly Lok Kalyan Melas to dovetail social-security enrolments and widen access to complementary welfare schemes.

PM SVANidhi: Eligibility, Documentation, and Institutional Roles

- A “**street vendor**” is defined as any person selling goods or offering services of daily use in public spaces through a temporary structure or by moving from place to place, and the scope includes vendors of fruits, vegetables, ready food, apparel, books, and services such as barbers, cobblers, laundry, and pan shops.
- Applicants should possess a Certificate of Vending or Identity Card issued by the Urban Local Body; vendors found in ULB surveys but pending certification are eligible; and left-out vendors may obtain a Letter of Recommendation by showing prior loan records, association membership, other proof of vending, or by requesting a local enquiry.

- KYC requires standard documents such as Aadhaar, Voter ID, Driving Licence, MNREGA Card, or PAN, and the scheme's lending network spans banks, microfinance institutions, NBFCs, and Self-Help Group channels to maximise last-mile reach.
- Implementation responsibility is shared by MoHUA and the Department of Financial Services, while SIDBI supports credit management via the UdyamiMitra platform, and interest-subsidy processing is integrated with the PAiSA portal to maintain e-governance transparency.

PMAY-U 2.0: Mission Momentum and Campaign Architecture

- **PMAY-U 2.0**—launched in September 2024—pursues saturation of urban housing support with the objective that every eligible urban family obtains a safe, permanent dwelling with basic services, and it complements earlier PMAY-U interventions started in 2015.
- **Angikaar 2025** is a time-bound national drive (4 September–31 October 2025) to expedite verification, sanction, ground-level mobilisation, geo-tagging, and completion for 20 lakh already-sanctioned houses, while also onboarding new eligible households.



- The drive specifically includes Special Focus Groups such as safai karamcharis, street vendors linked from **PM SVANidhi**, artisans under PM Vishwakarma, Anganwadi and construction workers, and residents of slums and chawls to ensure inclusive targeting.
- Convergence activities include PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana enrolment for eligible PMAY households, facilitation of home-loan linkages for 8.5 lakh sanctioned houses, and dignified Grih Pravesh ceremonies for newly completed units.

PMAY-U 2.0: Delivery Metrics and Financials

- Since the inception of PMAY-Urban, 1.20 crore houses have been sanctioned and about 94 lakh houses have been completed and handed over, while PMAY-U 2.0 has added 1.47 lakh approvals in August 2025 across 14 States and UTs, taking total 2.0 sanctions to 8.56 lakh.
- As on 25 August 2025, the cumulative PMAY-Urban dashboard recorded 120.33 lakh houses sanctioned, 112.98 lakh houses grounded, and 94.03 lakh houses completed, supported by a total investment of ₹8.24 lakh crore, with central assistance of ₹2,02,449 crore committed and ₹1,73,495 crore released.
- Under current assistance rules, eligible EWS, LIG, and MIG households can receive up to ₹2.5 lakh for construction or purchase of a dwelling, and applications may be filed online through the PMAY-U portal or via local Urban Local Bodies.

PMAY-U 2.0: Components and Beneficiary Pathways

- The **Beneficiary-Led Construction** vertical allows eligible families to build a house on their own land with central assistance, with ULB-linked geo-tagging of construction stages and release of instalments tied to verified progress and statutory clearances as needed.
- The **Affordable Housing** in Partnership vertical supports purchase or allotment in apartment projects executed by public agencies or approved private partners, and it includes Redeemable Housing Vouchers and redevelopment of tenable slums, including in-situ options.
- The Affordable Rental Housing vertical operates through two models: conversion of vacant government-funded houses into rental stock and construction-cum-operation of rental units by public or private entities for urban poor and migrants, including workers in industrial areas and institutional estates.
- The Interest Subsidy Scheme under PMAY-U provides home-loan interest support across EWS, LIG, and

- MIG income bands up to notified loan and house-value caps, and the subsidy is released in five yearly instalments to reduce effective EMIs for qualifying households.

Inclusion, Priorities, and Field Implementation

- Eligibility prioritisation under PMAY-U and 2.0 covers families without a pucca house and emphasises vulnerable groups such as widows, single women, senior citizens, transgender persons, SC, ST, OBC households, minorities, safai karamcharis, street vendors, artisans, Anganwadi workers, construction workers, and slum dwellers, with Aadhaar or Virtual ID mandatory to prevent duplication with the rural PMAY-G.
- As of August 2025, PMAY-U 2.0 reported 75,417 houses sanctioned in the names of women including single women and widows, and Uttar Pradesh recorded 1,166 houses approved for senior citizens, indicating targeted support for gender and age-based vulnerability.
- Additional approvals specifically recorded for disadvantaged communities include 32,551 houses for Scheduled Castes, 5,025 houses for Scheduled Tribes, and 58,375 houses for Other Backward Classes, reflecting a calibrated inclusion approach within urban housing allocations.
- On-ground services are delivered through “PM Awas Mela – Shehri” windows that provide eligibility help-desks, on-the-spot verification and registration, loan-mela facilitation, PM Surya Ghar enrolment, convergence camps for Ujjwala and health insurance, and dedicated outreach for Special Focus Groups, along with beneficiary success-story sharing and ULB recognitions.

Convergence: Vendor Finance to Urban Housing

- Street vendors supported through **PM SVANidhi** are explicitly included among Special Focus Groups under **PMAY-U 2.0**, and convergence at city-level camps enables eligible vendor households to transition from micro-credit for livelihood revival to access to affordable, secure housing.
- The combined approach—credit access, digital payments, social-security onboarding, targeted housing assistance, and solar-energy linkage—advances the urban inclusion objective by moving households along a clear ladder from enterprise stabilisation to dignified home ownership.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which scheme, recently restructured and extended by the Union Cabinet to 31 March 2030 with an outlay of ₹7,332 crore, supports lending to street vendors?
(a) PM Jan Dhan Yojana
(b) Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana
(c) Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Antyodaya Yojana
(d) PM SVANidhi
2. Which nationwide observance was held on 17 September 2025 to mark one year of the urban housing mission PMAY-U 2.0?
(a) PMAY-U Awas Diwas
(b) Housing for All Day
(c) Jan Awas Abhiyan
(d) Gramin Awas Utsav
3. Which initiative, rolled out in September–October 2025 under PMAY-U 2.0, focused on expediting housing benefits across more than 5,000 urban bodies?
(a) Griha Samridhi Abhiyan
(b) National Housing Drive
(c) Awas Pragati Mission
(d) Angikaar 2025
4. What is the annual rate of interest subsidy offered to PM SVANidhi beneficiaries who make timely or early repayments?
(a) 5% per-annum
(b) 7% per-annum
(c) 6% per-annum
(d) 8% per-annum
5. Which of the following best defines a street vendor under the PM SVANidhi framework?
(a) A person running a permanent retail shop in a fixed market location
(b) A worker employed in factories or offices for monthly wages
(c) A person selling goods or services in public spaces with a temporary stall or by moving
(d) A domestic worker engaged in household chores for urban families
6. Which urban housing programme, launched in September 2024, aims at saturation coverage so that every eligible urban family secures a safe, permanent house with basic services?
(a) PM Gramin Awas Yojana
(b) National Urban Housing Mission
(c) Affordable Rental Housing Complexes
(d) PMAY-U 2.0—
7. Which scheme has been integrated with PMAY-U 2.0 through convergence activities to provide solar power benefits for eligible households?
(a) PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana
(b) PM Kusum Solar Pump Yojana
(c) National Rooftop Solar Programme
(d) Ujjwala Solar Access Yojana
8. Which PMAY-Urban vertical specifically focuses on providing direct support to land-owning families to self-construct their dwelling units, ensuring transparency through geo-tagging and progress verification?
(a) In-Situ Slum Redevelopment
(b) Credit-Linked Subsidy Scheme
(c) Beneficiary-Led Construction
(d) Affordable Rental Housing Complexes
9. Which PMAY-Urban vertical provides interest support on housing loans for households in EWS, LIG, and MIG categories, helping reduce effective EMIs through subsidy released in instalments?
(a) Affordable Housing in Partnership
(b) Interest Subsidy Scheme
(c) Beneficiary-Led Construction
(d) In-Situ Slum Redevelopment
10. Which PMAY-Urban platform serves as a “one-stop window” at the city level, integrating registration, verification, loan linkages, convergence camps, and beneficiary engagement?
(a) In-Situ Slum Redevelopment
(b) Affordable Rental Housing Complexes
(c) Credit-Linked Subsidy Scheme
(d) PM Awas Mela – Shehri
11. Which two flagship urban schemes have integrated digital systems for geo-tagging, online portals, and workflow linkages to improve service delivery and beneficiary tracking?

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- (a) AMRUT and Smart Cities Mission
- (b) PM Surya Ghar and Ujjwala Yojana
- (c) PMAY-U and PM SVANidhi
- (d) Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana and DAY-NULM

12. Which digital platform is linked with PMAY-Urban for streamlined loan processing, helping beneficiaries connect with banks and financial institutions for housing credit?

- (a) GeM Portal
- (b) e-Shram Portal
- (c) UdyamiMitra
- (d) JanSamarth Portal

13. Which platform under PMAY-Urban enables automated subsidy credit transfer, ensuring traceability from application to disbursement and construction milestones?

- (a) PAiSA
- (b) JanSamarth
- (c) UdyamiMitra
- (d) GeM Portal

14. Which recognition, along with the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration (2023), highlighted PMAY-Urban's achievement in technology-enabled delivery and large-scale process reforms?

- (a) Golden Peacock Award for Innovation
- (b) National e-Governance Gold Award
- (c) Digital India Excellence Award
- (d) Silver Award for Government Process Re-engineering

15. Under PMAY-Urban 2.0, street vendors supported through PM SVANidhi are included in which category to ensure targeted convergence of credit, housing, and social security benefits?

- (a) Priority Sector Lending Groups
- (b) Special Focus Groups
- (c) Below Poverty Line Beneficiaries
- (d) General Beneficiary Pool

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) | |

3

NATIONAL SPORTS DAY 2025 AND AWARDS CONFERRED

SPORTS & GOVERNANCE

- India observes **National Sports Day** on **August 29** each year, and in 2025 the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports announced celebrations led by the **Fit India Mission** with the theme “Ek Ghanta, Khel ke Maidan Main,” encouraging citizens to devote sixty minutes daily to physical activity to prevent lifestyle diseases.
- The date commemorates the birth anniversary of **Major Dhyan Chand**, and the President of India presents the annual National Sports Awards on this day at Rashtrapati Bhavan.



National Sports Day

INDIA

- National Sports Day in India is observed annually on 29 August. This date corresponds to the birth anniversary of Major Dhyan Chand (born 29 August 1905), a legendary hockey player. The first official observance of National Sports Day was in 2012.
- The main aim of instituting National Sports Day was to honor and pay tribute to Major Dhyan Chand for his exceptional contributions to Indian hockey and sports in general. It also serves to promote awareness about the importance of sports, physical fitness, and active lifestyles among citizens.
- From its inception in 2012, National Sports Day has grown in scale, prominence, and symbolic value. It is now customary that on this day, the President of India presents the National Sports Awards to outstanding sportspersons and coaches.
- The Government often uses this occasion to launch new programs or campaigns related to sports and fitness. For example, the Fit India Movement was launched on 29 August 2019 (National Sports Day) to promote fitness nationwide. In 2025, the observance is being expanded into a three-day “Jan Andolan” (people’s movement) of sports and fitness from August 29 to 31, under the theme “Ek Ghanta, Khel ke Maidan Main” (One hour on the playground).

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Major Dhyan Chand

- Major Dhyan Chand was one of India’s greatest field hockey players, widely regarded as the **“Wizard of Hockey”** for his exceptional skill, precision, and control over the ball.
 - He was born on **29 August 1905 in Allahabad** (now Prayagraj), Uttar Pradesh, and his father, Sameshwar Dutt Singh, served in the British Indian Army and also played hockey.
- Dhyan Chand joined the Indian Army at the age of 16, in 1922, where his talent for hockey was first recognized and nurtured by his seniors. His extraordinary ability to score goals earned him the nickname “Chand” (moon) because he often practiced hockey late at night under the moonlight.
 - He represented India in three Olympic Games — Amsterdam (1928), Los Angeles (1932), and Berlin (1936) — helping India win three consecutive Olympic gold medals in field hockey.
 - In the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics, India won the gold medal by defeating the Netherlands, with Dhyan Chand scoring 14 goals in 5 matches, including a hat-trick in the final.
 - At the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics, India again won gold, beating the USA 24–1, where Dhyan Chand and his brother Roop Singh together scored 13 goals, earning them the title “Hockey Twins.”
 - In the 1936 Berlin Olympics, India defeated Germany 8–1 in the final, with Dhyan Chand scoring three goals, in front of Adolf Hitler, who was reportedly so impressed that he offered Dhyan Chand a position in the German army, which he declined.
 - Dhyan Chand scored over 400 international goals and more than 1,000 goals in his entire career, making him one of the most prolific scorers in the history of field hockey.
 - He was promoted to the rank of Major in the Indian Army in 1947 and retired in 1949 after a distinguished 34-year career in service and sports. In recognition of his contribution to Indian sports, the Government of India awarded him the Padma Bhushan in 1956, the country’s third-highest civilian honor. To honor his legacy, National Sports Day is celebrated every year in India on 29 August, his birth anniversary.
 - After retirement, he worked to promote and coach hockey but lived a modest life until his death on 3 December 1979 in New Delhi.
 - In 2021, the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award—India’s highest sporting honor—was renamed as the “Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award” in his memory, symbolizing his everlasting contribution to Indian sports.

National Sports Awards Conferred on August 29

- Every year, the National Sports Awards are conferred on 29 August, which is celebrated as National Sports Day in India to commemorate the birth anniversary of Major Dhyan Chand, the legendary hockey player.
- The awards are presented by the President of India at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, recognizing outstanding contributions in sports and coaching.
- The presentation of these awards on August 29 underscores the nation's respect for athletes and coaches who bring glory to India through their achievements at the national and international level.

Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award

- The Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award is the highest sporting honor in India, given for the most outstanding and consistent performance in the field of sports over a period of four years.
- It was instituted in 1991-92 to recognize exceptional sporting excellence and was originally known as the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award.
- In 2021, the award was renamed after Major Dhyan Chand, one of India's greatest hockey players, to honor his unmatched contribution to Indian sports.
- The award consists of a medal, a certificate, and a cash prize of ₹25 lakh.
- It is presented annually by the President of India during the National Sports Awards ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- Notable recipients include Viswanathan Anand (chess), Mary Kom (boxing), Neeraj Chopra (athletics), and Manika Batra (table tennis).

**Arjuna Award**

- The Arjuna Award is one of the oldest national sports honors, instituted in 1961, to recognize sportspersons who have consistently demonstrated outstanding performance at the national and international level over the previous four years.
- The award symbolizes commitment, discipline, and sportsmanship, encouraging athletes to achieve excellence in their respective sports.
- Each recipient is presented with a bronze statuette of Arjuna, a certificate, a ceremonial dress, and a cash prize of ₹15 lakh.
- The award covers a wide range of sports disciplines, including Olympic and non-Olympic sports, indigenous games, and para-sports.
- The selection process is based on recommendations from the Sports Authority of India and the National Sports Federations, followed by approval from the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.

Dronacharya Award

- The Dronacharya Award was instituted in 1985 to honor outstanding coaches who have successfully trained sportspersons or teams to achieve excellence at international competitions such as the Olympics, Asian Games, and Commonwealth Games.
- The award is named after Guru Dronacharya, the legendary teacher from the Mahabharata, symbolizing guidance, discipline, and dedication in coaching.
- It consists of a bronze statuette of Dronacharya, a certificate, a ceremonial dress, and a cash prize of ₹15 lakh.
- The award has two categories: Lifetime Category, for coaches with a long-term contribution, and Regular Category, for recent outstanding performances.
- It recognizes the vital role of coaches in nurturing and producing champions who bring glory to the nation.



Dhyan Chand Award for Lifetime Achievement in Sports and Games

- The Dhyan Chand Award for Lifetime Achievement in Sports and Games was instituted in 2002 to honour sportspersons who have made outstanding contributions to sports both during their active career and after retirement.
- It is presented annually by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India.
- The award carries a cash prize of ₹10 lakh, a plaque, and a certificate of honour.
- It recognizes athletes who have not only achieved excellence in competition but have also promoted sports through coaching, mentoring, or sports development activities.
- The award is named after Major Dhyan Chand, India's legendary hockey player, symbolizing dedication, discipline, and lifelong service to sports.
- Recipients of the award are selected by a committee constituted by the Government of India, based on their achievements, integrity, and continued contribution to the promotion of sports.

Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar

- The **Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar** was introduced in 2009 to recognize and encourage organizations, corporate entities, and individuals who have played a significant role in promoting sports and nurturing talent.

- The award is given in four main categories:
 - a. Identification and nurturing of budding talent,
 - b. Encouragement to sports through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR),
 - c. Employment to sportspersons and sports welfare measures, and
 - d. Sports for development.
- Each awardee receives a trophy and a certificate presented by the President of India.
- The award highlights the importance of institutional and corporate support in developing a strong sporting culture in the country.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy

- The Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy was instituted in 1956–57 to promote competitive sports and physical fitness among universities across India.
- It is named after Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, India's first Minister of Education, who played a key role in promoting education and sports.
- The trophy is awarded annually to the top-performing university in the field of sports, based on overall performance in inter-university and national-level competitions.
- The award is presented by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, as part of the National Sports Awards.
- The winning university receives a rolling trophy, a certificate, and a cash prize of ₹15 lakh, while the first and second runners-up receive ₹7.5 lakh and ₹4.5 lakh, respectively.
- The 2024 winner was Chandigarh University, making it the first private university to receive the honor.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. On which date does India observe National Sports Day each year to commemorate the birth anniversary of hockey legend Major Dhyan Chand?
(a) July 15 (b) September 5
(c) August 29 (d) October 10
2. Which flagship initiative of the Government of India was chosen to lead the 2025 celebrations of National Sports Day on August 29 by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports?
(a) Fit India Mission
(b) Khelo India Youth Games
(c) National Youth Festival
(d) Play India Campaign
3. Which theme was announced for the 2025 National Sports Day celebrations under the Fit India Mission, encouraging citizens to spend one hour daily in physical activity to prevent lifestyle diseases?
(a) Khelo India, Swasth Bharat
(b) Fitness First, India First
(c) Ek Ghanta, Khel ke Maidan Main
(d) Play for Health, Play for Nation
4. Which legendary hockey player's birth anniversary is commemorated each year on August 29 as National Sports Day in India?
(a) Milkha Singh (b) Major Dhyan Chand
(c) Balbir Singh Sr. (d) P. T. Usha
5. In which year was National Sports Day formally instituted as a nationwide event to promote sports participation and honour athletes on the birth anniversary of Major Dhyan Chand?
(a) 2008 (b) 2010 (c) 2011 (d) 2012
6. Which title is commonly used to refer to the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award, given annually for the most outstanding achievements in Indian sports?
(a) Rashtriya Khel Puraskar (b) Khel Ratna
(c) National Sports Award (d) Rajya Puraskar
7. For how many years of sustained international performance is a sportsperson evaluated before receiving India's highest sporting honour, the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award?
(a) Two years (b) Three years
(c) Four years (d) Five years
8. How much prize money, along with a medallion and a certificate, is awarded to the recipient of India's highest sporting honour, the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award?
(a) ₹10 lakh (b) ₹15 lakh
(c) ₹20 lakh (d) ₹25 lakh
9. For which group of individuals is the Dronacharya Award, instituted in 1985, recognised as India's highest sporting honour?
(a) Athletes (b) Coaches
(c) Sports Officials (d) Sports Scientists
10. For how many years of sustained contribution must an organisation promote sports to qualify for the Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar?
(a) One year (b) Two years
(c) Three years (d) Five years
11. Which award is conferred annually to universities in India for demonstrating the best all-round performance in inter-university sports competitions?
(a) Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Trophy
(b) Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar
(c) Arjuna Award
(d) Dhyan Chand Award
12. Which famous sobriquet was given to Major Dhyan Chand, born on 29 August 1905 in Allahabad (now Prayagraj), for his extraordinary ball control and prolific goal-scoring ability?
(a) Hockey King (b) Hockey Wizard
(c) Hockey Maestro (d) Hockey Legend
13. Which regiment of the British Indian Army did Major Dhyan Chand serve in, balancing his hockey career with military service until retiring as a Major in 1956?
(a) Rajputana Rifles
(b) Gorkha Rifles
(c) Madras Sappers
(d) Punjab Regiment Services
14. Which civilian honour was conferred upon Major Dhyan Chand in 1956, recognising his unmatched contribution to Indian hockey and national sporting pride?

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

(a) Padma Shri
(c) Arjuna Award

(b) Bharat Ratna
(d) Padma Bhushan

15. Which year marked the official renaming of India's highest sporting honour, the Khel Ratna, as the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award?

(a) 2019 (b) 2021 (c) 2020 (d) 2022

SOLUTIONS

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

4

100 YEARS OF THE SELF-
RESPECT MOVEMENT

HISTORY & CULTURE

- The centenary of the **Self-Respect Movement** is being observed in **2025** through institutional events in India and abroad, including the unveiling of **Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's** portrait at **Oxford University (St. Antony's College)** on **4 September 2025** and a two-day symposium in **Chennai** on **11-12 September 2025** reviewing the Dravidian movement's documented history, publications, and impact.
- The renovated **Thanthai Periyar memorial at Vaikom** in Kerala has been inaugurated by the Chief Ministers of **Kerala** and **Tamil Nadu**, with the site curated to record Periyar's participation in the **Vaikom Satyagraha (30 March 1924-23 November 1925)** and his related arrests.

Dravidian social reformer **Periyar EV Ramasamy** was born on September 17, 1879

CRUSADER AGAINST CASTEISM

Started the **Self-Respect Movement** or the Dravidian Movement, where backward castes have equal respect

Was once refused a meal on a visit to Kashi because of his caste, which **turned him towards atheism**

Affectionately called Periyar which means '**respected one**' or '**elder**' in Tamil

Founded political party **Dravidar Kazhagam**, which later split into two, with one group led by CN Annadurai forming the DMK

"If God is the root cause for our degradation, destroy that God. If it is religion, destroy it"

Periyar launched the Self-Respect Movement in 1925 in the Madras Presidency after leaving the Indian National Congress in November 1925, and he used the Tamil weekly Kudi Arasu (Republic) to set out a programme of anti-caste social reform, rational inquiry, and non-Brahmin mobilisation across castes and classes.

- Periyar addressed a **Justice Party** special conference at **Coimbatore** in **1925**, where he argued that elite education and government posts could not by themselves secure the welfare of the wider non-Brahmin population and warned that a detached non-Brahmin elite could replicate older hierarchies.

Programme, Methods, and Instruments

- The movement's literature and campaigns promoted **rationalism**, **self-respect marriages** without priestly mediation, widow remarriage, women's right to divorce and property, and inter-caste unions as social-reform measures within Hindu society.
- Organisationally, Periyar later established the **Dravidar Kazhagam** to carry the ideological programme, while **Kudi Arasu** functioned as advocacy journalism that contested caste-centred orthodoxy and created an alternative public sphere for mobilisation.

Interfaces with Parties and Nationalism

- Contemporary research records that **Kudi Arasu** challenged the Congress's religion-centred nationalism and identified caste hierarchy as an obstacle to national progress, even as Periyar urged **Justice Party** leaders to adopt constructive programmes that addressed mass needs beyond elite employment and education.
- Accounts by historians such as **N. K. Mangalamurugesan** document that the **South Indian Liberal Federation (Justice Party)**, founded in **1916**, initially served educated and wealthy non-Brahmins, and that Periyar's campaigns broadened political consciousness among non-Brahmin masses.

Vaikom Satyagraha and Commemorative Infrastructure

- The **Vaikom Satyagraha** in Travancore—seeking free public access to roads around a temple—ran from **30 March 1924 to 23 November 1925**, and records show **Periyar's** participation, his two imprisonments, and the conferment of the honorific "**Vaikom Veeran**."
- The updated **Vaikom memorial** now includes a library and curated materials on **Periyar**, the **Dravidian movement**, and engagements with contemporaries, providing a documented reference point for anti-caste history and temple-access struggles.

Centenary Events and Public Statements (2025)

- On **4 September 2025**, the **Tamil Nadu Chief Minister** unveiled Periyar's portrait at **Oxford**, painted by **Thotta Tharani**, and stated that the centenary marks international academic attention to rationalism, gender equality, and anti-caste reform associated with the movement.
- On **11–12 September 2025**, the **University of Madras** and the **Dravidian Historical Research Centre** hosted the symposium "A century of self-respect," where speakers, including **K. Veeramani** and **A. Raja**, reviewed the movement's documentary record and contrasted it with other strands founded in **1925**.



Parallel Caste based Movements

- **B. R. Ambedkar (14 April 1891–6 December 1956)** served as **Chairman, Drafting Committee of the Constitution**, became **India's first Law Minister**, was posthumously awarded the **Bharat Ratna (1990)**, and described **Article 32** as the "soul of the Constitution."

- Ambedkar led the **Mahad Satyagraha (1927)** for access to public water, participated in all three **Round Table Conferences**, and signed the **Poona Pact (1932)** with **M. K. Gandhi**, replacing the proposal of separate electorates with reserved seats for the Depressed Classes.
- Ambedkar resigned from the Cabinet in **1951** over differences on the **Hindu Code Bill**, later embraced **Buddhism**, and is commemorated on **Mahaparinirvan Diwas**.
- His periodicals—**Mooknayak (1920)**, **Bahishkrit Bharat (1927)**, **Samatha (1929)**, and **Janata (1930)**—and books such as *Annihilation of Caste*, *Buddha or Karl Marx*, *The Untouchables: Who Were They and Why They Became Untouchables*, and *The Rise and Fall of Hindu Women* set out legal-institutional strategies for equality.
- His organisations—the **Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha (1923)**, **Independent Labour Party (1936)**, and **Scheduled Castes Federation (1942)**—structured political representation and social advancement.

Caste Movements: Late-Colonial Context

- By the late nineteenth century, caste distinctions shaped access to education, employment, and public resources, with inter-caste marriage constrained and mobility between castes restricted.
- Colonial legislation such as the **Criminal Tribes Act (1871)**—extended to **Bengal (1876)** and **Madras (1911)**—authorised the designation of entire communities as “criminal,” and this framework remained until repeal and replacement by the **Habitual Offenders Act (1952)**.
- Following the **1857** uprising, colonial recruitment policies diversified the army and services by community, and caste became an administrative category in education and employment, shaping the environment in which anti-caste organisations emerged.

Intellectual Antecedents: Jyotiba Phule

- **Jyotiba Phule (born 11 April 1827)** founded the **Satyashodhak Samaj (1873)**, opened with **Savitribai Phule** India’s first girls’ school in **1848** and night schools in **1855** at **Pune**, and authored works including *Gulamgiri* (1873) and *Shetkaryacha Asud* (1881) that critiqued caste oppression and the exploitation of Shudra peasantry.
- Phule’s texts such as **Satsar** defended religious freedom, and his ideas circulated through outlets like the weekly **Deenbandhu (1877)**; he was honored with the title “**Mahatma**” on **11 May 1888**.

Women’s Leadership and Movement Cadres

- The **Self-Respect Movement** documented leadership roles for women including **Annai Meenambal** and **Veeramal**, and records identify that **Meenambal** conferred the title “**Periyar**” on E. V. Ramasamy, while movement pamphlets such as **Namathu Kurikkol** and **Tiravitak Kalaka Lateiyam** enumerated goals in accessible Tamil.
- Campaigns targeted the **Devadasi system**, restrictions on **widow remarriage**, and discriminatory property practices, and they framed **self-respect marriages** as legally recognisable, simple ceremonies to reduce caste-based barriers to union.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Whose portrait was unveiled at Oxford University's St. Antony's College on 4 September 2025 as part of the centenary celebrations of the Self-Respect Movement?

- (a) B. R. Ambedkar's (b) Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's
(c) Mahatma Gandhi's (d) Jawaharlal Nehru's

2. Which memorial at Vaikom in Kerala was renovated and inaugurated jointly by the Chief Ministers of Kerala and Tamil Nadu in 2025?

- (a) Thanthai Periyar memorial
(b) Mahatma Gandhi memorial
(c) B. R. Ambedkar memorial
(d) Jawaharlal Nehru memorial

3. Which historic movement, held between 30 March 1924 and 23 November 1925, is documented at the renovated Thanthai Periyar memorial in Vaikom to highlight Periyar's participation and arrests?

- (a) Quit India Movement
(b) Vaikom Satyagraha
(c) Salt Satyagraha
(d) Temple Entry Movement

4. Which administrative region of British India was the birthplace of the Self-Respect Movement launched by Periyar in 1925 after leaving the Indian National Congress?

- (a) Bombay Presidency (b) Bengal Presidency
(c) Madras Presidency (d) Central Provinces

5. Which Tamil weekly did Periyar use after leaving the Congress in 1925 to promote the Self-Respect Movement's agenda of anti-caste reform, rationalism, and social equality?

- (a) The Hindu (b) Indian Social Reformer
(c) Swadesamitran (d) Kudi Arasu

6. Which political organisation did Periyar address at its special conference in Coimbatore in 1925, where he argued that elite education and jobs alone could not ensure the welfare of the wider non-Brahmin community?

- (a) Justice Party (b) Indian National Congress
(c) Swaraj Party (d) Dravida Kazhagam

7. Which organisation was later founded by Periyar to institutionalise and carry forward the ideological

programme of the Self-Respect Movement?

- (a) Indian National Congress
(b) Justice Party
(c) Self-Respect League
(d) Dravidar Kazhagam

8. Which organisation, founded in 1916 and popularly known as the Justice Party, initially represented the interests of educated and wealthy non-Brahmins before Periyar broadened its social base?

- (a) Indian National Congress
(b) Swaraj Party
(c) South Indian Liberal Federation
(d) Dravidar Kazhagam

9. Which honorific title was conferred on Periyar E. V. Ramasamy for his fearless leadership and two imprisonments during the Vaikom Satyagraha in Travancore (1924–1925)?

- (a) Rationalist Leader
(b) Vaikom Veeran
(c) Social Justice Pioneer
(d) Dravidian Hero

10. Which wider socio-political movement, rooted in Periyar's Self-Respect Movement, is highlighted in the renovated Vaikom memorial alongside anti-caste struggles and temple-access campaigns?

- (a) Dravidian movement (b) Independence movement
(c) Peasant movement (d) Labour movement

11. Which renowned Indian artist, recipient of the Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan, painted the portrait of Periyar that was unveiled at Oxford University on 4 September 2025?

- (a) Raja Ravi Varma (b) Jatin Das
(c) Thotta Tharani (d) Anjolie Ela Menon

12. Which symposium, co-hosted in September 2025 by the University of Madras and the Dravidian Historical Research Centre, brought together scholars and leaders to assess the Self-Respect Movement and its centenary significance?

- (a) Voices of Equality
(b) Periyar and Social Reform
(c) Rationalism and Democracy
(d) A century of self-respect

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

13. Which of the following does not belong to the reformist legacy of Jyotiba Phule?

- (a) Authoring Satsar to defend religious freedom
- (b) Circulating his ideas through the weekly Deenbandhu (1877)
- (c) Campaigning for peasants' rights through writings like Shetkaryacha Asud
- (d) Launching the Self-Respect Movement in 1925 in the Madras Presidency

14. Which Article, termed by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as the "soul of the Constitution," provides citizens with the right to constitutional remedies through writs issued by the Supreme Court?

- (a) Article 32
- (c) Article 25

- (b) Article 14
- (d) Article 370

15. Which exploitative practice, tied to caste and gender hierarchies, did the Self-Respect Movement actively oppose along with restrictions on widow remarriage and discriminatory property rules?

- (a) Purdah system
- (c) Devadasi system
- (b) Polygamy
- (d) Female infanticide

SOLUTIONS

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

5

INDIA-ISRAEL SIGN BILATERAL
INVESTMENT AGREEMENT

ECONOMY & GOVERNANCE

- India and Israel signed a **Bilateral Investment Agreement (BIA)** in New Delhi on 8–9 September 2025, with Finance Ministers Nirmala Sitharaman and Bezalel Smotrich concluding the text to promote and protect two-way investments under India's **Model BIT 2015** framework.
- Israel became the first **OECD member** to sign an investment treaty aligned to India's new model; the BIA replaces the 1996 India–Israel BIT that India terminated in 2017 during its policy reset of legacy treaties.

Core Features Agreed in the India–Israel BIA

- The BIA provides for “**Most-Favoured-Nation**” (MFN) **treatment**, ensuring that investors from India and Israel will **receive treatment no less favourable** than that accorded to investors from any third country.
- The agreement ensures fair and equitable treatment and **full protection and security for investments made by investors** of one country in the territory of the other, consistent with international standards.
- It includes strong **protections against expropriation (both direct and indirect)**, stipulating that any such expropriation must be for a public purpose, non-discriminatory, and accompanied by prompt, adequate, and effective compensation.
- The BIA provides for free and unrestricted transfers of capital, returns, and compensation, thereby allowing investors to repatriate profits, dividends, interest, and other returns without undue delays or barriers.
- A **dispute resolution mechanism via neutral international arbitration is established**, so that investors may bring claims against host governments, subject to certain procedural safeguards.
- The **BIA reduces the local remedies exhaustion period** – the requirement that an investor must **first try to settle a dispute through the host country's courts** – to three years, instead of the earlier five years.
- The agreement preserves regulatory space for both countries: they retain the right to legislate and regulate in areas of public interest (**such as environment, public health, safety, and public order**) without being unduly constrained by the treaty's investment protections.
- It explicitly covers a broad scope of investments, including equity, debt, intellectual property, real estate, and other assets, enhancing legal certainty for a wide range of capital flows.
- The BIA mandates transparency of laws and policies, meaning that rules and regulations affecting investments must be publicly available, clear, and non-arbitrary, thus improving predictability for investors.
- The agreement encourages cooperation in technology, innovation, infrastructure, digital services, and financial regulation, to deepen economic ties and promote investments in high-growth sectors.
- The BIA provides for compensation to investors for losses arising from war, civil unrest, coups, and other emergencies, ensuring that investors are not unfairly penalized by extraordinary

- events beyond their control.
- Finally, the agreement includes mechanisms for periodic review and modernization, allowing both parties to revisit and update the treaty to keep it aligned with changing economic, technological, and legal environments.

Immediate Context, Delegations, and Follow-ups

- The signing took place in the presence of senior officials from both governments, including Israel's Director **General Ilan Rom**, Chief Economist **Dr. Shmuel Abramzon**, Accountant **General Yahli Rothenberg**, and Israel Securities Authority Chairman **Seffy Zinger**, reflecting whole-of-government backing for implementation.
- India conveyed condolences for civilian casualties from a terror attack in Israel and both ministers recorded solidarity against terrorism, while noting parallel reforms undertaken in India over the last decade to improve the investment climate; Minister Smotrich invited Minister Sitharaman for a reciprocal visit to Israel.

What a BIA/BIT?

- A **bilateral investment treaty** is a legally binding pact between two States to protect and promote cross-border investments, drawing on public international law sources recognised by **Article 38(1)(a)** of the ICJ Statute.
- The **Model BIT 2015** (adopted 2015/2016) defines investment as an enterprise constituted and operated in good faith under host-State law; it provides **full protection and security, national treatment**, exclusions for taxation, procurement, subsidies, compulsory licences, and national security, and requires investors to **exhaust local remedies** for up to five years before initiating ISDS.
- Following adoption, India terminated or sought renegotiation of most legacy BITs and has since signed model-aligned treaties with Uzbekistan (2024), UAE (2024), Kyrgyzstan (2025), and now Israel.
- India's first BIT was signed with the UK in 1994; by 2015 India faced multiple investor-treaty claims, including **White Industries v. India (2011)** with an award of USD 4.1 million and later the Cairn matter with an award of USD 1.2 billion, which triggered a comprehensive model revision.

What the New BIA Changes for Investors

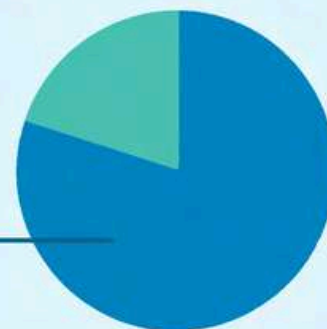
- The BIA restores a treaty-based shield for **India-Israel investors after the 2017 lapse**, reducing legal uncertainty and supporting boardroom decisions on greenfield and brownfield projects.
- Arbitration availability under a model-compliant pathway, combined with mandatory local-remedy pursuit, is designed to filter weak claims while preserving neutral fora for serious disputes.
- Clearer treatment standards and transfer protections lower perceived sovereign-risk premia and can reduce financing costs for projects in manufacturing, **high-technology sectors**, agritech, cybersecurity, and infrastructure targeted by both finance ministries.
- Policy-space clauses reassure regulators on public health, environment, and financial-stability measures, which in turn improves durability of commitments and limits renegotiation risk.

What Is the OECD?

(Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development)



- It aids developing countries outside membership and promotes reform
- It is an association of 38 nations in Europe, the Americas, and the Pacific
- It helps member countries formulate economic and social policies
- Members and key partners represent 80% of world trade



- The OECD is an **intergovernmental economic organization** that promotes policies to improve global economic and social well-being.
- It was established on **30 September 1961**, succeeding the **Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC)**, which was created in **1948 to administer the Marshall Plan**.
- The OECD Convention was signed in Paris on 14 December 1960.
- The organization currently has 38 member countries, mainly from Europe, North America, and the Asia-Pacific region.
- The headquarters of the OECD is located in Paris, France.
- The OECD Council is the main decision-making body, composed of representatives from all member states and the European Commission.
- The organization is headed by a Secretary-General, supported by a Secretariat and specialized directorates.
- Its main objectives are to promote sustainable economic growth, employment, and rising living standards, while supporting open trade and sound fiscal policies.
- The OECD is known for setting global policy standards and guidelines, such as the OECD Model Tax Convention and the Anti-Bribery Convention.
- India is not a member but is a key partner and a member of the OECD Development Centre, participating in policy dialogues and cooperation programs.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which framework guided the Bilateral Investment Agreement signed between India and Israel in New Delhi on 8–9 September 2025 by Finance Ministers Nirmala Sitharaman and Bezalel Smotrich?

- (a) WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement
- (b) ASEAN-India FTA framework
- (c) OECD Investment Guidelines
- (d) Model BIT 2015 framework

2. Which country became the first OECD member to sign a Bilateral Investment Agreement aligned with India's Model BIT 2015, replacing the 1996 treaty that India terminated in 2017?

- (a) Japan
- (b) France
- (c) Israel
- (d) Germany

3. Which mechanism does the India–Israel Bilateral Investment Agreement (BIA) provide to resolve covered disputes, while still preserving the States' right to regulate in the public interest?

- (a) Judicial review by the ICJ
- (b) Mediation through WTO panels
- (c) Investor–state arbitration
- (d) Domestic parliamentary approval

4. Which clause of the ICJ Statute recognises treaties as a primary source of international law, thereby validating bilateral investment treaties as legally binding instruments?

- (a) Article 10(2)(d)
- (b) Article 25(3)(a)
- (c) Article 32(4)(b)
- (d) Article 38(1)(a)

5. Which arbitration dispute, decided in 2011 with damages of USD 4.1 million against India, is often cited as the first major case that exposed weaknesses in India's BIT commitments?

- (a) BG Group v. India
- (b) White Industries v. India
- (c) Cairn Energy v. India
- (d) Enron v. India

6. Which strategic initiative, involving India, Israel, the UAE, and the US, has been described as a “West Asian QUAD” and focuses on joint ventures in food security, renewable energy, and regional connectivity?

- (a) SCO Dialogue Forum
- (b) G20 Compact
- (c) I2U2 Partnership
- (d) Indo-Pacific Economic Framework

7. Which advanced surface-to-air missile system, jointly developed by India's DRDO and Israel Aerospace Industries, exemplifies the strong defence cooperation between the two nations?

- (a) Barak-8 missile
- (b) Astra missile
- (c) Nirbhay missile
- (d) Agni-II missile

8. Which sector does not fall under the priority areas such as high-technology, manufacturing, agritech, cybersecurity, and infrastructure, jointly emphasised by India and Israel for investment facilitation?

- (a) High-technology
- (b) Infrastructure
- (c) Agritech
- (d) Textiles

9. Which Israeli port city, historically linked to the Battle of 1918 and now central to regular Indian Navy visits, symbolises the strategic naval dimension of India–Israel defence ties?

- (a) Jerusalem
- (b) Haifa
- (c) Nazareth
- (d) Beersheba

10. Which of the following is not a member of the I2U2 Partnership, whose first leaders' summit was held in 2022 to catalyse regional projects?

- (a) India
- (b) Israel
- (c) China
- (d) United States

SOLUTIONS

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

6

RECURRING FLOOD IN PUNJAB

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

- Punjab reported extensive **flood damage** in late August–early September **2025**, with official and media briefings recording all **23 districts** as flood-hit, thousands of villages inundated, and multiple fatalities across successive daily counts.
- The state government and central agencies deployed multi-agency rescue operations while hydrology authorities managed high reservoir inflows on the **Ravi–Beas–Sutlej** system during a monsoon noted for **excess rainfall**.

Topography of Punjab

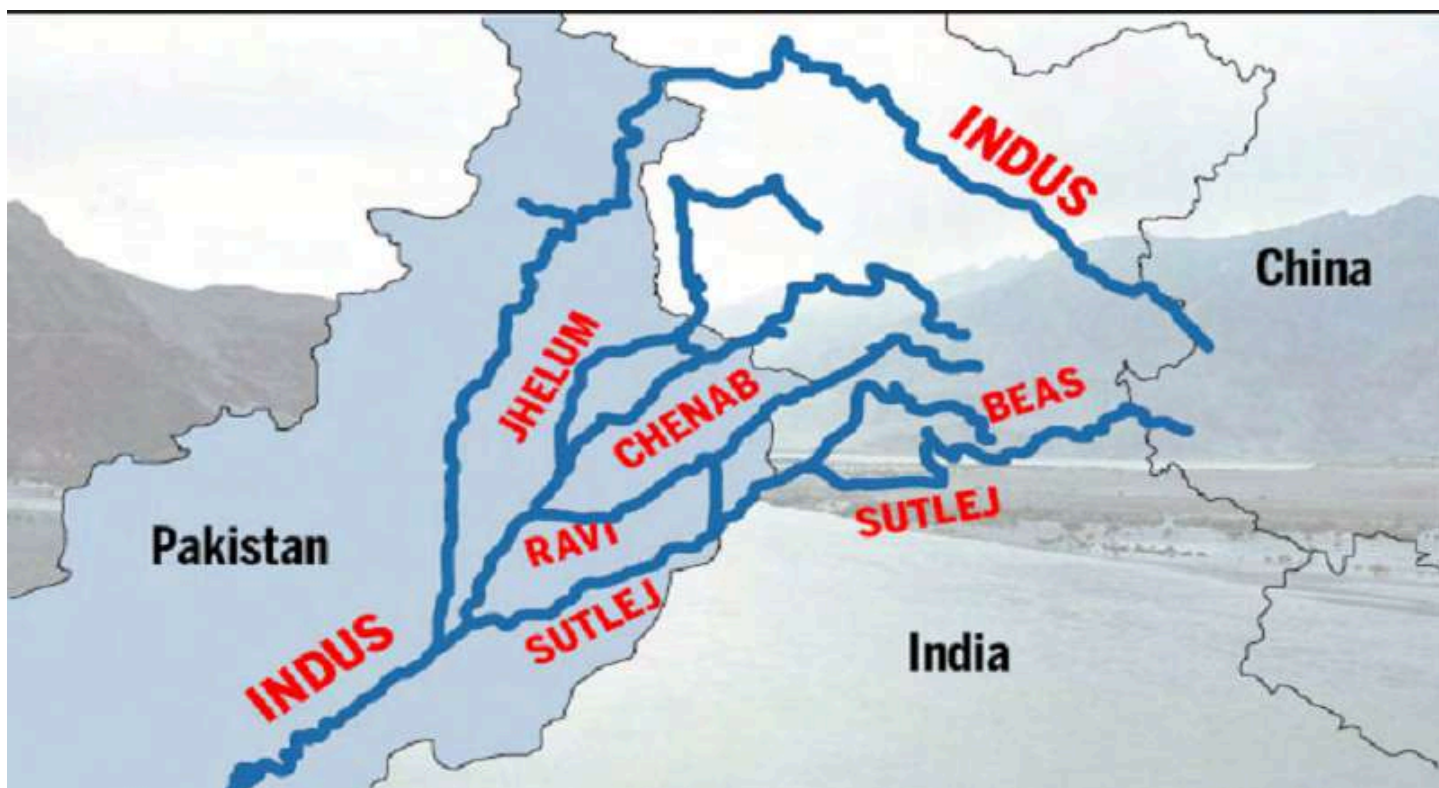
- The region of Indian Punjab lies **largely on the Punjab Plain**, which is part of the **greater Indo-Gangetic alluvial plain**.
- The elevation of this plain typically ranges from about **200 to 300 metres above mean sea level**, giving it a relatively flat terrain.
- The soils of Punjab are primarily composed of alluvium, which has been deposited over millennia by rivers flowing from the Himalayas and other upland areas.
- **Punjab is crisscrossed by doabs** (lands between rivers). For example, the **Bari Doab lies between the Ravi and Beas rivers**, and the **Bist Doab lies between the Beas and the Sutlej**. These interfluvial tracts are important hydrologically because rivers on both sides can overflow into them.
- In Punjab, two types of alluvial landforms are common: Bangar (older alluvium, higher ground) and Bet (younger alluvium or floodplains). Bet lands are formed by repeated deposition during floods and are more prone to inundation, while Bangar lands are somewhat safer.
- The river systems influencing Punjab include the Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej. Water from upstream catchments flows through these rivers into Punjab's plains.
- Because of the gentle gradient and the overall flatness of the plain, surface runoff and floodwaters spread more slowly across the land, making drainage less efficient.
- Punjab is adjacent to the Himalayan foothills (e.g., the Shivalik Range) in its northern parts, so rivers and streams descend from higher terrain into the plains, bringing sudden influxes of water during heavy precipitation.



Why Punjab Experiences Frequent Floods

- Heavy rainfall in the upstream catchment areas—notably in Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, and other Himalayan regions—causes rivers to swell and brings large volumes of water into Punjab's rivers, overwhelming their capacity.
- During periods of extreme inflow, upstream dams and reservoirs (such as Bhakra, Pong, Ranjit Sagar) are often forced to release excess water to maintain structural safety, and these releases add to the river discharge downstream, compounding flood risk.

- Many flood plains (Bet areas) have been encroached upon by agriculture, infrastructure, or settlements, which reduces the natural buffer space for floodwaters and forces water onto lands not originally meant to be occupied during high flows.
- The embankments, levees, and flood protection structures in Punjab are often old, poorly maintained, or weak; under excessive flood stress they can breach or be overtopped, leading to widespread inundation.
- The rivers and canals are frequently silted, which reduces their channel capacity. Over time, sediments accumulate and lower the amount of water they can safely carry, making them more prone to spillovers.
- Tributaries, nullahs, and smaller streams that feed into the main rivers can contribute sudden surges of water during heavy rains, especially when they join downstream, creating combined flows that exceed river carrying capacity. In 2025, a large proportion of flood flow in the Ravi was reported to originate from unregulated tributaries.
- Climate change is making extreme rainfall events more frequent and intense. This leads to more erratic and heavy precipitations that push rivers and drainage systems beyond their design limits.
- Upstream land use changes and deforestation reduce vegetation cover and infiltration capacity. As a result, more rainfall becomes surface runoff (rather than being absorbed), which increases the volume and speed of water entering rivers.
- The flat terrain and low gradients in Punjab slow down drainage; once water spills onto the land, it takes longer to recede, prolonging flooding.



Rivers in Punjab

- The state of Punjab, meaning “**Land of Five Rivers**,” derives its name from the five major rivers that traverse its plains — **Beas, Ravi, Sutlej, Chenab, and Jhelum**.
- Of these, only three rivers — Beas, Ravi, and Sutlej — now flow entirely within Indian Punjab, while **Chenab and Jhelum lie in Pakistan, following the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960**.
- These rivers form part of the larger Indus River System, which originates in the Tibetan Plateau and drains through India and Pakistan into the Arabian Sea.

- Punjab's topography and fertile alluvial plains have been shaped by these rivers, which have created extensive doabs (inter-river tracts).

Major Rivers of Punjab

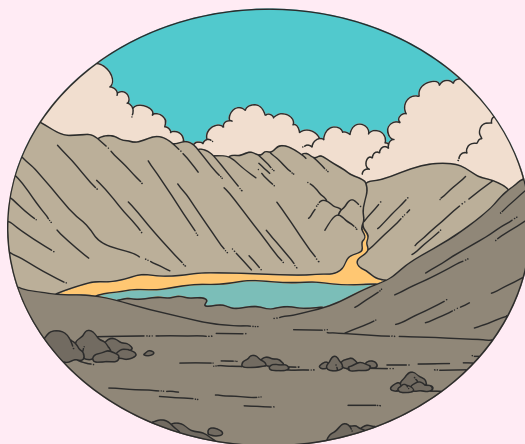
(a) Sutlej River

- The Sutlej is the largest and longest river in Punjab, flowing for about 440 km in India.
- It originates near Lake Rakshastal and Mount Kailash in Tibet, at an elevation of about 4,600 metres, and enters India through the Shipki La pass in Himachal Pradesh before flowing into Punjab.
- The river flows through Nangal, Ropar, Ludhiana, and Ferozepur districts before entering Pakistan near Fazilka.
- The Bhakra Dam and Nangal Dam are major multipurpose projects on the Sutlej, providing hydroelectric power, irrigation, and flood control.
- The Sutlej merges with the Beas River near Harike Pattan, forming the Harike Wetland, a significant Ramsar site.



(b) Beas River

- The Beas River is entirely confined within India. It originates from the Beas Kund near Rohtang Pass in Himachal Pradesh at about 3,900 metres elevation.
- It enters Punjab at Mirthal in Gurdaspur district and flows through Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala, and Amritsar before joining the Sutlej River at Harike.
- The Pong Dam (Maharana Pratap Sagar) on the Beas in Himachal Pradesh is an important hydroelectric and irrigation project controlling water supply to Punjab.
- The Beas plays a vital role in forming the Bist Doab, the fertile region between the Beas and Sutlej rivers.



(c) Ravi River

- The Ravi River originates from the Bara Banghal area in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh and enters Punjab near Madhopur.
- It flows along the India–Pakistan border for a considerable distance, passing through Gurdaspur, Pathankot, and Amritsar districts before entering Pakistan near Shakargarh.
- The Ranjit Sagar Dam (Thein Dam) near Pathankot is a major project on the Ravi, designed for irrigation, power generation, and flood control.
- The Ravi contributes to the formation of the Bari Doab, the land between the Beas and Ravi rivers.

(d) Chenab River

- The Chenab River is formed by the confluence of the Chandra and Bhaga rivers near Tandi in Himachal Pradesh, and it flows through Jammu and Kashmir before entering Pakistan.
- It was one of the five rivers historically associated with Punjab but now lies mostly outside Indian territory after the Indus Waters Treaty allocated it to Pakistan.

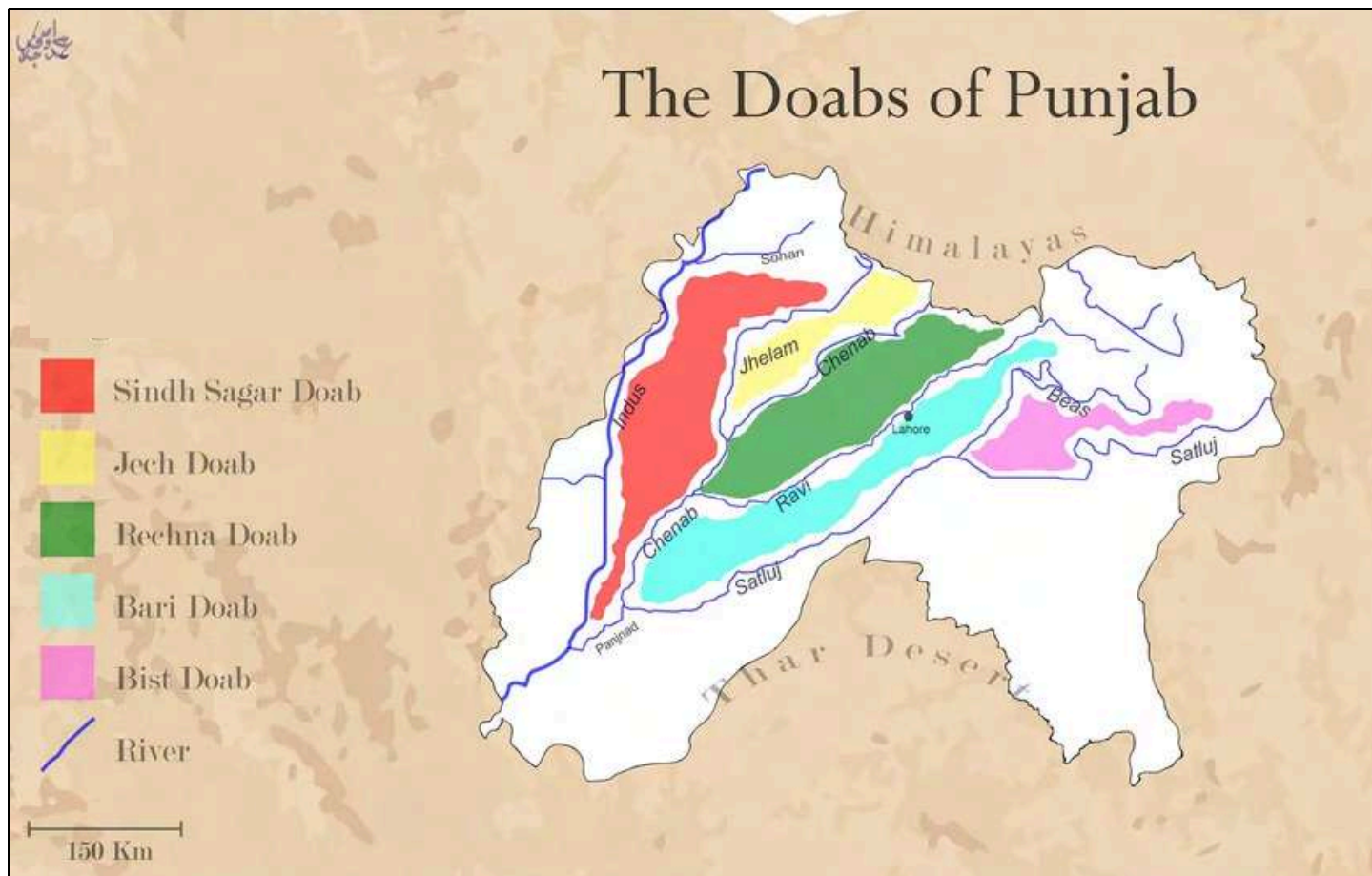
(e) Jhelum River

- The Jhelum River originates from the Verinag spring at the foot of the Pir Panjal range in Jammu and Kashmir.
- It flows through the Vale of Kashmir into Pakistan, where it eventually joins the Chenab.
- Like the Chenab, the Jhelum no longer flows through Indian Punjab but remains historically linked to the region's identity and nomenclature.

Major Doabs of Punjab

The term “Doab” refers to a land area situated between two rivers, and it is derived from the Persian words “do” meaning two and “ab” meaning water. In Punjab, there are several important doabs, each defined by the rivers that bound it.

- The **Bist Doab**, located between the Beas and Sutlej Rivers, is regarded as the most fertile region of Punjab and supports intensive agriculture due to its rich alluvial soil.
 - The **Bari Doab** lies between the Beas and Ravi Rivers and includes the Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts, making it one of the most productive and historically significant areas of the state.
 - The **Rachna Doab**, situated between the Ravi and Chenab Rivers, now lies mostly within Pakistan after the partition of India in 1947.
 - The **Chaj Doab**, located between the Chenab and Jhelum Rivers, lies entirely in Pakistan and forms part of the fertile plains of that country.
 - The **Sindh Sagar Doab** extends between the Jhelum and Indus Rivers and is also located within Pakistan, forming the westernmost of the historic Punjab doabs.
- The rivers of Punjab are the lifeline of its agriculture, forming the foundation of India's “Green Revolution.”
 - The state's vast network of canals and irrigation channels—fed by the Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi—makes it one of the most irrigated regions in India.
 - Major irrigation systems like the Upper Bari Doab Canal, Sirhind Canal, and Bist Doab Canal originate from these rivers.
 - Rivers have also contributed to rich alluvial soils, groundwater recharge, and floodplain fertility, supporting crops like wheat, paddy, and sugarcane.
 - The Indus Waters Treaty (1960) allocates the eastern rivers (Beas, Ravi, Sutlej) to India and the western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab) to Pakistan. Punjab's rivers face challenges such as pollution, sand mining, and reduced base flow, which threaten both ecological and agricultural sustainability.
 - The Harike Wetland at the Beas–Sutlej confluence plays an important role in flood control and biodiversity conservation.



Major Dams in Punjab and their role in the flood

- Punjab's river system is regulated by several large multipurpose dams and a network of barrages and headworks, which provide irrigation, power generation, and flood control.
- The main dams that influence Punjab's hydrology are **Bhakra Dam**, **Pong Dam**, **Ranjit Sagar (Thein) Dam**, and **Shahpur Kandi Dam**, along with a few smaller local dams.
- These dams are part of the **Bhakra-Beas-Ravi management system**, jointly managed by the **Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB)** and **state governments**.

Bhakra Dam (on the Sutlej River)

- The Bhakra Dam is one of India's highest gravity dams, located near **Bilaspur (Himachal Pradesh)**, forming the **Gobind Sagar Reservoir**.
- It was constructed to provide irrigation, hydropower generation, and flood control for Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan.
- The dam helps regulate the Sutlej River, which flows through Ropar, Ludhiana, and Ferozepur districts before entering Pakistan.
- During the **2025 Punjab floods**, the **Bhakra Reservoir was reported to be near its full capacity (~1,671 feet)** before the peak monsoon rains, leaving very little storage buffer.
- Officials were forced to release excess water rapidly, which increased the downstream flow in the Sutlej River and aggravated flooding in parts of Ferozepur and Ludhiana districts.
- Experts later pointed out that advance drawdown of reservoir levels in May-June 2025 could have created a buffer to absorb inflows, reducing flood intensity.

Pong Dam (on the Beas River)

- The Pong Dam, also known as **the Maharana Pratap Sagar Dam**, is located in **Himachal Pradesh** and controls **the flow of the Beas River into Punjab**.
- It serves as a major irrigation and hydropower project, as well as a flood regulation structure for downstream districts such as Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala, and Amritsar.
- During the 2025 floods, the Pong Reservoir also reached near its full reservoir level (~1,390 feet) as heavy rainfall in Himachal Pradesh caused sudden inflows.
- The dam authorities had to release large volumes of water to maintain dam safety, which led to high discharge downstream, increasing flood pressure in **the Beas–Sutlej confluence (Harike region)**.
- The simultaneous high releases from Pong and Bhakra Dams significantly contributed to flooding in the Bist Doab (area between the Beas and Sutlej rivers).

Ranjit Sagar Dam (Thein Dam) on the Ravi River

- The Ranjit Sagar Dam, also known as the Thein Dam, is located near Pathankot, on the Ravi River, at the tri-junction of Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, and Himachal Pradesh.
- It is a multipurpose dam designed for hydropower generation, irrigation, and flood control, creating a massive reservoir covering parts of Gurdaspur and Kathua districts.
- In August 2025, the Ranjit Sagar Reservoir was reported to be 97% full, forcing dam authorities to open multiple spillway gates during heavy rains.
- The sudden and large-scale water release caused a surge in the Ravi River, flooding low-lying areas of Gurdaspur, Amritsar, and border villages near Dera Baba Nanak.
- The rapid discharge also led to the erosion of embankments, damage to bridges, and temporary displacement of residents along the Ravi floodplain.
- This incident highlighted the lack of coordinated dam-release timing between Thein and downstream headworks like Madhopur, resulting in excessive water accumulation in short intervals.

Shahpur Kandi Dam (on the Ravi River)

- The Shahpur Kandi Dam Project is located downstream of the Ranjit Sagar Dam on the Ravi River.
- It serves as a balancing reservoir to regulate water released from Thein Dam and improve irrigation distribution in Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir.
- Although still under progressive commissioning during 2025, its limited regulation capacity meant that surges from Ranjit Sagar releases were not effectively moderated.
- As a result, the downstream areas continued to experience flash floods, highlighting the need for improved synchronization of dam operations.

Contribution of Dams to the 2025 Punjab Floods

- The 2025 floods in Punjab were partly natural, caused by record rainfall in Himachal Pradesh and northern Punjab, but they were also amplified by human and operational factors related to dam management.
- Many reservoirs were kept nearly full before the peak monsoon, leaving little buffer capacity to absorb sudden inflows.
- Simultaneous heavy releases from multiple dams — Bhakra (Sutlej), Pong (Beas), and Ranjit Sagar (Ravi) — caused cumulative surges in downstream rivers and canals.
- The Beas–Sutlej confluence (Harike region) and Ravi floodplains faced severe inundation because discharge exceeded the river's carrying capacity.
- There was inadequate coordination between states (Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir) and dam authorities under BBMB, leading to non-synchronized release timings.
- The siltation of riverbeds and encroachments on floodplains further worsened the situation, reducing the rivers' ability to drain excess water efficiently.
- Environmental experts noted that the failure to maintain dynamic flood rule curves — which adjust storage levels according to rainfall forecasts — played a key role in the disaster.

Bhakra Beas Management Board

- The Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) is a statutory organization constituted to manage and operate the multipurpose water, irrigation, and hydropower projects in the Bhakra–Nangal and Beas river systems.
- BBMB was formed after the reorganisation of Punjab through the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966. Under Section 79 of that Act, the Bhakra Management Board (BMB) was initially constituted, effective 1 October 1967, to administer the Bhakra Nangal Project.
- Subsequently, the Beas Project Works were transferred from the Beas Construction Board (BCB) to the Bhakra Management Board under Section 80 of the same Act, and on 15 May 1976, the organization was renamed Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB).



PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which calamity was reported across all 23 districts of Punjab in late August–early September 2025, leaving thousands of villages inundated and multiple fatalities recorded?

- (a) Drought impact (b) Earthquake tremors
(c) Industrial pollution (d) Flood damage

2. How many districts were affected by Punjab's extensive flood damage in 2025, according to official and media briefings?

- (a) 23 districts (b) 10 districts
(c) 7 districts (d) 5 districts

3. Which river system experienced high reservoir inflows during the 2025 Punjab floods, requiring hydrology authorities to manage water levels while rescue teams conducted large-scale evacuations?

- (a) Brahmaputra–Teesta system
(b) Mahanadi–Baitarani system
(c) Chambal–Betwa system
(d) Ravi–Beas–Sutlej system

4. Which river, unlike the Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej that flow perennially, is seasonal in Punjab and carries water mainly during the monsoon?

- (a) Mahanadi (b) Ghaggar
(c) Yamuna (d) Chenab

5. Which local hill streams of Punjab, though contributing to soil fertility through alluvial deposits, are also known for intensifying monsoon-season flooding?

- (a) Nullahs (b) Streams
(c) Choes (d) Brooks

6. Which cluster of Punjab districts experienced extensive inundation in 2025 due to the overflowing Ravi River?

- (a) Bathinda–Mansa–Muktsar
(b) Ropar–Mohali–Patiala
(c) Fatehgarh Sahib–Ludhiana–Barnala
(d) Pathankot–Gurdaspur–Amritsar

7. Which of the following districts was not among the areas affected by the Beas River during the 2025 Punjab floods?

- (a) Patiala (b) Hoshiarpur
(c) Kapurthala (d) Tarn Taran

8. Which major Punjab river was responsible for flooding along the Nangal–Ropar–Nawanshahr–

Jalandhar–Ludhiana–Moga–Ferozepur–Tarn Taran stretch in August–September 2025?

- (a) Ghaggar (b) Beas
(c) Sutlej (d) Chenab

9. Which weather phenomenon, when interacting repeatedly with monsoon currents, caused Punjab to receive 591.8 mm of rainfall between 24 June and early September 2025, 53% above the long-period average?

- (a) Cyclonic depressions (b) Westerly disturbances
(c) Local thunderstorms (d) Jet stream anomalies

10. Which body of water was highlighted by IMD and climate experts as a crucial moisture source behind intensified heavy rainfall in Punjab and northwest India in recent years?

- (a) Caspian Sea (b) Red Sea
(c) Bay of Bengal (d) Arabian Sea

11. Which states/UTs were identified in IMD's August 2025 rainfall maps as receiving over 45% excess rainfall, directly linking to surges across the Ravi–Beas–Sutlej basin?

- (a) Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh
(b) Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka
(c) Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and J&K
(d) Assam, Nagaland, and Manipur

12. Which destructive practice in Punjab's riverbeds has been linked to embankment weakening and changes in channel hydraulics, thereby exacerbating flood breaches during high-flow events?

- (a) Excess groundwater pumping
(b) Road expansion projects
(c) Illegal mining
(d) Reservoir siltation

13. Which reservoir does not belong to the Ravi–Beas–Sutlej system that faced exceptional inflows during the 2025 floods in Punjab?

- (a) Hirakud (Mahanadi)
(b) Bhakra (Sutlej)
(c) Pong (Beas)
(d) Thein/Ranjit Sagar (Ravi)

14. During the 2025 Punjab floods, which forms of agricultural damage were documented by farmers after paddy, basmati, cotton, and sugarcane fields were submerged in the pre-harvest weeks?

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- (a) Crop burning and fungal blight
- (b) Excess fertiliser residue and salinity
- (c) Silt deposition, sand casting, and topsoil loss
- (d) Pest infestation and locust attacks

15. Which two rivers' floodplains in Pakistan's Punjab province caused severe destruction in 2025, with

reports of crop losses, embankment failures, and even damage to border fencing?

- (a) Chenab and Ravi
- (b) Indus and Sutlej
- (c) Beas and Jhelum
- (d) Swat and Kabul

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. (c) | 15. (a) | |

7

CP RADHAKRISHNAN ELECTED
AS VICE PRESIDENT

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

- **C. P. Radhakrishnan** took oath on **12 September 2025** as the **15th Vice-President of India** and **Chairman of the Rajya Sabha**, with the oath administered by **President Droupadi Murmu** at **Rashtrapati Bhavan**.
- After the ceremony, he paid homage at Rajghat and offered tributes at Sadaiv Atal, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Memorial, and Kisan Ghat, marking formal assumption of national duties.
- In the Vice-Presidential election held after the resignation of Jagdeep Dhankhar, Radhakrishnan secured **452 votes** against **B. Sudershan Reddy's 300**, with 98.2% turnout of electors.

Office of the Vice President of India

Constitutional Status & Tenure

- The Vice President is the **second-highest constitutional** office in India, established under **Article 63** of the Constitution.
- The Vice President also serves as the **ex-officio Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha**, as per Article 64.
- The Vice President holds office for a period of **five years from the date of assuming office** but continues until a successor is elected (Article 67). There is no limit on the number of terms the Vice President may serve; re-election is permitted.

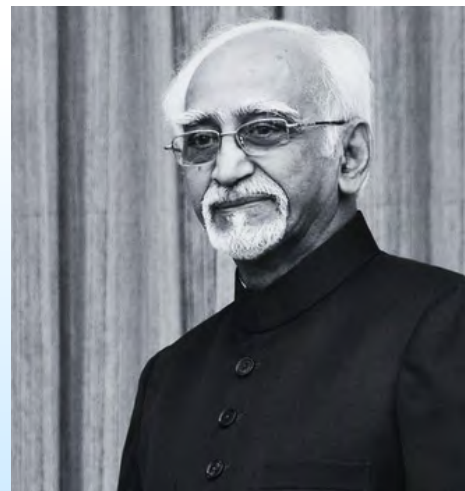
Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was the first Vice-President of India

Election Process

- Under Article 66, the Vice President is elected by an Electoral College comprising all members of both Houses of Parliament, including nominated members, using proportional representation with a single transferable vote via a secret ballot.
- The Eleventh Amendment (1961) clarified that the Vice President is elected by Parliament members without requiring a joint sitting and protected the election's validity against vacancies in the College (Art. 71(4)).
- **Eligibility criteria:** the candidate must be an Indian citizen, at least 35 years old, qualified for Rajya Sabha election, and not holding any office of profit under the government.

Oath and Functions

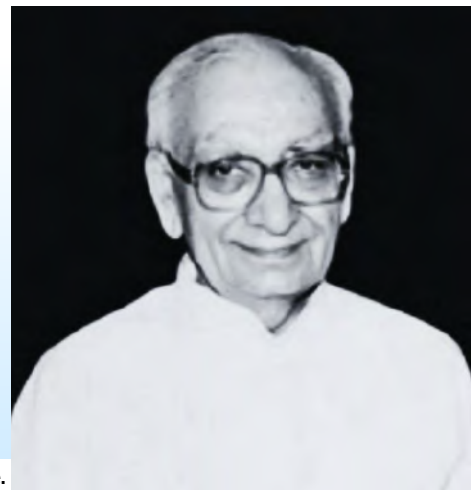
- Article 69 mandates that the Vice President must take an oath or affirmation before the President (or an appointee) to uphold the Constitution and perform duties faithfully.
- As Chairperson of Rajya Sabha, the Vice President presides over its sessions, enforces discipline, and uses discretionary powers like a casting vote in case of a tie (Article 100) but does not vote otherwise.
- If the President's office becomes vacant or the President is incapacitated, the Vice President acts as President, with all associated powers and emoluments (Article 65)



Resignation & Vacancy

- Under Article 67(a), the Vice President may resign at any time by submitting a written resignation to the President. The resignation takes effect immediately upon acceptance.
- In the event of mid-term resignation (as in the case of Jagdeep Dhankhar in July 2025), the Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha assumes duties as presiding officer until a new Vice President is elected.
- Article 68 mandates a fresh election to fill such a vacancy "as soon as possible", typically within six months, as affirmed by recent constitutional practice

Krishan Kant died in office on 27 July 2002, becoming the first and only vice president to die in office.

**Removal (Impeachment)**

- As per Article 67(b), the Vice President may be removed by a resolution passed by an effective majority in Rajya Sabha, followed by simple majority approval in Lok Sabha, with at least 14 days' notice.
- During parliamentary proceedings to remove the Vice President, he/she cannot preside over the House, and the Deputy Chairman or a member authorised by the President must preside.
- No Vice President has ever been removed through impeachment; attempts have been largely symbolic due to lack of numbers, including a move against Jagdeep Dhankhar in late 2024 that did not pass muster.

Powers and Functions

- **As the Ex-officio Chairperson of Rajya Sabha:** The Vice President presides over the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha. He or she maintains order and decorum in the House and decides on points of order. The Vice President has no vote in the Rajya Sabha except in the case of a tie, where he or she exercises a casting vote.
- **As Acting President:** Under Article 65, the Vice President acts as the President of India during temporary absence, illness, resignation, death, or removal of the President. During this period, the Vice President exercises all the powers and functions of the President. The Vice President continues to act as President until a new President is elected or the sitting President resumes office.
- **Advisory and ceremonial functions:** The Vice President often represents India on diplomatic and cultural occasions. He or she participates in national ceremonies and may chair committees or commissions when designated.

Significance of the Office

- The office of the Vice President ensures continuity and stability in the Indian executive.
- It provides a link between the Executive and the Legislature, since the Vice President presides over the Rajya Sabha but can also act as President when required.
- The position is seen as one of high constitutional dignity but with limited executive power except during presidential vacancy.
- The Vice President's impartial role in the Rajya Sabha is crucial for maintaining parliamentary discipline and decorum.

Profile of the Vice President of India

- **Birth and education:** Born 4 May 1957 at Tiruppur, Tamil Nadu; B.B.A. graduate; early public life as RSS Swayamsevak and Bharatiya Jana Sangh State Executive member (1974).
- **Parliamentary career:** Lok Sabha member from Coimbatore in 1998 and 1999; Chairman, Standing Committee on Textiles; member, Committee on Public Undertakings, Consultative Committee on Finance, and Special Committee on the Stock Exchange Scam; addressed the UN General Assembly in 2004; part of the first Parliamentary Delegation to Taiwan.
- **Party leadership:** BJP Tamil Nadu President (2004–2007); led a 19,000-km, 93-day Ratha Yatra advocating river linking, counter-terrorism, uniform civil code, eradication of untouchability, and anti-narcotics measures; organised additional Padayatras on public causes.
- **Economic administration:** Chairman, Coir Board, Kochi (2016–2020), during which coir exports reached ₹2,532 crore; BJP in-charge for Kerala (2020–2022).
- **Gubernatorial roles:** Governor of Jharkhand (from 18 Feb 2023) with additional charge as Governor of Telangana and Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry; later Governor of Maharashtra, undertaking extensive district engagements, higher-education outreach, and 'School Connect' monitoring with 29 state-funded universities to expand tribal participation.
- **Personal details:** Married 25 November 1985 to Smt. Sumathi R. with one son and one daughter; sports background includes table tennis, long-distance running, cricket, and volleyball; widely travelled across Asia, Europe, Africa, and North America.

C. P. Radhakrishnan



PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Which position, carrying the responsibility of being ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, was taken over by C. P. Radhakrishnan on 12 September 2025?
 - Finance Minister of India
 - Cabinet Secretary of India
 - Attorney General of India
 - 15th Vice-President of India
- Which constitutional authority, serving as the head of state, administered the oath of office to C. P. Radhakrishnan when he became the 15th Vice-President of India on 12 September 2025?
 - President Droupadi Murmu
 - Prime Minister Narendra Modi
 - Chief Justice D. Y. Chandrachud
 - Defence Minister Rajnath Singh
- How many votes were secured by C. P. Radhakrishnan in the Vice-Presidential election of 2025, where he contested against B. Sudershan Reddy?
 - 295 votes
 - 332 votes
 - 400 votes
 - 452 votes
- Which Articles of the Constitution of India lay down the framework for the Vice-President's office, covering establishment, election, term, removal, and vacancy procedures?
 - Articles 55–62
 - Articles 63–71
 - Articles 72–80
 - Articles 81–88
- Which Article of the Constitution provides the Election Commission of India with authority over the Vice-Presidential election, ensuring it is conducted with proportional representation and secret ballot?
 - Article 80
 - Article 102
 - Article 324
 - Article 352
- What is the minimum age required for a candidate to contest the election for the office of Vice-President of India?
 - 21 years of age
 - 25 years of age
 - 30 years of age
 - 35 years of age
- According to constitutional provisions, what is the tenure of the Vice-President of India, who may also seek re-election and continues in office until a successor enters upon the role?
 - Five years
 - Four years
 - Six years
 - Seven years
- Who administers the oath of office to the Vice-President of India, requiring allegiance to the Constitution and commitment to faithfully discharge duties?
 - Prime Minister of India
 - Chief Justice of India
 - President of India
 - Speaker of the Lok Sabha
- Which constitutional officeholder acts as President for a period not exceeding six months under Article 65 if a vacancy arises, but does not simultaneously perform Rajya Sabha Chairman functions?
 - Prime Minister
 - Vice-President
 - Attorney General
 - Comptroller and Auditor General
- Which position does the Vice-President of India hold by virtue of office, granting powers to preside over proceedings, maintain order, decide on procedural issues, and put questions to vote in the Upper House?
 - Leader of the House
 - Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha
 - Speaker of the Lok Sabha
 - Ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha
- Which of the following is not among the contributions or public causes associated with C. P. Radhakrishnan's leadership and campaigns?
 - Advocacy for river linking through a 19,000-km Ratha Yatra
 - Campaigns for counter-terrorism and a uniform civil code
 - Launching the Green Revolution in Indian agriculture
 - Organising Padayatras on untouchability eradication and anti-narcotics issues
- Which of the following Vice-Presidents of India are noted for having served two consecutive terms in office, a rare precedent in the constitutional history of the Republic?
 - Zakir Husain and B. D. Jatti
 - Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and V. V. Giri
 - R. Venkataraman and Bhairon Singh Shekhawat
 - S. Radhakrishnan and M. Hamid Ansari
- Which individual uniquely holds the distinction of having served as Chief Justice of India, Acting President, and later as Vice-President of India?

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- (a) B. D. Jatti
- (b) R. Venkataraman
- (c) Zakir Husain
- (d) M. Hidayatullah

14. Which Vice-President of India is the only one to have passed away while still in office, making his

tenure historically unique?

- (a) Krishan Kant
- (b) Zakir Husain
- (c) B. D. Jatti
- (d) Shankar Dayal Sharma

SOLUTIONS

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

8 POLITICAL UNREST IN NEPAL

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

IN FOCUS

- Nationwide demonstrations began in Nepal on 8 September 2025 after the government imposed a **social media ban on 26 platforms**, and the protests escalated into violent clashes in Kathmandu and other cities.
- On 9 September 2025, **K. P. Sharma Oli resigned as Prime Minister** following the deaths and injuries recorded during the unrest, and the Nepal Army assumed charge of security operations in the capital.
- On 12 September 2025, President Ram Chandra Poudel appointed former Chief Justice Sushila Karki to head an interim government, dissolved the House of Representatives, and set 5 March as the date for general elections.

Triggers, Timeline, and Initial Measures

- The administration led by K. P. Sharma Oli ordered a nationwide block on platforms including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, and X citing non-compliance with new registration rules, and the prohibition was withdrawn on 9 September 2025.
- Youth groups gathered at Maitighar Mandala on 8 September, marched toward the Parliament precincts, and clashes with police followed as tear gas, water cannons, and live ammunition were used.
- Hospitals in Kathmandu, including the National Trauma Centre and the Civil Service Hospital, treated gunshot and other protest-related injuries through 8–14 September.



Demands and Motivations of the 2025 Nepal Protests

Restoration of Social Media Freedom

- The immediate trigger for the protests was the government's ban on 26 major social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), and YouTube.
- Protesters demanded an immediate withdrawal of the ban, calling it an attack on freedom of expression, access to information, and digital rights.
- Many youth emphasized that social media had become a crucial platform for education, employment, activism, and creativity, and that banning it violated their constitutional right to communication and free speech.
- They also demanded that the Digital Nepal Act, which required global tech companies to "register" and share user data with the government, be reviewed and amended for transparency and data protection.

Accountability and End to Corruption

- Protesters called for strict accountability from politicians, bureaucrats, and public servants involved in corruption and misuse of state resources.
- Decades of unaddressed corruption scandals, embezzlement of public funds, and lack of punishment for political elites had eroded public trust in governance.
- The protesters accused the ruling political class of diverting national resources for personal and party enrichment, while basic services like education, healthcare, and jobs remained neglected.
- They demanded the establishment of independent anti-corruption mechanisms and public disclosure of assets by all elected representatives.

End to Nepotism and Political Elitism

- A major grievance was nepotism within political parties, where leadership positions and government appointments were dominated by a small group of families and senior leaders.
- The younger generation expressed anger that the same leaders — many in power since the 1990s — had monopolized politics and blocked youth participation.
- Protesters sought inter-generational political reform, asking for term limits, age caps, and a quota for youth representation in political parties and public offices.
- The movement's slogans frequently referenced a need to “end the old political order” and replace it with a transparent, accountable, and youth-inclusive democracy.

Demand for Employment and Economic Justice

- Economic stagnation and high youth unemployment were long-standing grievances that intensified the protests.
- Many young Nepalis, especially graduates, face job scarcity despite rising living costs and heavy migration for work abroad.
- Protesters demanded economic reforms, creation of domestic job opportunities, and policies to reduce dependency on remittances.
- They called for investment in technology, green energy, and startups, which they saw as pathways to retaining Nepal's skilled youth within the country.

Demand for Transparent Governance and Judicial Reform

- Protesters sought transparency in governmental decision-making, especially regarding procurement, budgeting, and contract allocation.
- They demanded judicial independence and faster resolution of corruption and abuse-of-power cases involving politicians.
- Many accused the government of using the police and courts as tools of intimidation against journalists, students, and dissenters.
- Calls for reforms in the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) and other watchdog bodies gained prominence during the movement.

Frustration with Systemic Inequality and Social Injustice

- The protests were also rooted in long-standing structural inequalities—between urban and rural regions, elites and working youth, men and women.
- Generation Z activists expressed anger over gender discrimination, caste hierarchies, and ethnic marginalization, arguing that these persisted despite decades of democratic rule.
- They linked political corruption to social inequality, demanding an inclusive system that ensures equal

- access to education, jobs, and digital participation.

Rejection of Political Apathy and Generational Awakening

- Unlike earlier movements led by established parties or unions, the 2025 protests were largely leaderless and decentralized, marking a generational awakening.
- The youth consciously rejected the dominance of traditional political parties such as the Nepali Congress and CPN-UML, seeing them as symbols of the corrupt establishment.
- The movement adopted a horizontal structure, with students, artists, IT workers, and freelancers organizing through encrypted platforms and community networks.
- Protesters described their actions not as a political coup, but as a moral uprising to reclaim “the soul of the Republic.”

Demand for Digital and Data Sovereignty

- Protesters emphasized that any regulation of online platforms should respect privacy, transparency, and data protection principles.
- They demanded the creation of an independent data protection authority and a digital bill of rights that ensures that online speech is not restricted for political gain.
- The youth framed social media as a space of empowerment, where marginalized voices could be heard, and insisted that the government’s control amounted to technological authoritarianism.

Interim Government: Formation & Leadership

- The interim government of Nepal was formally formed on 12 September 2025, following the resignation of Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli after mass protests.
- Sushila Karki, former Chief Justice of Nepal, was appointed as the interim Prime Minister, making her Nepal’s first female head of government.
- The appointment followed consultations involving protest groups, the Nepal Army, and political stakeholders, seeking a leader perceived as neutral and credible.
- With the dissolution of the House of Representatives on the same day, the interim government was charged with managing the transition until new elections on 5 March 2026.
- The interim cabinet, declared under the Karki interim cabinet, includes ministers with reputations in reform, anti-corruption, energy, and home affairs.



Declared Tasks & Mandate of the Interim Government

- **Conduct Free and Fair General Elections:** One of the foremost tasks assigned to the interim government is to organize parliamentary elections on 5 March 2026 to restore a full elected government. The government must ensure that the electoral process is credible, transparent, and inclusive, rebuilding legitimacy after the crisis.
- **Restore Public Confidence and Institutional Trust:** The interim administration aims to rebuild public trust in state institutions—including the judiciary, legislature, and executive—especially after the violent protests. It must assert neutral governance and refrain from political favoritism, ensuring that administrative machinery operates fairly.

- **Investigate Violence & Accountability:** The government has established a three-member investigation panel, headed by retired Judge Gauri Bahadur Karki, to probe loss of life, property damage, and excesses during the protests, including actions by both protesters and security forces.
- The panel has been given a three-month mandate to complete the inquiry and recommend action. The interim government has pledged that those responsible for violence and arson will be held accountable “without exception.”
- **Compensation and Support for Victims:** Karki has pledged monetary compensation to the families of those who died during the protests and assistance for the injured. The government has also declared nationwide mourning to honor victims, reinforcing its recognition of the tragedy.

Nepal: Historical Arc

- Nepal is a federal democratic republic under the 2015 Constitution, and the Federal Parliament is bicameral with a **275-member House of Representatives and a 59-member National Assembly**.
- The House uses 165 first-past-the-post seats and 110 proportional representation seats for five-year terms, and the National Assembly elects 56 members via provincial electoral colleges with three appointed by the President.
- Finance Bills must originate in the House of Representatives, and the Constitution sets bicameral timelines, gender-inclusion targets of at least one-third women, and Election Commission mandates across federal, provincial, and local levels.



Historical Arc: Monarchy to Republic

Early Monarchical Foundations

- Nepal's political history traces back to ancient Himalayan kingdoms, but the foundation of modern Nepal began with **King Prithvi Narayan Shah of the Gorkha Kingdom, who unified Nepal in 1768** after conquering the Kathmandu Valley.
- He established the Shah dynasty, which ruled Nepal for over two centuries, marking the beginning of a centralized Hindu monarchy with Kathmandu as its capital.
- The Shah rulers maintained Nepal as an independent Himalayan kingdom, balancing relations between British India and China, while preserving a feudal political structure.

The Rana Oligarchy (1846–1951)

- In **1846, the Kot Massacre** led by **Jung Bahadur Rana** established the **Rana regime**, which sidelined the Shah kings and turned the monarchy into a ceremonial institution.
- Under **the Rana Prime Ministers**, Nepal became a hereditary autocracy, where real power was concentrated within the Rana family for over a century.
- The Ranas maintained close ties with British India, sending troops to support the **British during the Indian Rebellion of 1857** and World Wars, in exchange for recognition of their authority.
- During this period, Nepal remained isolated from the outside world and saw little modernization, while the people suffered under authoritarian and caste-based rule.

Democratic Awakening and the Fall of the Ranas (1950–1951)

- The Nepali Congress (NC), established in 1947, began mobilizing against the Ranas with the support of exiled leaders and Indian democracy movements.

- In 1950, King Tribhuvan fled to India seeking refuge, joining hands with the Nepali Congress and Indian mediators to end Rana rule.
- The Delhi Agreement of 1951 ended the Rana regime and restored King Tribhuvan to power as a constitutional monarch.
- This marked the first democratic transition, introducing a multiparty system and a coalition government, though instability soon resurfaced.

The Panchayat Era and Royal Absolutism (1960–1990)

- In 1960, King Mahendra dissolved Parliament, dismissed the elected Nepali Congress government led by B. P. Koirala, and established the Panchayat System, a partyless autocracy under the monarchy.
- The Panchayat system concentrated power in the hands of the King and the bureaucracy, banning political parties and suppressing dissent.
- Despite limited modernization efforts, political freedoms were curtailed, and opposition leaders were imprisoned or exiled.
- In 1980, limited reforms such as a national referendum were introduced, but they failed to dismantle royal dominance.

The 1990 People's Movement and Constitutional Monarchy

- The Jana Andolan (People's Movement) of 1990, led by the Nepali Congress and United Left Front, successfully forced King Birendra to accept constitutional reforms.
- The 1990 Constitution of Nepal established Nepal as a constitutional monarchy with multiparty democracy, ending the Panchayat system.
- King Birendra became a symbolic head of state, while executive power shifted to an elected Prime Minister.
- The 1990s, however, were marked by frequent government changes, corruption, and rising public frustration, which paved the way for radical movements.

The Maoist Insurgency (1996–2006)

- In 1996, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) launched an armed insurgency to overthrow the monarchy and establish a people's republic.
- The decade-long Nepal Civil War resulted in over 17,000 deaths and deepened political instability.
- The Maoists accused the monarchy and traditional parties of exploiting the poor and perpetuating feudal inequality.
- The conflict devastated rural Nepal but also mobilized marginalized groups, including women, Dalits, and ethnic minorities, into mainstream politics.

Royal Massacre and Crisis of Monarchy (2001–2006)

- The Royal Palace Massacre of 1 June 2001, in which King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya, and most of the royal family were killed, shocked the nation.
- Gyanendra, the King's brother, ascended the throne under suspicion and faced declining public legitimacy.
- In 2005, King Gyanendra dissolved Parliament and seized absolute power, citing failure to control the Maoist insurgency.
- His direct rule and suppression of civil liberties triggered massive public protests and international condemnation.

The 2006 People's Movement (Jana Andolan II)

- The Seven-Party Alliance (SPA) and the Maoists united under a 12-point agreement in 2005, calling for the end of absolute monarchy.
- The April 2006 mass protests (Jana Andolan II) saw millions of Nepalis take to the streets demanding democracy.

- Under immense pressure, King Gyanendra reinstated Parliament on 24 April 2006, effectively ending 240 years of royal rule.
- The reinstated Parliament stripped the King of all powers, declared Nepal a secular state, and moved towards republicanism.

Declaration of the Republic (2008)

- After the **Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2006**, the Maoists joined mainstream politics, and elections for **the Constituent Assembly were held in 2008**.
- On **28 May 2008**, the **First Constituent Assembly of Nepal** voted overwhelmingly to abolish the monarchy and declare **Nepal a Federal Democratic Republic**.
- **King Gyanendra** vacated the royal palace peacefully, ending over two centuries of Shah rule. **Dr. Ram Baran Yadav** became **the first President of Nepal**, symbolizing the complete transition to republican democracy.

Republic Era and the 2015 Constitution

- The transition to a republic was followed by years of constitutional deadlock and political instability, as parties disagreed over federal boundaries and power sharing.
- In 2015, the Second Constituent Assembly promulgated the Constitution of Nepal (2015), establishing Nepal as a Federal Democratic Republic with seven provinces.
- The Constitution enshrines secularism, inclusivity, multiparty democracy, and fundamental rights, marking the culmination of Nepal's long struggle for representative governance.
- The President became the ceremonial head of state, while executive authority rests with the Prime Minister and the bicameral federal Parliament.

Year	Event	Outcome
1768	Unification by King Prithvi Narayan Shah	Establishment of Shah monarchy
1846–1951	Rana rule	Hereditary autocracy, isolation
1951	Delhi Agreement	End of Rana regime, restoration of monarchy
1960–1990	Panchayat system	Partyless royal rule
1990	First Jana Andolan	Constitutional monarchy established
1996–2006	Maoist insurgency	Civil war, demand for republic
2001	Royal massacre	Crisis of legitimacy
2006	Jana Andolan II	End of absolute monarchy
2008	Abolition of monarchy	Federal Democratic Republic declared
2015	New Constitution	Federal, secular, multiparty democracy
2025	Gen Z protests	Demand for reform and accountable governance

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. How many social media platforms were banned by the Nepalese government in September 2025, sparking nationwide demonstrations and violent clashes?

- (a) 26 platforms (b) 15 platforms
(c) 20 platforms (d) 30 platforms

2. Who resigned as Prime Minister of Nepal on 9 September 2025 after violent unrest left multiple deaths and injuries, prompting the Nepal Army to assume charge of security operations in the capital?

- (a) Pushpa Kamal Dahal (b) Sher Bahadur Deuba
(c) K. P. Sharma Oli (d) Baburam Bhattarai

3. Who was appointed by President Ram Chandra Poudel to head an interim government after dissolving the House of Representatives and announcing fresh elections?

- (a) Pushpa Kamal Dahal (b) Sher Bahadur Deuba
(c) K. P. Sharma Oli (d) Sushila Karki

4. What birth-year range is generally used by demographic studies to define Gen Z, the group that played a key role in coordinating Nepal's 2025 protests through Discord and campus networks?

- (a) 1985–2000 (b) 1997–2012
(c) 2001–2018 (d) 1990–2005

5. What was the approximate youth unemployment rate in Nepal in 2024, a key factor behind the social discontent that fueled nationwide protests?

- (a) 16.7% (b) 19.1% (c) 21.4% (d) 20.8%

6. For what maximum duration did Sushila Karki state her interim government would function after assuming office on 14 September 2025?

- (a) Three months (b) Five months
(c) Six months (d) Nine months

7. Under which Constitution does Nepal currently operate as a federal democratic republic, establishing provincial divisions and guaranteeing new sets of rights?

- (a) 2015 Constitution
(b) 1990 Constitution
(c) 2007 Interim Constitution
(d) 1962 Constitution

8. What type of structure does Nepal's Federal Parliament, established under the 2015 Constitution, follow with a 275-member House of Representatives and a 59-member National Assembly?

- (a) Unicameral (b) Bicameral
(c) Tricameral (d) Non-parliamentary

9. What minimum proportion of women does Nepal's 2015 Constitution require to be represented across the Federal Parliament and provincial assemblies?

- (a) One-fourth women (b) One-fifth women
(c) One-third women (d) One-half women

10. Who founded the Shah monarchy of Nepal in 1768, initiating a dynasty that ruled until its abolition in 2008?

- (a) Prithvi Narayan Shah
(b) Rana Bahadur Shah
(c) Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah
(d) Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah

11. Which corridor linking Nepal and adjoining Indian states is most affected by operational disruptions in Nepal's aviation, freight, and banking sectors, despite India recording USD 7.32 billion in exports and USD 1.2 billion in imports in FY25?

- (a) Himalayan Silk Route
(b) Kathmandu Valley Corridor
(c) Terai corridor
(d) Eastern Himalayan Trade Corridor

12. Which military engagement highlights defence cooperation between India and Nepal, complementing the tradition of Gorkha recruitment, though it sometimes sees reduced frequency during crisis phases?

- (a) Maitree naval drills
(b) Surya Kiran joint exercises
(c) Yudh Abhyas exercises
(d) Varuna maritime exercises

13. What is the official name of Nepal, whose capital is Kathmandu, official language is Nepali, and currency is the Nepalese rupee (NPR)?

- (a) Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal
(b) Kingdom of Nepal
(c) People's Republic of Nepal
(d) Himalayan Democratic State of Nepal

14. Which mountain, at 8,848.86 metres, lies on the Nepal–China boundary and is recognised as the tallest peak in the world?

- (a) Dhaulagiri
(b) Makalu
(c) Mount Everest
(d) Cho Oyu



SOLUTIONS

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

9

SWACHH VAYU SARVESHAN AWARD 2025

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

- In September 2025, the **Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEFCC)** announced the **Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan (SVS) 2025** awards and rankings as part of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP). Indore topped the list among million-plus cities with a perfect score of 200/200, establishing a benchmark in urban air quality management.
- Chennai was ranked last (41 out of 41) in the million-plus cities category, with a score of 115.3, drawing attention to persistent air pollution challenges in the city. The awards were conferred during the Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan Awards & Wetland Cities Recognition Ceremony 2025, where MoEFCC recognized eleven best-performing cities out of 130 NCAP cities.

- Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan (SVS) is an annual air quality performance survey launched under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).
- It ranks 130 NCAP cities (cities identified as “non-attainment” or those with critical pollution levels) across three population categories.
- The survey uses a composite scoring framework out of 200 points, assessing cities across eight key parameters related to air pollution control and mitigation.
- Its objective is to promote healthy competition among cities, accelerate air quality improvement, and incentivise implementation of City Action Plans (CAPs) under NCAP.
- It also monitors improvements in PM₁₀ concentrations over baseline values and holds cities accountable for actual pollution reduction.

Ranking under ‘Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan’ (clean air survey) 2025

Category 1

Population of over 10 lakh | 47 cities

- 1 Indore
- 2 Jabalpur
- 3 Agra and Surat

Category 2

Population between 3 and 10 lakh | 43 cities

- 1 Amravati
- 2 Moradabad and Jhansi
- 3 Alwar

Category 3

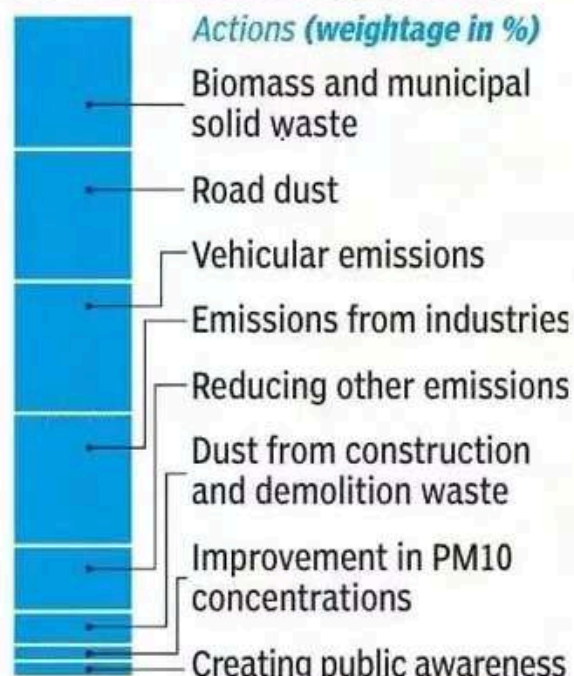
Population under 3 lakh | 40 cities

- 1 Dewas
- 2 Parwanoo
- 3 Angul

‘Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan’ is a central initiative to rank cities on the basis of implementation of approved activities to improve air quality in 130 cities under National Clean Air Programme



Cities are ranked on the basis of their actions under following activities:



Findings and Highlights from Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan 2025

Top-Ranked Cities and Prize Distribution

- In the 2025 edition of Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan, **Indore emerged as the top-performing city in Category I** (million-plus population) by achieving a perfect score of 200 out of 200. The city was awarded a cash prize of ₹1.5 crore in recognition of its comprehensive air quality management efforts.
- **Jabalpur secured the second position in Category I** with a score of 199, receiving a ₹1 crore prize, while Agra and Surat jointly occupied the third position, each scoring 196 points and earning ₹25 lakh as an incentive for their performance.
- In Category II (cities with populations between 3 and 10 lakh), **Amravati ranked first with a perfect score of 200 out of 200**, earning a ₹75 lakh prize. **Jhansi and Moradabad shared the second position in this category.**
- Among the **Category III cities** (under 3 lakh population), **Dewas in Madhya Pradesh achieved the first position with a score of 193**, followed by **Parwanoo in Himachal Pradesh and Angul in Odisha**, which ranked second and third, respectively.
- These results demonstrate that cities from smaller states and tier-two regions are also showing remarkable improvement in managing air quality through targeted and sustainable actions.

Improvements in PM₁₀ Concentration Levels

- Out of the 130 cities assessed under the **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)**, a total of **103 cities recorded a decline in PM₁₀ concentrations** compared to their baseline values. This reflects substantial progress in implementing dust control, emission reduction, and waste management strategies.
- Among these, 64 cities achieved a reduction of at **least 20 percent**, while 25 cities achieved a reduction of 40 percent or more in PM₁₀ levels, indicating tangible improvement in air quality.
- **Mumbai showed the most significant improvement**, with a 44 percent decline in PM₁₀ concentration compared to the 2017–18 baseline. **Kolkata followed closely with a 37 percent reduction**, while Hyderabad and Bengaluru each recorded a 26 percent reduction.
- Other major cities such as Delhi and Chennai also registered progress, though to a lesser extent, with reductions of around 15 percent and 12 percent, respectively. This trend highlights that air quality management efforts are yielding measurable results in metropolitan areas, though progress remains uneven.

Cities Meeting National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS):

- A total of 22 cities successfully met **the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for PM₁₀**, maintaining average annual concentrations below the threshold of 60 µg/m³.
- Notably, among the larger metropolitan cities, Chennai was the only one that achieved the NAAQS limit, with an annual average PM₁₀ concentration of approximately 58 µg/m³. This underscores Chennai's relatively better particulate matter control despite its low overall ranking in the survey.

Understanding Indore's Top Rank Despite PM₁₀ Increase

- Interestingly, **Indore's PM₁₀ concentration slightly increased from 82 µg/m³ in 2017–18 to 83 µg/m³ in 2024–25, yet it still topped the rankings.**
- This outcome occurred because the weightage assigned to PM₁₀ reduction in the SVS scoring system is comparatively low, while higher weightage is given to the implementation of mitigation measures such as road dust management, waste burning control, vehicular emission checks, and citizen participation.
- Consequently, Indore's top position reflects the city's strong institutional framework and proactive pollution management strategies, even if its immediate air quality indicators showed marginal fluctuations.

Performance of Other Prominent Cities

- Chennai, despite meeting national air quality standards for PM₁₀, ranked 41st (last) among million-plus cities with a total score of 115.3, indicating weak performance in planning, governance, and policy implementation for air pollution control.
- Bhubaneswar achieved the fourth rank in Category II with a score of 196.5, showcasing effective execution of measures under its City Action Plan, including curbing vehicular emissions and enhancing public participation.
- Guntur in Andhra Pradesh secured the sixth position among mid-sized cities, while Chandigarh improved notably, climbing to eighth place among million-plus cities compared to its lower ranking in previous years.

General Trends Observed Across NCAP Cities

- The majority of cities exhibited measurable reductions in PM₁₀ levels, confirming that local air quality management plans under NCAP are producing results.
- The survey also revealed that smaller and mid-tier cities often performed better than larger metropolitan centers, largely because of more localized governance, reduced industrial intensity, and faster adoption of cleaner technologies.
- Metropolitan cities, while improving, continue to face complex challenges related to traffic density, urban expansion, and industrial emissions, which require long-term structural reforms rather than short-term measures.

Distribution of Awards and Broader Recognition

- During the Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan Awards and Wetland Cities Recognition Ceremony 2025, eleven best-performing cities across all population categories were formally honored by the Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bhupender Yadav.
- The ceremony also included the Wetland Cities Accreditation Programme, linking air quality management with ecological conservation and sustainable urban planning.
- The recognition of high-performing cities under both programs underscores the government's integrated approach to urban environment management, aligning air quality, biodiversity, and climate resilience goals.

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KEY**PROGRAMS &
INITIATIVES FOR
AIR POLLUTION
CONTROL IN INDIA****National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)**

- The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) is India's flagship national strategy launched in January 2019 under the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEFCC) to fight air pollution in Indian cities.
- Its initial target was to reduce PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} levels by 20–30% (relative to 2017 baseline) by 2024.

- The target was later revised and extended, with aspirations to achieve a 40% reduction in PM₁₀ levels by 2026 in non-attainment cities.
- Under NCAP, about 130 non-attainment cities (cities that have repeatedly failed to meet National Ambient Air Quality Standards) have been identified to implement City-level Clean Air Action Plans (CAPs).
- The program emphasizes sectoral actions across transport, industry, waste, dust control, open burning, regulatory enforcement, public awareness, and monitoring infrastructure.
- NCAP also mandates expansion of ambient air quality monitoring networks, capacity building, and establishing mechanisms to track implementation and financial support to cities.

Air Quality Monitoring & Data Infrastructure

- Under NCAP, the ambient air quality monitoring network has been expanded significantly: from limited stations in past years to hundreds of monitoring stations across cities.
- The year for India's National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) city-level action plans was initially set for 2024, with a target to reduce PM₁₀ by 20-30% compared to 2017-18. However, this has been revised to a new target year of 2025-26, with the goal of a 40% reduction or achievement of national standards for PM₁₀.
- The PRANA portal (Pollution Regulation, Ambient Air, Non-attainment, Action) is used to monitor progress of NCAP implementation, track physical and financial status, and publish data publicly.
- Satellite remote sensing and geospatial approaches are increasingly being integrated with ground monitoring to track pollutant sources, trends, and compliance (e.g. for NO₂, SO₂, particulate matter).

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Which survey-based awards, presented by the President of India in New Delhi, evaluate cleanliness standards of cities and encourage citizen participation in sanitation efforts?
(a) National Innovation in Governance Awards 2024–25
(b) Jal Jeevan Mission Awards 2024–25
(c) Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Awards 2024–25
(d) Swachh Survekshan 2024–25
- Which new recognition category was launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to honour consistently top-ranked cities and ensure fair competition in annual cleanliness rankings?
(a) Super League (b) Platinum Circle
(c) Diamond League (d) Champions Trophy
- Which title under the Ramsar Convention framework was awarded internationally to Indore and Udaipur for their efforts in wetland conservation and urban ecological management?
(a) Eco-Smart City (b) Green Heritage City
(c) Wetland City (d) Blue Planet City
- Which 3R approach remained the thematic focus of the 2025 framework, even as it introduced indicators for project grounding?
(a) Refuse, Rebuild, Restore
(b) Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
(c) Recover, Reinvest, Regrow
(d) Rebuild, Renew, Recreate
- How many cities were covered under the clean-air survey conducted as part of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)?
(a) 100 cities (b) 110 cities
(c) 130 cities (d) 150 cities
- Which key indicator of air-quality improvement formed part of the NCAP clean-air survey's evaluation of 130 cities?
(a) PM10 reduction
(b) Groundwater recharge
(c) Soil fertility improvement
(d) Plastic ban enforcement
- Which of the following cities is not among those placed in the Super Swachh League for sustained top-three performance in prior editions?
(a) Indore (b) Surat
(c) Navi Mumbai (d) Bhopal
- Under Swachh Survekshan, which category included cities such as Noida, Chandigarh, Mysuru, Ujjain, Gandhinagar, and Guntur that were shifted into the Super Swachh League for sustained achievements?
(a) Below 3 lakh class (b) 3–10 lakh class
(c) 10–40 lakh class (d) Million-plus class
- Which city secured the first position in the 2024–25 Swachh Shehar rankings for cities with populations above 10 lakh?
(a) Bhopal (b) Lucknow
(c) Surat (d) Ahmedabad
- Which entities received a special recognition for “Swachh Mahakumbh 2025” under the Swachh Survekshan awards framework?
(a) Uttar Pradesh and the Prayagraj Municipal Corporation
(b) Madhya Pradesh and the Indore Municipal Corporation
(c) Gujarat and the Surat Municipal Corporation
(d) Maharashtra and the Mumbai Municipal Corporation
- Which title was awarded to Prayagraj under Swachh Survekshan 2024–25 for its river-linked sanitation and ghat management efforts?
(a) Best Heritage Sanitation City
(b) Cleanest Ganga Town
(c) Riverfront Excellence City
(d) Eco-Smart River City
- Which award did Visakhapatnam, Jabalpur, and Gorakhpur receive for adopting practices like mechanised cleaning, protective equipment, and welfare measures for sanitation workers?
(a) Swachh Shehar Dignity Award
(b) Swachh Bharat Labour Safety Award
(c) Shehar Swachh Karmachari Suraksha
(d) Safaimitra Surakshit Shehar
- Which distinction under Swachh Survekshan 2024–25, was awarded to Secunderabad Cantonment for its top performance in sanitation and waste management?
(a) Smart Cantonment Award
(b) Eco-Friendly Cantonment Award
(c) Cleanest Cantonment Board
(d) Sustainable Cantonment Trophy
- Which city in the million-plus population category achieved first place with a perfect score and a ₹1.5-crore award?

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

(a) Jaipur (b) Lucknow (c) Nagpur (d) Indore

15. Which cities were honoured with Wetland City Accreditation, coinciding with India expanding its

Ramsar network to 91 sites over 1.36 million hectares?

- (a) Indore and Udaipur
- (b) Varanasi and Surat
- (c) Hyderabad and Chandigarh
- (d) Pune and Bhopal

SOLUTIONS

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

10

PAKISTAN-SAUDI SIGN DEFENCE
PACT

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

- On 17 September 2025, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia formally signed a Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA) in Riyadh, under which any aggression against one country is to be treated as aggression against both.
- The agreement was ratified by Pakistan's federal cabinet shortly after, signaling Islamabad's intent to institutionalize long-standing defence cooperation.
- The pact comes amidst regional turbulence—recent Israeli strikes, shifting Gulf security calculations, and doubts over reliance on the U.S. as a security guarantor have all contributed to Saudi Arabia's pursuit of diversified defense partnerships.

Key Terms of the Pact

**Mutual Defence /
Collective Security
Clause:**

- The core stipulation of the SMDA is that any aggression against one country shall be considered an act of aggression against both, signaling a formal collective security guarantee.
- This clause mirrors the style of NATO's Article 5, though the scope and binding nature of obligations remain subject to interpretation.

**Formalization of
Longstanding Military
Ties:**

- The pact formalizes what many analysts say was already a de facto alliance, institutionalizing

ACTS OF AGGRESSION

The "Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement" states that any aggression against either Saudi Arabia or Pakistan shall be considered an aggression against both, said a joint statement issued after the pact was signed.

JOINT DETERRENCE

The pact "reflects the shared commitment of both nations to enhance their security and to achieving security and peace in the region and the world".

**IMPLICATIONS OF THE DEAL**

- The agreement institutionalises Pakistan's role in the security architecture of West Asia.
- Saudi Arabia has worked to build its defence ties with Pakistan, with an eye on benefiting from its nuclear arsenal.
- The pact was also a signal from Saudi Arabia to the leadership of the US and Israel following the latter's attacks on Gaza and in countries such as Qatar, Iran.

MEA ISSUES STATEMENT

"We will study the implications of this development for our national security as well as for regional and global stability. The government remains committed to protecting India's national interests and ensuring comprehensive national security in all domains."

HT

- Pakistan's military support and Saudi Arabia's security guarantee.
- Historically, Pakistan has deployed troops to Saudi Arabia, provided training and advisory support, and assisted with defense infrastructure in the Gulf.

Clause of Non-Assignment to Specific Aggressors

- The agreement does not name any specific adversary; it is structured as an umbrella agreement rather than an offensive pact targeting a particular state.

Defence Cooperation, Joint Deterrence & Military Integration:

- The pact envisages enhanced cooperation in defence technology, logistics, intelligence sharing, joint exercises, and defence production—though detailed implementation modalities are yet to be disclosed.
- It signals a shared commitment to deterrence and raises the possibility of military integration or pooling of capabilities in response to external threats



Economic & Strategic Dimensions

- Beyond security, the pact is expected to trigger economic and investment commitments from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, perhaps unlocking business deals tied to defense cooperation.

Pakistan has already constituted an **18-member committee to negotiate economic terms with Saudi Arabia**, co-chaired by portfolios including climate change and the **Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC)**.

Ratification and Legal Status: The Pakistan federal cabinet ratified the pact, making it legally binding and signaling strong domestic consensus behind the agreement. However, the full text of the treaty has not been made public, leaving uncertainties in execution, command structures, and conditions triggering mutual response.

- Saudi Arabia and Pakistan share one of the closest bilateral relationships in the Muslim world, founded on religious, strategic, economic, and military cooperation.
- The relationship is built on shared Islamic identity, mutual security interests, and long-standing political alignment, especially since Pakistan's independence in 1947.

Saudi-Pakistan Relations

- Saudi Arabia was among the first countries to recognize Pakistan after its independence in **August 1947**, setting the foundation for a close and enduring partnership.
- Diplomatic relations were formally **established in 1948**, and both countries soon opened embassies in each other's capitals.
- During the 1950s and 1960s, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan aligned politically under pro-Western alliances, such as the **Baghdad Pact (1955) and CENTO**, as both countries sought U.S. support in the Cold War context.
- Pakistan supported Saudi Arabia in strengthening its administrative institutions and offered technical assistance and military training through defence cooperation agreements.

Growing Military and Strategic Cooperation (1970s–1980s)

- The 1970s marked a deepening of military and strategic cooperation between the two nations. After the 1971 Indo-Pak war, Saudi Arabia provided substantial financial assistance to help stabilise Pakistan's economy.
- Under Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, relations expanded into strategic and ideological realms, as Pakistan aligned more closely with **Saudi Arabia and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**.
- The **OIC Summit in Lahore (1974)**—attended by **King Faisal**—symbolised the high point of Islamic solidarity between the two nations.
- In the late 1970s, during General Zia-ul-Haq's regime, Saudi Arabia became Pakistan's main financial backer and ideological ally, supporting Zia's policy of Islamization and providing aid during the Afghan jihad.

Role During the Afghan War (1979–1989)

- The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 brought Pakistan and Saudi Arabia into a strategic trilateral partnership with the United States.
- Saudi Arabia and the U.S. jointly financed

Saudi-India Relations

- India and the Arabian Peninsula maintained extensive maritime trade relations long before the rise of Islam.
- Indian merchants traded spices, textiles, and precious stones with Arabian traders who supplied dates, pearls, and horses.
- With the rise of **Islam in the 7th century**, **Arab traders played a key role in spreading Islamic culture and faith to the western coast of India, especially in Kerala, Gujarat, and the Deccan.**
- These interactions laid the foundation for civilisational and religious linkages that continue to influence the relationship today.

Pre-Independence Era and Early 20th Century

- During the British colonial period, India's contact with the Arabian Peninsula continued through pilgrimage, commerce, and diplomacy. The Indian Muslim community maintained spiritual and cultural ties with Mecca and Medina, as thousands undertook the Hajj pilgrimage each year.
- Indian Muslims contributed financially to the upkeep of the holy mosques and maintained religious endowments (waqfs) in the Hijaz region.
- Indian leaders such as **Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad also supported the Khilafat Movement (1919–1924)**, which aimed to protect the Ottoman Caliphate — a movement that connected Indian Muslims emotionally with the Arabian Peninsula.

Establishment of Diplomatic Relations (Post-1947)

- After India's independence in 1947, **Saudi Arabia recognised the Republic of India in 1947**, and **formal diplomatic relations were established in 1952.**
- The first Indian Prime Minister, **Jawaharlal Nehru, visited Saudi Arabia in 1956**, marking the beginning of high-level political engagement.
- The early years of the relationship were cordial but limited, primarily focusing on

- Pakistan's support to Afghan Mujahideen through the **Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)**, as part of the anti-Soviet campaign.

Economic and Labor Relations

- Saudi Arabia is one of Pakistan's largest sources of remittances, as over 2.6 million Pakistani expatriates work in Saudi Arabia in various sectors.
- Bilateral trade has remained significant, particularly in the energy sector, with Saudi Arabia supplying crude oil and petroleum products to Pakistan on concessional terms at multiple times of crisis.
- Riyadh has extended financial bailouts and deferred oil payments to **Pakistan during economic difficulties, notably in 1998 (after nuclear tests), 2018, 2021, and again in 2023–24.**
- The **Saudi Fund for Development (SFD)** and other Saudi institutions have financed infrastructure, health, and education projects across Pakistan.

Defense Cooperation and Security Ties

- Military cooperation has been a cornerstone of Saudi-Pakistani relations for over five decades.
- Pakistan has stationed military personnel in Saudi Arabia since the early 1960s, assisting in training, defense planning, and security operations.
- In 1969, Pakistani pilots reportedly helped repel Yemeni insurgent incursions into Saudi territory during border conflicts.
- During the Gulf War (1990–91), Pakistan deployed 11,000 troops to protect Saudi borders and assist the coalition forces.
- Pakistan also provides training to Saudi cadets at its premier institutions, such as the Pakistan Military Academy, Kakul, and National Defence University, Islamabad.
- The Joint Military Cooperation Committee (JMCC), established in the 2000s, coordinates bilateral defense exercises, logistics cooperation, and counterterrorism operations.

religious pilgrimage facilitation and trade in oil and consumer goods.

The 1960s–1980s: Limited Engagement and Emerging Economic Ties

- During the Cold War, relations between India and Saudi Arabia remained cautious.
- Saudi Arabia was aligned with **the Western bloc and the United States**, while India pursued a non-aligned and pro-Soviet policy, leading to some ideological distance.
- Nonetheless, the **1973 oil crisis** and the rise in India's energy needs created new avenues for cooperation.
- Saudi Arabia emerged as a major oil supplier to India, and Indian workers began migrating in large numbers to the Gulf, strengthening economic and human connections.
- The establishment of **the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981** provided India with a new regional partner framework, though Saudi priorities at the time were focused on Pakistan and the West.

1990s: Economic Reforms and Diplomatic Re-engagement

- India's economic liberalization in 1991 opened the door to greater trade and investment ties with Saudi Arabia.
- The Gulf War (1990–91) was a turning point — India evacuated more than 175,000 nationals from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, demonstrating strong organizational capability and the significance of its diaspora in the Gulf.
- The large Indian expatriate community in Saudi Arabia, numbering over 2 million, became a bridge between the two nations, contributing to both economies.
- Trade in hydrocarbons expanded rapidly, with Saudi Arabia becoming one of India's top crude oil suppliers.

2000s: Transformation into a Strategic Partnership

- The early 2000s marked a decisive transformation in bilateral ties.

- Pakistan's support to Afghan Mujahideen through the **Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)**, as part of the anti-Soviet campaign.

Political and Diplomatic Coordination

- Saudi Arabia has consistently supported Pakistan on key international issues, including its stance on **Kashmir and representation in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**.
- Pakistan, in turn, has supported Saudi positions in the Arab-Israeli conflict and regional disputes, aligning itself with Riyadh's broader **Middle Eastern policies**.
- The two countries have also coordinated within multilateral forums such as the OIC, the United Nations, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) observer mechanisms.

Strategic Friction and Diplomatic Challenges

- Despite close ties, there have been occasional strains in the relationship.
- In 2015, Pakistan's Parliament voted against joining the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen, citing neutrality, which caused temporary tension with Riyadh.
- Relations also cooled in 2019–2020, when Pakistan's criticism of the OIC's silence on Kashmir led Saudi Arabia to recall its financial support briefly.
- These episodes highlighted Pakistan's delicate balancing act between Saudi Arabia, Iran, and China, as well as its need to maintain economic independence.

Recent Developments (2020–2025)

- Since 2021, relations have been rejuvenated through high-level visits by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Army Chief General Asim Munir to Riyadh.
- Saudi Arabia pledged multi-billion dollar investments in Pakistan under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) framework.
- In September 2025, both nations signed a Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA)—a landmark treaty committing that any aggression against one will be considered

- Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and later Prime Minister Manmohan Singh prioritized engagement with the Gulf region, including Saudi Arabia.

2010s: Deepening Cooperation in Security, Energy, and Counterterrorism

- The **Riyadh Declaration (2010)** committed both countries to cooperation in counterterrorism, intelligence sharing, and maritime security.
- Saudi Arabia began extraditing Indian fugitives involved in terrorism, including key **Lashkar-e-Taiba** operatives, reflecting a significant shift in Riyadh's security outlook.
- India became one of the largest trading partners of Saudi Arabia, with trade volumes crossing **USD 34 billion by 2019**.
- Energy cooperation deepened as **Saudi Aramco** invested in India's downstream oil sector, including **the Ratnagiri Refinery and Petrochemical Project in Maharashtra**.
- Cultural and diplomatic exchanges expanded, and Saudi Arabia increased Hajj quotas for Indian pilgrims, recognising India's efficient management of the pilgrimage process.

2019–2025: Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

- The relationship entered a new era under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who visited Saudi Arabia multiple times (2016, 2019, 2023).
- During Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's (MBS) visit to India in 2019, the relationship was formally upgraded to a "Strategic Partnership Council (SPC)."
- The SPC is co-chaired by the Prime Minister of India and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, institutionalizing cooperation in two main tracks:
 - Political, Security, Social and Cultural Cooperation
 - Economy and Investments
- In 2023–24, Saudi Arabia pledged multi-billion dollar investments in India's energy, mining, and digital sectors as part of Vision

- aggression against both.
- The pact symbolizes the formalization of their military alliance, emphasizing defense, intelligence cooperation, and economic interdependence.

- 2030 and India's Make in India initiative.
- Both countries also collaborate under multilateral frameworks like the G20, BRICS+ dialogues, and the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) announced during the G20 Summit 2023 in New Delhi.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which pact, witnessed by Pakistan's Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir, was signed in Riyadh on 17 September 2025 to establish a mutual defence commitment between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan?

- (a) Saudi–Pakistan pact
- (b) Arab–Pakistani Friendship Treaty
- (c) Riyadh Strategic Partnership
- (d) Defence Cooperation Charter

2. Which principle is articulated by the clause stating that an attack on one party shall be treated as an attack on both, forming the basis for joint deterrence?

- (a) Mutual coexistence
- (b) Collective defence
- (c) Strategic autonomy
- (d) Cooperative neutrality

3. Which concept underlies the creation of a joint military committee, intelligence-sharing arrangements, and enhanced training exchanges between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan?

- (a) Flexible alliance
- (b) Contingent cooperation
- (c) Tactical neutrality
- (d) Permanent coordination

4. Which critical sectors were affected by Houthi strikes and conflict spillovers, demonstrating Saudi Arabia's exposure to regional instability and its need for stronger defence agreements?

- (a) Banking sector and airports
- (b) Agricultural zones and pipelines
- (c) Saudi oil facilities and Red Sea shipping
- (d) Tourism hubs and IT networks

5. Which role does Pakistan aim to reinforce by formalising a defence pact with Saudi Arabia, while simultaneously securing Saudi funding during fiscal strain?

- (a) Regional trade facilitator
- (b) South Asian neutrality broker
- (c) Humanitarian relief hub
- (d) Pan-Islamic security provider

6. Which status did Saudi Arabia hold for India in FY 2023–24, when bilateral trade reached USD 42.98 billion with Indian exports at USD 11.56 billion and imports at USD 31.42 billion?

- (a) Third-largest trading partner
- (b) Fifth-largest trading partner
- (c) Sixth-largest trading partner
- (d) Seventh-largest trading partner

7. Which 2006 agreement, preceding the 2010 Riyadh Declaration that elevated India–Saudi relations to a Strategic Partnership, is considered the foundation of modern bilateral cooperation?

- (a) Jeddah Framework
- (b) Gulf Security Accord
- (c) Delhi Declaration
- (d) Indo–Saudi Vision Pact

8. Which constitutional provision, revoked in 2019, did Saudi Arabia avoid criticising during its crisis diplomacy, even while condemning terrorism and balancing ties with both India and Pakistan?

- (a) Article 356
- (b) Article 35A
- (c) Article 370
- (d) Article 368

9. Which maritime theatres are being reviewed for potential operational consequences in light of policy assessments covering energy security, expatriate safety, and counter-terrorism cooperation?

- (a) Bay of Bengal and Gulf of Aden
- (b) Mediterranean Sea and Caspian Sea
- (c) Red Sea and Persian Gulf
- (d) Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea

10. Which diplomatic process has slowed, as Saudi Arabia now links its normalisation with Israel to recognition of a Palestinian state on 1967 borders, a demand rejected by Israel?

- (a) Camp David Framework
- (b) Oslo Peace Process
- (c) Abraham Accords trajectory
- (d) Gulf–Israel Strategic Initiative



SOLUTIONS

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

11

US SANCTIONS ON CHABAHAH
PORT

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

IN FOCUS

- The United States announced that the **sanctions waiver** granted in **2018** for activities linked to the **Chabahar port** in Iran will be revoked with effect from 29 September 2025, exposing port operators and related activities to penalties under **the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act (IFCA)**.
- The State Department said the revocation aligns with **President Donald Trump's "maximum pressure" policy**, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio formally declared the end of the exception that had allowed Afghanistan reconstruction assistance and economic development via Chabahar.
- New Delhi faces immediate strategic and operational consequences because India is developing and operating the Shahid Beheshti terminal at Chabahar under a long-running program that provides an overland trade route to Afghanistan and Central Asia while bypassing Pakistan.



Chabahar port lies on Iran's Makran coast at the mouth of the Gulf of Oman, west of the Iran–Pakistan border and roughly opposite Pakistan's Gwadar port that is being developed by China. Chabahar is Iran's first deep-water facility with open-ocean access outside the Strait of Hormuz, and it is a planned node on the **INSTC** linking the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea and onward to northern Europe through St. Petersburg.

How India's Engagement Evolved

- India's interest dates to 2002 consultations between Hassan Rouhani (then Iran's National Security Advisor) and India's NSA Brajesh Mishra and was enshrined in the 2003 Vajpayee-Khatami roadmap of strategic cooperation.
- Cooperation intensified after the Taliban's 1996 takeover in Afghanistan, when India and Iran supported the Northern Alliance, and India sought a non-Pakistan route to Afghanistan, Central Asia and Russia.
- In December 2017, the first phase of Shahid Beheshti was inaugurated, and India shipped its first wheat consignment to Afghanistan through the port the same year; Afghan exports to India began moving via Chabahar in 2019.

WHAT MAKES THE CHABAHAR DEAL HOT

Gives India **strategic heft** in region; helps it **bypass Pakistan** & build closer ties with Iran and Afghanistan

Closer ties with Iran will allow Delhi to secure **cheaper energy imports**

Offsets China's growing influence and reach in the region. China is heavily invested in developing Gwadar Port in Pakistan, of equal significance, some 100-odd km west of Chabahar as the crow flies

Chabahar Port route helps **connect India with energy-rich** Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan & other central Asian nations

This route is **40% shorter, 30% less expensive** than trade via the Red Sea-Suez Canal-Mediterranean route

WHAT INDIA MAY INVEST IN CHABAHAR

- India will invest **\$85m** to build a container terminal & a multi-purpose cargo terminal
- On May 6, 2015, Union minister Nitin Gadkari signed MoU with Iran to complete this by **Dec 2016**

➤ Iran wants Chabahar to be the third major hub for its **petrochemical industries**

➤ Indian private & public sector entities projected investment worth **\$22b** in the free trade zone area

➤ **Chemicals, petrochem, steel, fertilizer** are major sectors, besides Indian railways likely to invest

➤ India was offered the project to develop Chabahar port in 2003 by Iran, intended to be a critical access-point to **land-locked Afghanistan**

➤ For Afghanistan, an operational Chabahar route was a better alternative. It would reduce its dependence on Pakistan — the sole nation providing it access to the sea

➤ **Pakistan has been reluctant to allow Indian goods to pass overland through its territory**

➤ The project did not take off over US sanctions against Iran, but India has gone ahead now following lifting of the sanctions

RUN-UP TO THE DEAL

In 2009, India built a **218 km long** (@\$100m) link road from **Delaram** in western Afghanistan to **Zaranj** on the Iran-Afghan border to **link up with Chabahar port**

Zaranj-Delaram highway connects with the 2,200 km two-lane metalled road network, known as the **Garland Road** that connects major cities in the country

WHY CHABAHAR IS CRUCIAL

- Sits at mouth of Strait of Hormuz area
- Connects three regions: Central Asia, South Asia and West Asia
- Junction of shipping, oil trade routes
- About 100,000 ships sail by yearly
- Region holds two-thirds world oil reserves; estimated 17 billion barrels of crude oil passes this way daily

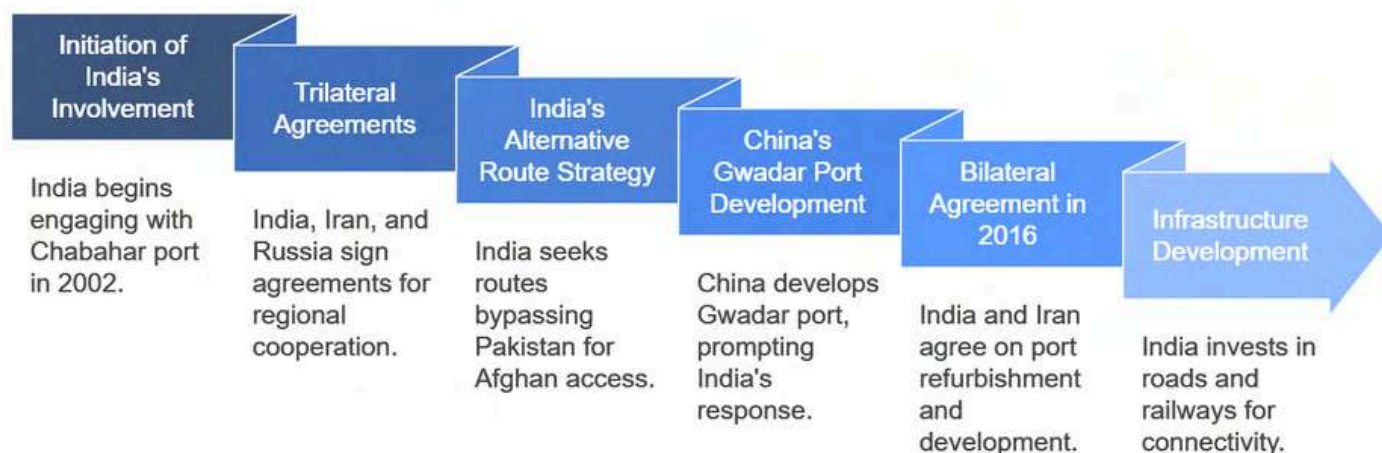
WHAT DEALS MEAN FOR AFGHANISTAN

- Unhindered access to the Indian Ocean
- India-built highway will link country to Chabahar port, further trade
- Afghanistan hopes to exploit \$1trillion of untapped mineral wealth to earn revenue



- India Ports Global Limited (**IPGL**) was incorporated in January 2015 and, through its wholly owned subsidiary IPGCFZ, took over part-operations at Shahid Beheshti on 24 December 2018.
- India has provided six mobile harbour cranes (two of 140-tonne and four of 100-tonne capacity) and other equipment worth USD 25 million to the terminal.
- The terminal is planned in four phases to an 82-million-tonnes-per-year capacity via 32 jetties (16 multipurpose, 10 container, three oil and three dry bulk); by late-2019, a cruise terminal addition raised first-phase capacity to 5.8 million tonnes.
- From 2018 through mid-2025, the port handled more than 90,000 TEUs and over 8.4 MMT of bulk and general cargo, and it enabled the trans-shipment of 2.5 million tonnes of wheat and 2,000 tonnes of pulses from India to Afghanistan, including Covid-era humanitarian aid; in 2021 India also moved 40,000 litres of Malathion to Iran to combat locusts.
- India signed a 10-year operating pact in May 2024 for Shahid Beheshti; by 2024 the Shipping Ministry recorded about ₹200 crore spent from a ₹400-crore allocation, alongside a 43% rise in vessel calls and a 34% rise in container traffic in 2023–24.

Course of India's Engagement with Chabahar Port



Why Progress Was Slow Before the New Sanctions Move

- Project execution across India's neighborhood has often lagged, but the primary constraint at Chabahar has been U.S.–Iran geopolitics.
- After the 2003 summit, follow-through slowed as India deepened ties with Washington while Iran was labelled part of an **"axis of evil,"** and only recovered during the 2015 JCPOA period.
- The U.S. quit the JCPOA in 2018 and re-imposed sanctions; a carve-out let India continue specific Chabahar-related work, yet suppliers and insurers were difficult to secure under the wider sanctions environment.
- The 2021 U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Taliban's return further disrupted India's usage of the corridor, although India reopened its Kabul embassy in 2022, pledged ₹200 crore in Afghan development assistance, allocated ₹100 crore for Chabahar, and announced 20,000 tonnes of wheat shipments via the port in 2023.

What the Waiver Revocation Changes

- The 2018 exception under IFCA for Chabahar port operations, the associated railway, and shipments of non-sanctionable goods for Afghanistan will cease on 29 September 2025; after that date, "persons who operate the Chabahar port or engage in other activities described in IFCA may expose themselves to sanctions."

- The step follows additional U.S. actions, including June 22 strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities and designations against entities tied to Iran's oil trade, and it explicitly targets Iran while creating second-order exposure for Indian and third-country entities working at Shahid Beheshti.

Immediate Risks for Indian Stakeholders

- **Operational exposure** arises for IPGL and contractors across shipping, insurance, equipment, spares and financing, because U.S. secondary sanctions deter counterparties from servicing the terminal.
- **Contractual jeopardy** threatens India's 10-year lease and ongoing capex, and could stall traffic growth and expansion plans that depend on external vendors.
- **Legal vulnerability** increases for firms conducting activities that fall within IFCA's sanctions triggers, raising compliance costs and potential withdrawal by logistics service providers.

Strategic Costs for India if Access Shrinks

- **Bypass to Pakistan** becomes constrained, reducing India's ability to reach Afghanistan and Central Asia without Pakistani transit, and weakening leverage vis-à-vis the China-backed Gwadar port only 170–180 km away by coastline.
- **INSTC integration** suffers because Chabahar is a southern gateway to the multi-modal corridor that links the Indian Ocean to Russia and Europe via Iran and the Caspian; loss of momentum impedes the corridor's trade-time and cost-reduction benefits (estimated 30% cost and 40% time savings on certain routes).
- **Humanitarian logistics** are affected since the port has served as a reliable conduit for food aid and essential supplies to landlocked Afghanistan.
- **Regional standing** risks erosion as connectivity promises falter, potentially ceding space to alternative suppliers and routes aligned with competing powers.

India-U.S. and India-Iran Balancing Challenges

- The decision marks a fourth U.S. sanctions action since 2018 with direct Indian costs, after earlier pressure to end oil imports from Iran and Venezuela and recent tariff steps in bilateral trade.
- If India scales down at Chabahar under sanctions pressure, it faces reputational and strategic damage in Tehran; if it presses ahead, private actors may still retreat due to compliance risks, complicating execution.
- India's recent high-level contacts with Iran—including NSA-level discussions to intensify cooperation on Chabahar—must now be reassessed against the revised U.S. sanctions perimeter.

Strategic Importance of Chabahar for India

Gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia

- Chabahar provides India direct access to Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan, which has denied overland transit for Indian goods.
- It connects to the Zaranj-Delaram Highway built by India in Afghanistan, linking to the broader Afghan road network and onward to Central Asia.
- This route allows India to deliver humanitarian aid, medical supplies, and construction materials to Afghanistan even after the fall of Kabul in 2021.

Counterbalance to China's Gwadar Port

- Located just 170 km west of Gwadar Port in Pakistan, developed by China under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Chabahar serves as a strategic counterbalance.
- It enables India to maintain a presence near the Strait of Hormuz, a critical chokepoint through which one-third of the world's oil trade passes.

Integration with the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC)

- Chabahar is a key node in the INSTC, which connects India, Iran, Russia, and Europe through a multi-modal transport network (sea, rail, and road).
- The corridor significantly reduces transport time and cost compared to traditional Suez Canal routes.
- For India, this means faster connectivity to Eurasian markets and Russia, enhancing trade diversification beyond the West and East Asian regions.

Economic and Trade Significance

- Chabahar shortens trade routes for Indian exports to Central Asia and Russia by nearly 40%, saving both time and cost.
- The port can handle 8.5 million tonnes of cargo annually, with plans to increase its capacity to 20 million tonnes.
- Indian exports like rice, wheat, pharmaceuticals, machinery, and construction materials are already routed through Chabahar to Afghanistan.
- It also offers opportunities for Indian public and private sectors to invest in logistics, warehousing, and infrastructure in the region.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which infrastructure project in Iran, developed with Indian participation, will lose its U.S. sanctions waiver from September 2025, after having been exempted since 2018?

- (a) Bandar Abbas terminal (b) Gwadar port
(c) Duqm port (d) Chabahar port

2. Which U.S. law will expose port operators and related activities to penalties once the Chabahar port sanctions waiver expires on September 2025?

- (a) Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act
(b) Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act
(c) Iran Nuclear Accountability Act
(d) Middle East Security Enforcement Act

3. Which country's reconstruction and economic development had been supported through the U.S. sanctions waiver for Chabahar port, before its revocation under the 'maximum pressure' policy?

- (a) Iran (b) Pakistan
(c) Afghanistan (d) Turkmenistan

4. Which terminal in Iran is being developed and operated by India at Chabahar to provide an overland trade route to Afghanistan and Central Asia while bypassing Pakistan?

- (a) Bandar Abbas terminal
(b) Shahid Beheshti terminal
(c) Gwadar East terminal
(d) Duqm logistics terminal

5. Which country is bypassed by India's overland trade route developed through the Shahid Beheshti terminal at Chabahar, linking New Delhi to Afghanistan and Central Asia?

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

6. Which water body lies at the mouth of which Iran's Chabahar port is located, positioned on the Makran coast just west of the Iran-Pakistan border?

- (a) Gulf of Oman (b) Arabian Sea
(c) Strait of Hormuz (d) Persian Gulf

7. Which rival facility, located opposite Iran's Chabahar port across the Gulf of Oman, is being developed by China on Pakistan's coastline?

- (a) Pakistan's Gwadar port
(b) Sri Lanka's Hambantota port
(c) Oman's Duqm port
(d) UAE's Jebel Ali port

8. Which narrow maritime chokepoint does Iran's Chabahar port bypass, offering open-ocean access as the country's first deep-water facility outside this route?

- (a) Bab el-Mandeb Strait
(b) Malacca Strait
(c) Strait of Hormuz
(d) Sunda Strait

9. Which connectivity initiative is Chabahar port planned to serve as a node in, linking the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea and further into Eurasia?

- (a) Belt and Road Initiative
(b) Asia-Africa Growth Corridor
(c) Sagarmala Project
(d) INSTC

10. Which terminal at Chabahar port has India specifically undertaken to develop and operate, while the other terminal remains outside its scope?

- (a) Shahid Kalantari (b) Bandar Abbas
(c) Gwadar (d) Shahid Beheshti

11. Which three countries signed a Trilateral Agreement in May 2016 to establish the International Transport and Transit Corridor via Chabahar, bypassing Pakistan's denial of overland access?

- (a) India, Iran and Russia
(b) India, Iran and Afghanistan
(c) India, Afghanistan and Tajikistan
(d) India, Iran and Uzbekistan

12. Which Indian company, incorporated in January 2015, assumed part-operations at Iran's Shahid Beheshti terminal through its subsidiary IPGCFZ on 24 December 2018?

- (a) Shipping Corporation of India
(b) Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust
(c) India Ports Global Limited
(d) Cochin Shipyard Limited

13. Which equipment has India supplied to Iran's Chabahar terminal, including two of 140-tonne capacity and four of 100-tonne capacity, valued at USD 25 million?

- (a) Container reach stackers
(b) Tugboats and pilot vessels
(c) Ship loaders and unloaders
(d) Six mobile harbour cranes

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

14. Which agreement did India sign in May 2024 for the Shahid Beheshti terminal, coinciding with ₹200 crore expenditure from a ₹400-crore allocation and traffic growth at Chabahar?

- (a) Strategic port-sharing deal
- (b) Short-term lease arrangement
- (c) 10-year operating pact
- (d) Bilateral shipping charter

15. Which country withdrew from the JCPOA in 2018, re-imposed sanctions on Iran, and created a carve-out that allowed India to pursue limited Chabahar-related activities despite wider restrictions?

- (a) Russia
- (b) U.S.
- (c) France
- (d) China

SOLUTIONS

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

12

GLOBAL INNOVATION INDEX
2025

INDICES AND REPORTS

IN FOCUS

- The **Global Innovation Index 2025** reports a global slowdown in **R&D growth**, which fell to 2.9% in 2024 and is projected to decline to 2.3% in 2025, the lowest rate since the 2010 financial crisis.
- Europe leads the innovation landscape with 15 economies in the global top 25, including six in the top 10, while North America remains strong with the United States ranked third and Canada seventeenth.
- India ranks **India rank 38** overall in 2025, climbs from 48 in 2020, and holds the #1 position among **lower-middle-income leader** economies and within **Central & Southern Asia**.
- The 2025 global top 10 are Switzerland (1), Sweden (2), United States (3), Republic of Korea (4), Singapore (5), United Kingdom (6), Finland (7), Netherlands (8), Denmark (9), and China (10).

What is the Global Innovation Index (GII)?

- The Global Innovation Index (GII) is an annual ranking that measures the innovation performance and capacity of countries across the world.
- It serves as a benchmark tool to assess how countries foster innovation through policy, investment, research, and entrepreneurship.
- The GII captures both inputs that enable innovation (like education, research, and infrastructure) and outputs that result from innovation (like patents, creative goods, and technological exports).

Who Publishes the Global Innovation Index

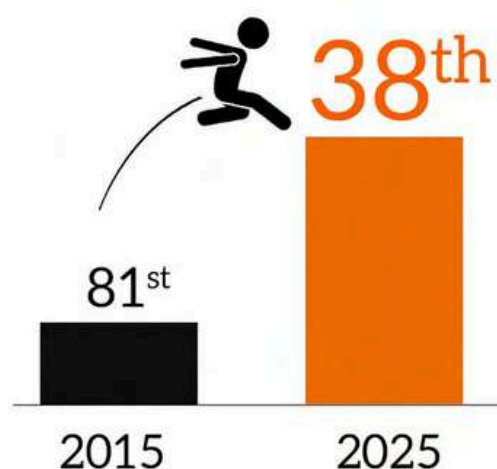
- The Global Innovation Index is published by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN).
- The GII was first launched in 2007 by INSEAD (the Business School for the World) and Cornell University, in collaboration with WIPO.
- Since 2018, WIPO has taken the lead in publishing and maintaining the Index as part of its mission to promote innovation and intellectual property worldwide.
- The GII is developed jointly with academic and research partners such as Portulans Institute, Cornell University, and other global innovation networks.

Methodology and Structure of the Index

- The GII is based on a composite index of around 80 indicators grouped into seven key pillars. It uses both quantitative data (e.g., R&D spending, patents) and qualitative assessments (e.g., business sophistication, institutional strength).

Innovation Unstoppable:
India Soars in Global
Innovation Index Rankings!

India Leads the Central & South Asia Pack

India's Rank in
Global Innovation Index

Source: WIPO

Pillars of the Global Innovation Index:

The seven pillars are divided into two major subcategories — Innovation Inputs and Innovation Outputs.

ELEMENTS OF THE INDEX

The index is computed by taking a simple average of the scores in **two sub-indices**.

1 Innovation Input Index : 5 Pillars

Institutions



Human capital & research



Infrastructure



Market sophistication



Business sophistication



2 Innovation Output Index : 2 Pillars

Knowledge and technology outputs



Creative outputs



Calculation of Scores

- Each country's input and output sub-indices are scored separately, and the overall GII score is the average of the two.
- This dual structure ensures a balance between a country's capacity to innovate and its actual performance in producing innovation-driven outcomes.

Key Insights from the Global Innovation Index 2025

India's Improved Global Position

- In the Global Innovation Index 2025, India has shown a significant improvement by securing the 38th position among 139 economies. This marks a steady upward movement for India, reflecting consistent policy efforts in innovation, entrepreneurship, and technology-driven sectors.
- India continues to be recognised as the top innovator among lower-middle-income economies and retains its position as the leading innovator in Central and Southern Asia. According to WIPO, India's progress is attributed to its strong performance in ICT services, startups, and knowledge creation.

Top three innovation economies by region

Latin America and the Caribbean

- 1 Chile ↑
- 2 Brazil ↓
- 3 Mexico

Sub-Saharan Africa*

- 1 South Africa
- 2 Botswana
- 3 Senegal

Northern Africa and Western Asia *

- 1 Israel
- 2 United Arab Emirates
- 3 Türkiye

South East Asia, East Asia, and Oceania

- 1 Republic of Korea ↑
- 2 Singapore ↓
- 3 China

Northern America

- 1 United States
- 2 Canada

Europe

- 1 Switzerland
- 2 Sweden
- 3 United Kingdom

Central and Southern Asia

- 1 India
- 2 Iran (Islamic Republic of)
- 3 Uzbekistan⁺



Top three innovation economies by income group

High-income

- 1 Switzerland
- 2 Sweden
- 3 United States

Upper middle-income

- 1 China
- 2 Malaysia
- 3 Türkiye

Lower middle-income

- 1 India
- 2 Viet Nam
- 3 Philippines

Low-income[^]

- 1 Rwanda
- 2 Togo
- 3 Uganda

⁺ Indicates a new entrant into the top three in 2025.

^{↑↓} Indicates movement in rank (up or down) within the top three, relative to 2024.

^{*} Top three in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) – excluding island economies. The top five in the region, including all economies, comprise Mauritius (1st), South Africa (2nd), Seychelles (3rd), Botswana (4th) and Senegal (5th).

^{*} Top three in Northern Africa and Western Asia (NAWA) – excluding island economies. The top four in the region, including all economies, are as follows: Israel (1st), Cyprus (2nd), United Arab Emirates (3rd) and Türkiye (4th).

[^] Top three in the low-income group – excluding island economies. The top four in the low-income group, including all economies are as follows: Rwanda (1st), Togo (2nd), Madagascar (3rd), and Uganda (4th).

Slower Growth in Global Research and Development (R&D)

- The global growth rate in R&D spending has slowed considerably, recording only 2.9% growth in 2024, compared to around 4.4% in previous years.
- It is projected to decline further to 2.3% in 2025, marking the lowest growth since the 2010 global financial crisis.
- This slowdown reflects global economic uncertainty, rising inflation, and reduced corporate investment in long-term innovation projects.
- Despite this, certain regions in Asia, particularly China, India, and South Korea, continue to maintain robust R&D ecosystems.

Rise of Middle-Income Innovators

- The 2025 index highlights the continued rise of middle-income economies such as China, India, Türkiye, and Vietnam, which have demonstrated sustained improvements in innovation performance.
- These economies are closing the innovation gap with advanced economies by investing heavily in education, research, and digital infrastructure.
- The report also notes that Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Mauritius, and Jordan have emerged as fastest-growing innovation performers in recent years.
- This trend signifies a global shift, where innovation is no longer concentrated only in developed nations, but increasingly distributed across emerging economies.

**Continued Dominance of European Innovators**

- The top three positions in the GII 2025 are held by Switzerland, Sweden, and the United States, respectively. Switzerland retains its title as the world's most innovative economy, a position it has held for over a decade. Europe remains the leading innovation hub, with 15 European countries featuring in the top 25 rankings.
- The report attributes this to Europe's strong research infrastructure, advanced industries, and government-supported innovation policies.

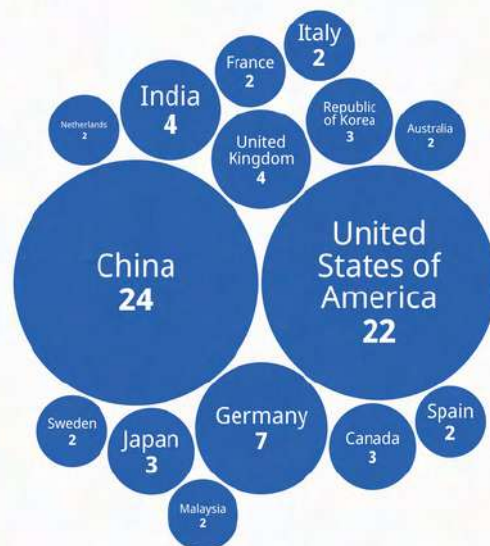
India's Presence in Global Innovation Clusters

- The GII 2025 highlights India's growing prominence in innovation clusters, which are geographical concentrations of high-tech research and industrial activity.
- India now features **four major innovation clusters among the world's top 100**, with **Bengaluru leading the list, followed by Delhi, Mumbai, and Chennai**.
- The Bengaluru cluster continues to strengthen its position as one of the world's fastest-growing technological hubs, particularly in software development, startups, and biotechnology.
- These clusters illustrate India's emergence as a global technology and knowledge center in the digital era.

India's Strengths and Weaknesses in Sub-Indices

- India's strongest performance in GII 2025 lies in the Knowledge and Technology Outputs pillar, where it ranks around 22nd globally.
- The country also performs well in the Market Sophistication and Creative Outputs categories, reflecting the dynamism of its private sector and digital economy.
- However, India's relatively weaker performance in Business Sophistication (rank ~64), Infrastructure (rank ~61), and Institutions (rank ~58) indicates the need for better business linkages, regulatory efficiency, and logistics development.
- These disparities highlight areas where India must focus on improving policy frameworks and institutional coordination to sustain long-term innovation growth.

Figure 3 Economies with two or more top 100 innovation clusters, 2025



Year	GII Position	Innovation Inputs	Innovation Outputs
2020	48th	57th	45th
2021	46th	57th	45th
2022	40th	42nd	39th
2023	40th	46th	35th
2024	39th	44th	33rd
2025	38th	52nd	32nd

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Which projected global R&D growth rate for 2025, reported in the Global Innovation Index, marks the lowest since the 2010 financial crisis?
(a) 3.5% (b) 2.9% (c) 2.3% (d) 4.1%
- Which region leads the global innovation rankings, with 15 economies in the top 25 and six of them in the top 10 according to the Global Innovation Index 2025?
(a) Europe (b) Asia
(c) North America (d) Middle East
- Which rank did India achieve in the Global Innovation Index 2025, improving from its 48th position in 2020?
(a) 42 (b) 45 (c) 40 (d) 38
- Which regional grouping does India lead in the Global Innovation Index 2025, alongside being ranked 38th overall and first among lower-middle-income economies?
(a) East Asia & Pacific
(b) Central & Southern Asia
(c) Sub-Saharan Africa
(d) Latin America & Caribbean
- Which of the following is not among the Global Innovation Index 2025 global top 10 economies?
(a) Republic of Korea (b) Singapore
(c) Japan (d) China
- Which index is widely used as a reference to measure the strength and performance of an economy's innovation ecosystem?
(a) Human Development Index
(b) Ease of Doing Business Index
(c) Global Competitiveness Index
(d) Global Innovation Index
- Which organization publishes the Global Innovation Index each year, benchmarking around 130–139 economies on innovation inputs and outputs across 80+ indicators?
(a) IMF (b) WIPO
(c) OECD (d) World Bank
- Which structural components does the Global Innovation Index aggregate to evaluate and compare national innovation systems across countries?
(a) Five pillars (b) Six pillars
(c) Seven pillars (d) Eight pillars
- Which index highlights rapid advances in frontier technologies like AI and quantum computing, despite a slowdown in investment momentum that creates divergence between breakthroughs and funding growth?
(a) GII records
(b) WIPO barometer
(c) OECD technology index
(d) UNCTAD innovation tracker
- Which regional grouping has consolidated as a dynamic hub of innovation, contributing six economies to the Global Innovation Index 2025's global top 25?
(a) Middle East and North Africa
(b) Sub-Saharan Africa
(c) South Asia
(d) Southeast Asia, East Asia, and Oceania
- Which country entered the Global Innovation Index 2025's top 10 at rank 10, ranks second worldwide in R&D spending, leads in patent filings, and even surpasses Switzerland in knowledge and technology outputs?
(a) China (b) Republic of Korea
(c) Japan (d) Singapore
- Which region does India lead in the Global Innovation Index 2025, alongside being ranked 38th overall and first among lower-middle-income economies?
(a) East Asia & Pacific
(b) Sub-Saharan Africa
(c) Central & Southern Asia
(d) Latin America & Caribbean
- Which country ranks 22nd in Knowledge & Technology Outputs, 38th in Market Sophistication, but posts weaker scores such as 64th in Business Sophistication, 61st in Infrastructure, and 58th in Institutions in the Global Innovation Index 2025?
(a) India (b) Brazil
(c) South Africa (d) Indonesia
- Which regional grouping does India's country profile place it in under the Global Innovation Index 2025, alongside its classification as a lower-middle-income economy?
(a) East Asia & Pacific
(b) Sub-Saharan Africa
(c) Middle East & North Africa
(d) Central & Southern Asia

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

15. Which number of indicators does the Global Innovation Index compile, covering areas like policy, education, infrastructure, investment, firm capabilities, and knowledge outputs, to generate a composite score and rank for economies?

- (a) 60 indicators (b) 80 indicators (c) 100 indicators (d) 120 indicators

SOLUTIONS

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

13

NEW SCHEME AND UNICORNS
IN 2025 INDIA

ECONOMY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

- The Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation inaugurated **Startup Conclave 2025** in Gandhinagar, stating that the conclave would connect emerging ventures with investors and translate the “**mind to market**” mantra into practice through seven theme sessions over two days.
- The address highlighted eight years of **Startup India** outcomes, India’s rise to the world’s third-largest startup ecosystem, progress on **GST reforms**, and a strong pipeline of women-led enterprises, alongside updated counts of recognized startups and **unicorns**.

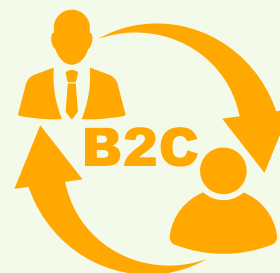
Program Genesis and Institutional Build-Out

Origins, Aims, and Governance

- The **Startup India** initiative was launched in January 2016 to create a structured ecosystem that lowers entry barriers, expands access to finance, protects **IPR**, and accelerates commercialization through coordinated policy, fiscal incentives, and handholding support.
- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (**DPIIT**) operationalized startup recognition with streamlined eligibility criteria, enabling benefits such as tax relief, fee reductions on intellectual property filings, and access to government-backed funds and guarantees.
- The initiative runs alongside national digital enablers under **Digital India**—notably **Aadhaar**, **UPI**, and **BharatNet**—which provide authenticated identity, frictionless payments, and broadband backbones that reduce customer acquisition costs and support inclusive product delivery.
- The Government designated 16 January as **National Startup Day**; the 9-year milestone fell on 16 January 2025, reinforcing program continuity and annual ecosystem stock-taking.
- Cross-ministerial schemes such as **iDEX** (for defence innovation) and **ADITI** complement the core startup framework by opening strategic procurement pathways and targeted R&D funding streams

Policy Pillars: Handholding, Financing, and Incubation

The policy architecture is organized around three pillars—**handholding**, **funding/incentives**, and **incubation**—each embedding distinct instruments for compliance relief, risk capital, and capacity building across educational institutions and private accelerators.



Handholding and Regulatory Facilitation

Legal Compliance and Exit Architecture

- Recognized startups can self-certify compliance under nine specified environment and labour laws via the **Startup India** web portal and mobile application, reducing inspection friction and early-stage compliance costs.
- The exit framework references the Insolvency and Bankruptcy regime (initially articulated as the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Bill 2015 and implemented through the **IBC**), enabling simple-structure startups to be wound up within ninety days, which shortens failure cycles and redeploys entrepreneurial talent faster.



Intellectual Property and Filing Support

- Startups access a **fast-track patent** examination channel to compress grant timelines for core technologies where time-to-market is decisive for competitive advantage.
- A nationwide **panel of facilitators** assists in filing patents and trademarks, with the government bearing facilitation costs to improve quality of claims and broaden IP protection among first-time founders.
- Recognized entities benefit from an **80% rebate** on patent filing fees, a quantifiable reduction designed to tilt cost-benefit decisions toward early IP protection in deep-tech and design-intensive sectors.



Funding Architecture and Risk-Mitigation Instruments

Fund of Funds and Early-Stage Equity

- A government-anchored **Fund of Funds (FFS)** with a total corpus of ₹10,000 crore, managed through **SIDBI**, invests in SEBI-registered Alternative Investment Funds that, in turn, invest in startups, thereby crowding-in private capital while preserving fund manager autonomy.
- The **Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS)** deploys a ₹945 crore corpus for **proof of concept, prototype development, product trials, market entry, and commercialization**, channelled through eligible incubators with clear ticket-size norms.
- The policy mix includes a maximum loan limit increase from ₹10 crore to ₹20 crore for qualified lines, plus approval of up to ₹20 lakh for proof-of-concept and up to ₹50 lakh for prototype development, expanding non-dilutive pathways for technology validation.



Guarantees and Debt Access

- A **Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups (CGSS)** provides collateral-free coverage to lending institutions, reducing perceived risk premiums on early-stage borrowers and widening access beyond equity-only funding routes.



- A credit-guarantee mechanism via **NCGTC/SIDBI** was envisaged with a budgetary provision of ₹500 crore per year for four years, creating predictable coverage capacity for banks and NBFCs extending term loans or working capital to eligible ventures.

Direct Tax Incentives and Capital Gains Relief

- Eligible startups receive **income-tax exemptions** on profits for any three consecutive financial years out of ten from incorporation, enhancing reinvestment capacity during product-market fit and early scaling.
- **Capital gains** exemptions are available for investments made in government-recognised **Fund of Funds**, subject to statutory conditions, aligning private portfolio rebalancing with national innovation goals.
- Relief is also provided against taxation of investments above **Fair Market Value (FMV)** for eligible entities, reducing the risk of punitive assessments on price discovery in private rounds.



Incubation, Academia Linkages, and Grant Pathways

National Incubation Footprint

- The network includes **31 Innovation Centres**, **13 Startup Centres**, **18 Technology Business Incubators**, **7 Research Parks**, and **500 Atal Tinkering Labs**, providing domain-specific mentorship, fabrication access, and research-to-market bridges for student and faculty spin-outs.
- Thirty-five new incubators have been set up in existing institutions, while additional private incubators have been supported with public funding, expanding geographic reach into tier-2 and tier-3 cities.
- States run ranking frameworks and capacity-building workshops that strengthen institutional quality in non-metro regions, widening the pipeline of investable teams.



Competitions, Student Grants, and Research Catalysts

- **NIDHI** supports student innovations with grants of **₹10 lakh** to **twenty** selected projects through Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Centres, activating campus ideation funnels.
- **Ucchatar Avishkar Yojana** disburses **₹250 crore per annum** to drive high-quality, industry-connected research among **IIT** students, seeding frontier-tech prototypes with commercialization potential.
- An **Annual Incubator Grand Challenge** and nationwide startup festivals create repeated exposure cycles where founders meet investors, corporates, and regulators, compressing time for feedback, pilots, and partnerships.
- Ecosystem showcases such as **Startup Mahakumbh** attract large founder, investor, and policy audiences; the 2024 edition recorded over 48,000 visitors and 392 speakers, with a 2025 edition aligned to **"Startup India @ 2047"**



Scale-Up Metrics and Labour Market Effects

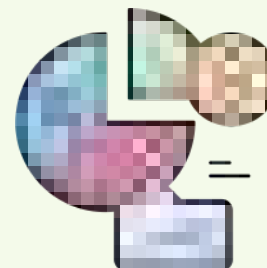
Recognition Growth and Ecosystem Ranking

- **DPIIT recognition** rose from 500 startups in 2016 to **1.59 lakh** by January 2025, indicating an institutionalized pipeline of formal ventures availing statutory benefits.
- The Union Home Minister reported **1.92 lakh** startups by September 2025, reflecting continued net additions post-January and the breadth of entrepreneurial activity across districts.
- India is the **third-largest startup ecosystem** globally, with a rising position in the **Global Innovation Index**, improving from rank **91** in 2015 to **38** by the time of the Gandhinagar address.



Employment and District Penetration

- Startups generated **16.6 lakh** direct jobs by 31 October 2024 and **17.9 lakh** sustainable jobs by September 2025, indicating sustained hiring momentum through 2024–25.
- The footprint extends to **770 districts**, evidencing diffusion beyond traditional metro hubs and reflecting the impact of digital infrastructure and state-level capacity building.



Women-Led Enterprises and Regional Inclusion

- **48%** of startups are founded by women, with **900** women-led startups operating in the Northeast, illustrating notable gender and regional diversification within the ecosystem.
- As of 2024, **73,151** recognized startups reported at least one woman director, signalling expanded leadership participation and board-level representation.



Startup India by the Numbers 2025

A unicorn is a privately held startup that has reached a valuation of at least USD 1 billion without going public. This status is often a benchmark for high growth, scalability, and investor confidence in a startup ecosystem.

Current Numbers & Growth: As of 2025, India is among the top three countries globally in terms of unicorn count. According to Hurun Global Unicorn Index 2025, India holds third place globally with 64 unicorns. The ASK Private Wealth Hurun India Unicorn Report 2025 reports that 11 new startups have entered the unicorn club this year, bringing the total to 73 unicorns in India.

Leading Unicorns & Valuations: Among India's most valuable unicorns in 2025, Zerodha ranked first with a valuation of USD 8.2 billion, followed by Razorpay and Lenskart, valued at USD 7.5 billion each. Other top performers include Groww, Zepto, InMobi, OfBusiness, Icertis, and more — across fintech, e-commerce, adtech, SaaS, and enterprise services sectors.

Geographic Distribution & Hotspots: Bengaluru remains the clear unicorn capital in India, with 26 unicorns headquartered there. Delhi–NCR follows with 12 unicorns, and Mumbai hosts 11 unicorns. The concentration of unicorns in a few cities shows regional imbalances in startup growth and investment access.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Which city hosted the Startup Conclave 2025 inaugurated by Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah on September 2025?
(a) Ahmedabad, Gujarat (b) Surat, Gujarat
(c) Rajkot, Gujarat (d) Gandhinagar, Gujarat
- Which number of sessions were planned at the Startup Conclave 2025 to deliberate on India's global startup mission and ecosystem challenges?
(a) Seven sessions (b) Five sessions
(c) Six sessions (d) Eight sessions
- Which three guiding mantras frame the Startup Conclave 2025, designed to connect emerging startups with investors and help ideas move from 'mind to market'?
(a) Create, grow, sustain
(b) Think, build, scale
(c) Innovate, elevate, accelerate
(d) Inspire, invest, impact
- Which knowledge resource, unveiled at the Startup Conclave 2025, seeks to aggregate India's intellectual traditions across disciplines and channel them into research and innovation?
(a) Global Knowledge Atlas
(b) Indian Knowledge System
(c) Bharat Research Index
(d) Viksit Bharat 2047 Blueprint
- Which initiative, launched in 2016, was highlighted at the Startup Conclave 2025 as having transformed youth from job seekers into job creators and positioned startups as instruments of self-reliance?
(a) Digital India
(b) Make in India
(c) Startup India
(d) Atal Innovation Mission
- Which position did India achieve both in its startup ecosystem (2016–2024) and digital ecosystem (over the past decade), reflecting its rapid growth in innovation and entrepreneurship?
(a) Third-largest (b) Second-largest
(c) Fourth-largest (d) Fifth-largest
- Which rank did India achieve in the Global Innovation Index in 2025, rising from its 91st position in 2015 and aiming for the top ten within the next three years?
(a) 38th (b) 42nd (c) 44th (d) 48th
- Which three sectors, each with about 11,000 startups, were highlighted by the Minister as part of India's diversified startup ecosystem alongside IT and healthcare?
(a) Transport, energy, and defence
(b) Retail, tourism, and logistics
(c) Agriculture, services, and education
(d) Real estate, media, and telecom
- Which financial support mechanism, worth ₹10,000 crore, was highlighted by the Minister as part of instruments to strengthen India's startup ecosystem?
(a) Credit Guarantee Trust Fund
(b) Startup Seed Support Scheme
(c) Angel Tax Rebate Facility
(d) Fund of Funds
- Which region of India is home to 900 women-led startups, as noted by the Minister while highlighting that 48% of Indian startups overall are founded by women?
(a) Western India (b) Southern India
(c) Central India (d) Northeast
- Which duration has Gujarat held the top rank for startups, as highlighted by the Minister while crediting Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel for implementing the Prime Minister's vision at the state level?
(a) Two consecutive years
(b) Four consecutive years
(c) Three consecutive years
(d) Five consecutive years
- Which observance, marked annually on 16 January, commemorates the launch of the Startup India initiative in 2016 and promotes innovation, entrepreneurship, and investments across sectors?
(a) National Innovation Day
(b) Digital India Day
(c) National Startup Day
(d) Entrepreneurs' Growth Day
- Which scheme provides startups with financial assistance for proof of concept, prototype development, and product trials to bridge the gap between ideation and commercial validation?
(a) Atal Innovation Mission
(b) Fund of Funds for Startups
(c) National Startup Advisory Council
(d) Startup India Seed Fund Scheme

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

14. Which initiative under Intellectual Property Facilitation helps startups with patent filing, trademark registration, and IPR support at reduced cost, including fast-track processing and an 80% rebate on filing fees?

- (a) National IPR Policy 2016
- (b) Intellectual Property India Portal
- (c) Startup Intellectual Property Protection
- (d) Digital India Patent Support Scheme

15. Which programme provides up to ₹10 lakh to support 20 student innovations through Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Centres (IEDC)?

- (a) Atal Innovation Mission
- (b) NIDHI
- (c) Uchchatar Avishkar Yojana
- (d) Startup India Seed Fund Scheme

SOLUTIONS

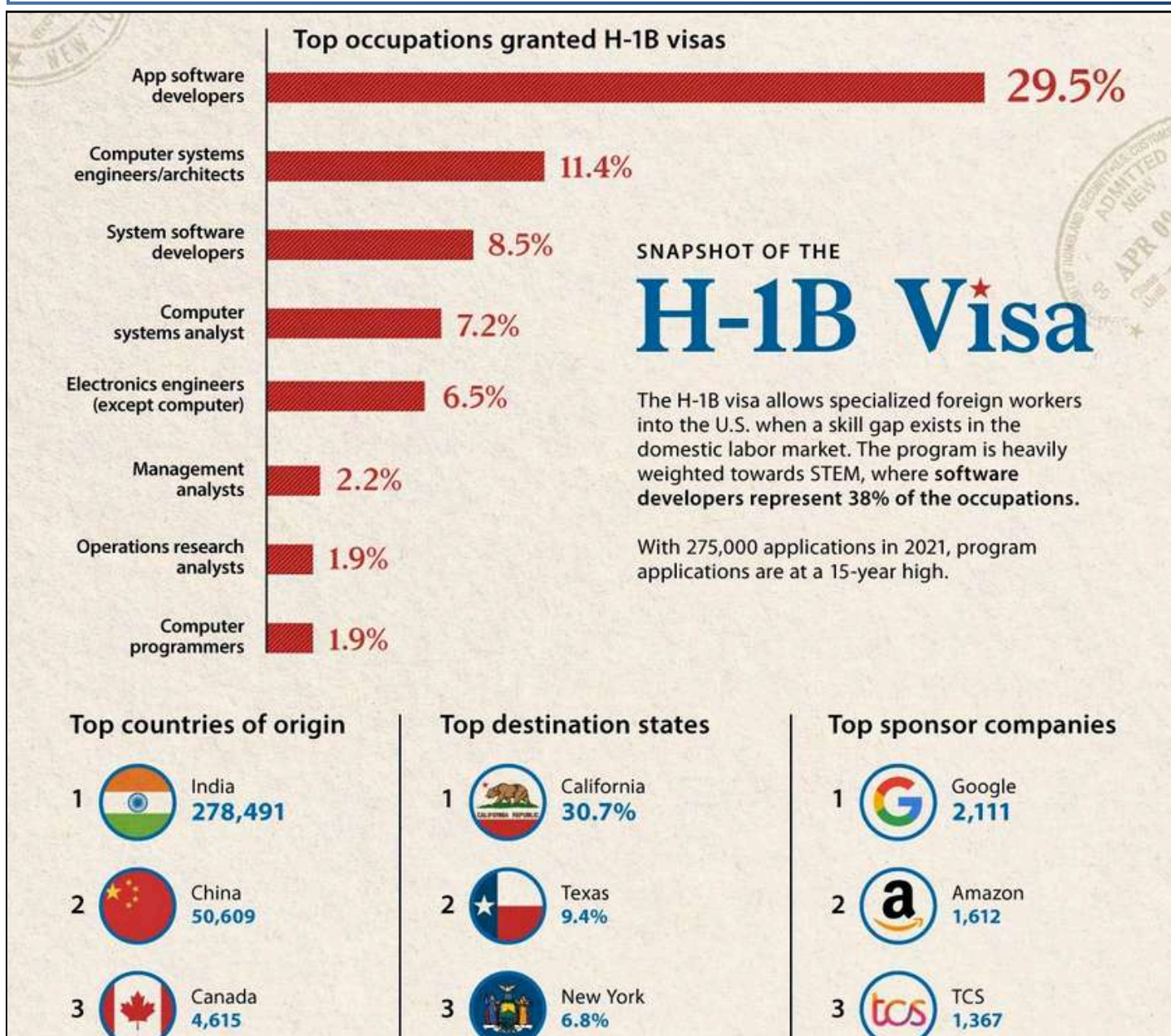
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| 1. (d) | 2. (a) | 3. (c) | 4. (b) | 5. (c) | 6. (a) | 7. (a) | 8. (c) |
| 9. (d) | 10. (d) | 11. (b) | 12. (c) | 13. (d) | 14. (c) | 15. (b) | |

14 H-1B \$100,000 ENTRY FEE

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

IN FOCUS

- A White House proclamation announced a **\$100,000 entry fee** for **new H-1B** entrants effective 21 September 2025, triggering immediate concern among Indian tech workers and students who comprise the largest H-1B cohort.
- Clarifications stated that the fee does not apply to people already in the United States who are extending, changing, or transferring **H-1B** status, while ambiguity remains over practical payment processes, waiver criteria, and coverage of cap-exempt institutions.



History and Evolution of H1B Visa

1

Introduction to the H-1B Visa

- The **H-1B visa is a non-immigrant work visa** issued by the **United States government** that allows U.S. employers to hire foreign professionals in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.
- These occupations typically include fields such as information technology, engineering, mathematics, medicine, and research.
- The H-1B visa is one of the most sought-after categories for skilled professionals worldwide, especially for Indian and Chinese nationals.
- It is administered by the **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)** under the **Immigration and Nationality Act (INA)**.

2

Origins and Early History (1952–1989)

- The roots of the H-1B visa can be traced to the **Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1952**, which first introduced the concept of temporary work visas for non-immigrant professionals.
- Under this law, the H-1 visa category was created for individuals of “**distinguished merit and ability**” to work temporarily in the U.S.
- There were no numerical caps or detailed definitions of “specialty occupation” in the early H-1 framework.
- During the 1960s–1980s, this visa was used primarily for scientists, university professors, and researchers — especially in **the aftermath of World War II and during the Cold War**, when the U.S. sought technical talent to strengthen its industrial and defense capabilities.

3

Establishment of the H-1B Visa under the 1990 Immigration Act

- The **Immigration Act of 1990 (signed by President George H.W. Bush)** restructured the U.S. visa system and created the modern H-1B visa by dividing the **earlier H-1 category into H-1A (for nurses) and H-1B (for specialty occupations)**. This Act clearly defined a “specialty occupation” as one that requires at least a bachelor’s degree or equivalent in a specific field of study.
- The Act also introduced, for the first time, an annual numerical cap of 65,000 H-1B visas.
- It required employers to file a Labor Condition Application (LCA) with the U.S. Department of Labor, ensuring that hiring a foreign worker would not negatively affect the wages and conditions of U.S. employees. The 1990 reform thus marked the formal beginning of the H-1B system as it exists today.

4

The 1990s: Tech Boom and Surge in H-1B Demand

- The 1990s technology boom, driven by the rise of Silicon Valley, created a massive demand for skilled workers in IT, software, and engineering sectors.
- Many U.S. companies began hiring from India and China, which became the largest sources of H-1B workers.
- The American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act (ACWIA) of 1998 temporarily increased the H-1B cap to 115,000 for fiscal years 1999 and 2000 to meet industry demand.

- The **American Competitiveness in the 21st Century Act (AC21) of 2000** further raised the cap to 195,000 for 2001–2003 and allowed H-1B holders greater job mobility and extensions beyond six years if green card applications were pending.
- These reforms positioned the H-1B visa as a cornerstone of America's high-tech economy, enabling the U.S. to attract global talent during its digital revolution.

5

The 2000s: Post-Dot-Com Adjustments and Policy Tightening

- Following the dot-com bubble burst (2001), demand for H-1B workers fell sharply, leading to the cap returning to 65,000 in 2004.
- However, the U.S. Congress introduced exemptions – notably, 20,000 additional H-1B visas were reserved for foreign professionals holding U.S. master's degrees or higher (the "advanced degree exemption").
- During this period, debates intensified over whether H-1B workers displaced American labor or contributed to innovation.
- The H-1B visa lottery system was introduced to allocate visas randomly when applications exceeded the cap.
- By the mid-2000s, Indian IT companies such as Infosys, TCS, and Wipro became the largest users of H-1B visas, cementing India's dominance in this category.

6

The 2010s: Scrutiny, Reforms, and Political Attention

- The 2010s witnessed heightened scrutiny and regulation of the H-1B program amid growing concerns about job outsourcing and wage suppression.
- In 2010, the USCIS and the Department of Labor increased oversight on employer compliance, focusing on "H-1B-dependent employers."
- Under the Obama Administration, several reforms aimed to streamline green card backlogs and encourage retention of highly skilled talent. However, under the Trump Administration (2017–2020), the policy focus shifted to a "Buy American, Hire American" agenda.
- This led to stricter eligibility criteria, higher rates of visa denials and RFEs (Requests for Evidence), and tighter interpretations of "specialty occupation."
- Despite these restrictions, Indian nationals continued to receive over 70% of all H-1B visas issued annually.

7

The 2020s: Digital Era and Policy Modernization

- The **Biden Administration (2021–2024)** has taken steps to modernise and digitise the H-1B process, aiming to make it more transparent and merit-based.
- In 2021, USCIS implemented an electronic registration system for the H-1B lottery to reduce paperwork and improve efficiency.
- The **Department of Homeland Security (DHS)** proposed new rules in 2023–2024 to prioritise H-1B selection based on wages and skills rather than purely random selection.
- The administration also introduced measures to protect foreign workers from exploitation, enhance compliance, and simplify visa renewals within the U.S. without requiring consular visits.
- The H-1B modernization rule of 2024–2025 seeks to align visa allocation more closely with STEM skill shortages, reducing fraud and ensuring fair competition.

8

India's Role and Importance in the H-1B Ecosystem

- India remains the largest source of H-1B visa recipients, accounting for approximately 73–75% of total visas issued each year.
- Major U.S. tech firms — such as Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Meta, and Apple — employ tens of thousands of Indian H-1B professionals.
- The Indian IT industry, including companies like Infosys, TCS, Wipro, and HCL, also relies heavily on this visa to deploy employees to U.S. client projects.
- The H-1B system has become a critical bridge in the U.S.–India technology partnership, driving innovation, talent exchange, and bilateral economic ties.

New Rules Under Trump Administration 2025**Policy Instrument and Effective Coverage**

- The measure operates through a presidential **proclamation**, which directs federal agencies and carries legal force until a court stays or overturns it, while it does not amend the statute governing **H-1B** which only **Congress** can change.
- The fee applies prospectively to **new entrants** who must obtain consular stamping or seek admission at a port of entry, and it does not cover beneficiaries of petitions filed before the effective date, holders of currently approved petitions, or those already possessing valid **H-1B** visas.
- The policy has been framed as a **border entry** requirement linked to executive authority over admission and national security, and attorneys expect near-term litigation that could seek **temporary restraining orders**.
- Lawyers report operational uncertainty on whether the levy is **per entry** or **annual** when re-entering, how payment will be collected and receipted by the **State Department**, and how travel by current visa holders after the effective date will be treated at consulates and ports.

Who Pays, Who Is Exempt, and What Remains Unclear

- Employers sponsoring candidates **outside the U.S.** are expected to pay the **\$100,000** upfront as a pre-condition for visa issuance or admission; attorneys caution that Department of Labor rules prohibit shifting mandatory government fees to the individual employee.
- Individuals **inside the U.S.** who pursue **extensions, transfers, or change of status** from **F-1** to **H-1B** without leaving the country are outside the fee's scope, so their mobility between qualifying employers remains intact under existing rules.
- A **national-interest** waiver is contemplated for individuals, companies, or industries, yet the proclamation does not enumerate sectors; attorneys infer that **healthcare, defence, or critical technology** could be candidates based on historical practice.
- Universities and non-profits are usually **cap-exempt** under standard H-1B rules; the proclamation's text does not explicitly address them, leaving room for agency guidance to determine treatment.

Legal Basis and Program Governance

- The statutory authority resides in the **Immigration and Nationality Act (INA)**, chiefly §§101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b), 212(n), and 214, implemented through regulations of the **Department of Labor (DOL)** and **Department of Homeland Security (USCIS)**, with **Department of State** handling consular issuance.
- The program is **dual-intent**, allowing an H-1B worker to maintain non-immigrant status while pursuing permanent residence through PERM labor certification and immigrant petitions.
- Enforcement and compliance are split: DOL enforces wage and working-conditions attestations; USCIS adjudicates petitions; the State Department conducts consular interviews; and **CBP** makes final admission decisions at ports of entry.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which U.S. visa category was affected by the September 2025 White House proclamation introducing a \$100,000 entry fee for new applicants, raising concerns among Indian tech workers and students?
(a) F-1 (b) L-1 (c) H-1B (d) O-1
2. Which categorisation has the U.S. administration used to justify the \$100,000 H-1B fee, linking it to executive discretion on admission and national security, and prompting predictions of lawsuits?
(a) Border entry (b) Filing surcharge
(c) Employer penalty (d) Visa lottery premium
3. Which department's role in handling payment collection and receipting for the new H-1B fee has created operational ambiguity regarding re-entry, consular processing, and treatment of existing visa holders?
(a) Department of Justice
(b) Department of Commerce
(c) State Department
(d) Department of Energy
4. Which amount must employers sponsoring candidates outside the U.S. pay upfront under the new H-1B rule as a pre-condition for visa issuance or admission?
(a) \$50,000 (b) \$75,000
(c) \$90,000 (d) \$100,000
5. Which percentage of continuing employment approvals in FY2024 were for men, reflecting the gender imbalance in the H-1B program's incumbent workforce?
(a) 68% (b) 74% (c) 70% (d) 26%
6. Which salary band for initial H-1B employment approvals in FY2024 was reported at \$130,000, reflecting compensation at the upper quartile of newly admitted workers?
(a) 75th percentile (b) Median
(c) 25th percentile (d) 90th percentile
7. Which figures capture the proportion of women beneficiaries from India in FY2024, indicating underrepresentation at 22% in continuing H-1B approvals and 31% in initial approvals?
(a) 24% and 28% (b) 22% and 31%
(c) 26% and 34% (d) 20% and 27%
8. Which national group's H-1B beneficiaries demonstrated higher female representation in FY2024, with women comprising 46% of continuing employment approvals and 49% of initial employment approvals?
(a) Canada-born beneficiaries
(b) Mexico-born beneficiaries
(c) China-born beneficiaries
(d) India-born beneficiaries
9. Which U.S. law overhauled the pre-1990 H-1 framework and established the H-1B category for specialty occupations, laying the foundation for today's skilled-worker visa system?
(a) Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996
(b) Border Security and Visa Reform Act of 2001
(c) Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952
(d) Immigration Act of 1990
10. Which legislation forms the statutory basis for the H-1B program, with sections covering specialty occupation criteria, labour conditions, and admission rules, and coordinated across DOL, DHS, and the State Department?
(a) Fair Labor Standards Act
(b) Immigration Reform and Control Act
(c) Immigration and Nationality Act
(d) Federal Employment and Migration Act
11. Which form must employers file with USCIS for selected H-1B registrants, along with supporting documents such as an approved Labor Condition Application (LCA)?
(a) Form DS-160 (b) Form I-129
(c) Form I-140 (d) Form I-765
12. Which certification from the Department of Labor must employers include with Form I-129 when petitioning for H-1B workers after registration selection?
(a) Labor Condition Application
(b) Prevailing Wage Determination
(c) Labor Market Impact Test
(d) Employment Eligibility Verification
13. Which maximum duration normally applies to H-1B employment, combining an initial three-year approval with renewals, and allowing recapture for time spent abroad?
(a) Four years (b) Six years
(c) Nine years (d) Ten years

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

14. Which U.S. law provides portability for H-1B workers, allowing a new employer to begin employment upon USCIS receipt of a non-frivolous petition, and also authorizes extensions beyond six years for those in the green-card queue?

- (a) INA 1965
- (b) Immigration Act of 1990
- (c) AC21
- (d) Homeland Security Act of 2002

15. Which sectors beyond traditional IT services now dominate the India-U.S. corridor, with H-1B visas supporting cross-border leadership, investor ties, and customer success functions?

- (a) SaaS, fintech, semiconductor design, and AI
- (b) Agriculture, textiles, tourism, and hospitality
- (c) Oil, gas, steel, and mining
- (d) Healthcare, retail, construction, and shipping

SOLUTIONS

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

15

TWO NEWS JUDGES SWORN IN
AS SUPREME COURT JUDGES

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

- Chief Justice of India **B.R. Gavai** administered the oath of office to **Justice Alok Aradhe** and **Justice Vipul M. Pancholi** as judges of the **Supreme Court of India**, restoring the court to its sanctioned strength of **34 judges** until the retirement of the Chief Justice on 23 November 2025.
- The appointments followed a **Collegium** recommendation dated **25 August 2025** that was cleared by the **Union Government** on **27 August 2025**, and they included a recorded **dissent** by Justice **B.V. Nagarathna** regarding Justice Pancholi's elevation and seniority position, while the majority proceeded 4:1 to recommend both names



Apex Court Strength Restored and Succession Implications

- The appointments brought the Supreme Court back to **full sanctioned strength of 34**, comprising one **Chief Justice of India** and thirty-three **puisne judges**, a level set by parliamentary enactments that have progressively increased the court's complement since 1950 to manage constitutional, civil, criminal, and appellate workloads. With Justice Pancholi's elevation, the seniority chart places him in the **line of succession** to become **Chief Justice of India** under the established seniority convention for the tenure **3 October 2031 to 27 May 2033**, subject to continuation of the convention and the absence of intervening contingencies such as resignation or elevation changes.
- The court's remaining tenure under **CJI Gavai** continues until **23 November 2025**, after which normal succession will operate according to the senior-most judge principle reaffirmed by precedent and Collegium practice.

Collegium Recommendation, Government Notification, and Recorded Dissent

- The **Supreme Court Collegium**, presided over by **CJI B.R. Gavai**, recommended **Justices Alok Aradhe** and **Vipul M. Pancholi** for elevation on **25 August 2025**, and the **Appointments Committee** of the Government of India issued notifications within **48 hours** on **27 August 2025**, reflecting a rapid turnaround between recommendation and appointment.
- **Justice B.V. Nagarathna** recorded a **dissent** regarding Justice Pancholi's elevation, noting his place at **57th** on the all-India seniority list of **High Court judges** and observing that judges senior to him could also be considered; her note asserted that the appointment would be "counter-productive" to the administration of justice and could affect Collegium credibility.
- The remaining Collegium members constituted a **4:1 majority** and proceeded with the recommendation, thereby continuing the Collegium's practice of institutional decision-making where majority concurrence determines the final recommendation to the **President** for appointment under **Article 124(2)**.

**Justice B.V. Nagarathna****Justice Alok Aradhe**

- **Justice Alok Aradhe** was **born in Raipur** and **enrolled as an advocate** on **12 July 1988**, commencing his legal practice with specialization consistent with High Court litigation before subsequent judicial appointment.
- He was appointed **Additional Judge, High Court of Madhya Pradesh**, on **29 December 2009**, and he became a **Permanent Judge** on **15 February 2011**, marking his initial tenure on the Madhya Pradesh bench.
- He was **transferred** to the **High Court of Jammu and Kashmir** in **September 2016** and served as **Acting Chief Justice** from **11 May 2018** during a period of administrative transition, demonstrating experience in court leadership.
- He was **transferred** to the **Karnataka High Court** in **November 2018** and held charge as **Acting Chief Justice** from **3 July 2022** to **October 2022**, thereby gaining exposure to docket administration in a large chartered High Court.
- He was **appointed Chief Justice** of the **Telangana High Court** in **July 2023**, and he was subsequently **transferred** as **Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court**, assuming charge on **21 January 2025**, before his elevation to the Supreme Court on **29 August 2025**.
- In the Collegium's internal seniority of Chief Justices, he was recorded as **third** among **High Court Chief Justices**, indicating a senior position within the pool considered for elevation to the apex court.



Justice Vipul M. Pancholi

- Justice Vipul Manubhai Pancholi was born on 28 May 1968 in Ahmedabad and enrolled as an advocate in September 1991, beginning practice before the Gujarat High Court across civil and criminal jurisdictions.
- He was appointed Assistant Government Pleader and Additional Public Prosecutor, serving for approximately seven years until March 2006, which provided structured experience in state litigation and advisory work.
- He was elevated as Additional Judge of the Gujarat High Court on 1 October 2014, and he was confirmed as a Permanent Judge on 10 June 2016, thereby entering the substantive judicial cadre.
- He was transferred to the Patna High Court in July 2023 and was appointed Chief Justice of that High Court on 21 July 2025, reflecting cross-jurisdictional leadership experience within the High Court system.
- In the contemporaneous list of High Court Chief Justices, he was placed nineteenth, and in the all-India seniority list of High Court judges, he was placed 57th, figures that were cited in the recorded Collegium dissent but did not preclude the majority recommendation.
- With his elevation, he falls in the seniority line to become CJI from 3 October 2031 until 27 May 2033, aligning with service norms that factor date of appointment to the Supreme Court and date of birth for determining tenure.

Constitutional Basis for Supreme Court Appointments and Service Conditions

Foundational Articles and Institutional Design

- Articles 124 to 147 of Part V of the Constitution of India establish the Supreme Court, define its composition, jurisdiction, powers, and procedures, and provide the legal basis for appointment, tenure, salaries, and removal of judges.
- Article 124(1) stipulates that there shall be a Supreme Court of India consisting of a Chief Justice of India and other judges as Parliament may by law prescribe, enabling Parliament to revise strength to meet caseload and federal needs.
- Article 124(2) vests appointment power in the President of India, acting on advice and after the consultation mandated by constitutional text and interpreted through judicial precedents into the present Collegium system.
- Article 124(3) sets eligibility for appointment as a citizen of India who has served as a High Court judge for at least five years in one or two courts in succession, or who has been an advocate of a High Court for at least ten years in one or more courts, or who is a distinguished jurist in the opinion of the President.
- Article 124(4) and allied provisions govern removal on grounds of proved misbehaviour or incapacity, requiring a special majority address by each House of Parliament before a Presidential order can be issued.
- Articles 126–128 provide mechanisms for Acting Chief Justice, appointment of ad hoc judges, and recall of retired judges to sit on the bench with prior Presidential consent and at the Chief Justice's request.

Oath, Tenure, and Age of Retirement

- Each judge must take the oath of office before the President or a person appointed by him, swearing to bear true faith to the Constitution, uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India, and discharge duties without fear or favour, affection or ill-will.

- A Supreme Court judge **holds office** until attaining the age of **65 years**, with **no minimum age** specified for initial appointment, and may **resign** by writing to the **President** prior to the age of superannuation.
- **Post-retirement practice** as an advocate is **prohibited** before any court or government authority, consistent with the independence of the bench, while **Article 128** allows **temporary recall** to the Supreme Court subject to consent.

Salaries, Allowances, and Financial Independence

- **Parliament** determines **salaries, allowances, privileges, leave, and pension** of judges through statute, and these expenditures are **charged on the Consolidated Fund of India**, which insulates judicial remuneration from ordinary annual votes.
- Such emoluments **cannot be varied to a judge's disadvantage** after appointment, except during a **Financial Emergency**, thereby protecting decisional independence through secure service conditions.

Removal and the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968

- Removal requires an **address of each House** supported by a **special majority**—a majority of the **total membership** and of **two-thirds of members present and voting**—followed by a **Presidential order**, and it may be initiated upon **proved misbehaviour or incapacity**.
- The **Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968** regulates the **procedure** for presenting the address and conducting **investigation**, and no Supreme Court judge has been **removed** to date; impeachment motions such as those concerning **Justice V. Ramaswami** and **Justice Dipak Misra** did not culminate in removal.

Collegium System: Evolution Through the Judges Cases and Current Working

From 'Consultation' to 'Concurrence'

- In the **First Judges Case (S.P. Gupta v. Union of India, 1981/82)**, the Supreme Court held that **consultation** with the **CJI** did not mean **concurrence**, which left **executive primacy** in appointments for the next decade.
- In the **Second Judges Case (Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India, 1993)**, the court reversed course and held that **consultation** effectively meant **concurrence**, and it defined the **institutional opinion** of the **CJI** formed in consultation with the two senior-most judges as the controlling standard.
- In the **Third Judges Case (1998 Presidential Reference)**, the court expanded the **Collegium** to **five members**—the **CJI** and **four senior-most judges**—and it prescribed a **plurality** consultation process in which the **CJI** should not recommend a name if **two judges** in the Collegium gave **adverse opinions**.
- The **Fourth Judges Case (2015)** struck down the **99th Constitutional Amendment** and the **NJAC Act, 2014** as **unconstitutional**, reaffirming the **Collegium** on the ground that **judicial independence** is part of the **basic structure** and cannot be diluted by an appointments body with executive participation.

Present Procedure and Executive Interface

- The **Collegium** initiates proposals for **elevation, transfer, and confirmation** after evaluating **merit, seniority, integrity inputs, performance, and representation needs** across High Courts, and it records **reasons** where departures from seniority occur.
- The **Central Government** receives the Collegium's resolution, conducts **background verifications**, and processes appointments; where it returns a name with comments, the **Collegium may reconsider** and, if it **reiterates**, the **Government** is **bound** to issue notification.
- The **dissent** recorded in Justice Pancholi's case demonstrates the Collegium's practice of maintaining institutional records that capture minority views while the **majority decision** continues as the operative recommendation to the **President**.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Which Chief Justice of India administered the oath of office to Justice Alok Aradhe and Justice Vipul M. Pancholi as Supreme Court judges on 29 August 2025?
(a) D.Y. Chandrachud (b) B.R. Gavai
(c) N.V. Ramana (d) Ranjan Gogoi
- Which sanctioned strength was restored in the Supreme Court of India on 29 August 2025 after the swearing-in of Justices Alok Aradhe and Vipul M. Pancholi by Chief Justice B.R. Gavai?
(a) 34 judges (b) 33 judges
(c) 32 judges (d) 31 judges
- Which category of judges, along with the Chief Justice of India, completes the sanctioned strength of 34 judges in the Supreme Court as set by parliamentary enactments?
(a) Additional judges (b) Ad hoc judges
(c) Acting judges (d) Puisne judges
- Which judges were recommended by the Supreme Court Collegium under CJI B.R. Gavai on 25 August 2025 and appointed within 48 hours by the Government of India, highlighting a rapid turnaround?
(a) Justices Alok Aradhe and Vipul M. Pancholi
(b) Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Bela Trivedi
(c) Justices N.V. Ramana and Surya Kant
(d) Justices R. Banumathi and Sanjiv Khanna
- Which body of the Government of India issued the appointment notifications for Justices Alok Aradhe and Vipul M. Pancholi on 27 August 2025, just 48 hours after the collegium's recommendation?
(a) Law Commission of India
(b) Union Cabinet Secretariat
(c) Appointments Committee
(d) Ministry of Law and Justice
- Which voting pattern among the remaining Collegium members enabled the recommendation for the elevation of Justices Alok Aradhe and Vipul M. Pancholi to proceed?
(a) 5:0 majority (b) 4:1 majority
(c) 3:2 majority (d) 2:3 majority
- Which Article of the Constitution empowers the President to appoint judges of the Supreme Court, acting on recommendations made through the Collegium system?
(a) Article 311 (b) Article 142
(c) Article 226 (d) Article 124(2)
- Which section of the Indian Constitution provides the legal foundation for the Supreme Court, covering Articles 124 to 147 on appointments, powers, salaries, and removal of judges?
(a) Part II
(b) Part IV-A
(c) Part V
(d) Part IX
- Which authority is vested in the President of India under Article 124(2), exercised after consultation with judges and refined by judicial precedents into the Collegium system?
(a) Appointment power
(b) Removal authority
(c) Judicial review power
(d) Legislative assent
- Which constitutionally mandated retirement age applies to judges of the Supreme Court of India, with provision for earlier resignation by addressing a letter to the President?
(a) 62 years (b) 63 years
(c) 64 years (d) 65 years
- Which fund bears the expenditure on the salaries, allowances, and pensions of Supreme Court judges, ensuring it is not subject to annual voting in Parliament?
(a) Contingency Fund of India
(b) Consolidated Fund of India
(c) Public Account of India
(d) National Judicial Fund
- Which constitutional situation allows the salaries and service conditions of Supreme Court judges to be varied to their disadvantage, despite the general safeguard of independence?
(a) Financial Emergency
(b) National Emergency
(c) State Emergency
(d) Martial Law
- Which legislation regulates the procedure for presenting an address and conducting investigations in the process of removing judges of the higher judiciary in India?
(a) Contempt of Courts Act, 1971
(b) Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill
(c) Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968
(d) Supreme Court Rules, 2013

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

14. Which landmark case in 1981/82 held that the Chief Justice of India's consultation in judicial appointments did not mean concurrence, thereby leaving the executive with primacy in appointments?

- (a) Kesavananda Bharati Case
- (b) First Judges Case
- (c) Second Judges Case
- (d) Third Judges Case

15. Which Act established the Supreme Court of Judicature at Calcutta in 1774 as a Court of Record with civil and criminal jurisdiction over Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa?

- (a) Regulating Act of 1773
- (b) Charter Act of 1813
- (c) Pitt's India Act of 1784
- (d) Charter Act of 1833

SOLUTIONS

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

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BBNJ TREATY TO ENTER INTO FORCE IN JANUARY 2026

ENVIRONMENT

IN FOCUS

- The **BBNJ treaty** reached the threshold of 60 ratifications in the third week of September 2025, triggering its entry into force on January 17, 2026, exactly 120 days after the 60th instrument was deposited.
- Four countries—Sri Lanka, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Sierra Leone, and Morocco—provided the decisive ratifications, while 143 countries, including India, have signed to signal intent to ratify.
- Two global **PrepCom** meetings have already convened to draft operational rules, including governance arrangements, the **Clearing-House Mechanism**, and financial procedures, in preparation for COP1.

WHAT IS

BBNJ Agreement?

The **Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction**

is an international treaty to protect ocean life in areas beyond any country's borders.

WHAT IS

THIS AGREEMENT?

Known as **BBNJ** or **High Seas Treaty**

It aims to protect marine biodiversity in the high seas — the parts of the ocean that do not belong to any country.

NEW MILESTONE:

69 Parties (as of 23/09/2025) have ratified the BBNJ.

This means that the Agreement will come into force on the **17 January 2026**

Treaty Overview and Legal Position

- The **BBNJ treaty** is a legally binding agreement negotiated under **UNCLOS** for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.
- The agreement becomes the third “implementing agreement” under **UNCLOS**, complementing the 1994 Part XI Implementation Agreement on the international seabed and **the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement** on straddling and migratory stocks.
- The treaty advances **SDG 14** (Life Below Water) by establishing rules for conservation, sustainable use, and fair benefit-sharing in international waters.

Geographic Scope and Definition

- “**High Seas**” comprise saltwater areas beyond the territorial seas and outside the exclusive economic zones of coastal states, i.e., beyond 200 nautical miles from baselines.
- These international waters account for roughly 64 percent of ocean area and about 43 percent of Earth’s surface, and they belong to no single nation.
- All states possess equal freedoms in the high seas, including navigation, overflight, laying of undersea cables, fishing, and scientific research, subject to the new conservation and assessment obligations created by this treaty.

Why an Updated Regime Was Needed

- The demand for a modern legal framework for the high seas has built up over roughly two decades due to intensifying commercial fishing, prospective deep-sea mining, rising pollution, and ocean **acidification**.
- Only about 1.2 percent of **High Seas** areas are currently protected, whereas approximately 6.35 percent of the global ocean has some protected status and around 1.89 percent lies within no-take marine protected areas.
- Around 10 percent of global marine species face a risk of extinction, underscoring the need for stronger area-based conservation measures and impact controls beyond national jurisdiction.
- Ocean ecosystems produce roughly half of the planet's oxygen, constitute about 95 percent of the biosphere by volume, and act as the world's largest carbon sink by absorbing atmospheric CO₂, which elevates the global stakes for an enforceable high-seas regime.
- The previous landmark global ocean agreement was **UNCLOS** in 1982, making this treaty the most significant upgrade to ocean protection architecture in decades.

Core Provisions and Institutional Design

- The treaty empowers parties to designate and manage **marine protected areas** (MPAs) in the high seas to conserve biodiversity and ecosystem functions, with area-based tools modeled on national-park-style protection.
- Parties agree to conduct prior **environmental impact assessments** for proposed activities with potential transboundary or high-seas impacts, including activities within national jurisdiction that could affect areas beyond.
- The agreement establishes rules to ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from **marine genetic resources**, including access modalities, data sharing, and monetary or non-monetary benefits relevant to applications such as pharmaceuticals
- Capacity-building and technology transfer form a dedicated pillar to support small island developing states and landlocked developing countries in meeting obligations and benefiting from lawful high-seas uses.
- Parties will operationalize an institutional architecture that includes a decision-making body, scientific and technical functions, and a **Clearing-House Mechanism** to organize information on areas, activities, and benefit-sharing.

Ratification Status, Timeline, and Next Milestones

- The treaty opened for signature in September 2023 and reached 60 ratifications in September 2025, fixing January 17, 2026, as the date of entry into force under the 120-day rule.
- Signatures have reached 143, including India, and additional ratifications are anticipated around high-level UN events leading into the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP1).
- Two **PrepCom** sessions have developed draft procedures on governance, finance, and information exchange to ensure that COP1 can adopt early decisions for effective implementation

Alignment with Global Targets and Anticipated Outcomes

- The treaty directly supports the **30x30 target** agreed under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework by enabling protection of at least 30 percent of the ocean by 2030.
- Legal protection of two-thirds of the ocean's surface through MPAs and impact-assessment obligations is expected to strengthen conservation outcomes for endangered species and habitats across more than 40 percent of Earth's surface.
- The framework embeds equitable benefit-sharing for **marine genetic resources**, thereby promoting innovation while recognizing common interests in high-seas biodiversity.
- By standardizing **environmental impact assessments**, parties can evaluate effects from activities such as carbon-sequestration projects and deep-sea mining proposals before those activities proceed.

India's Position and Domestic Preparation

- India has signed the **BBNJ treaty** in September 2024 and announced a plan to enact national legislation to safeguard India's interests in international waters while aligning domestic practice with new treaty obligations.
- The Ministry of Earth Sciences has constituted a 12-member drafting committee chaired by Senior Advocate Sanjay Upadhyay to prepare a comprehensive law covering conservation mandates, EIA procedures, access-and-benefit mechanisms, and institutional capacity.
- The proposed law aims to ready India for obligations such as prior **environmental impact assessments**, compliance reporting, and participation in equitable benefit-sharing from **marine genetic resources**, while protecting lawful navigation and economic interests.

Global Actors and Negotiation Dynamics

- The European Union, the United States, the United Kingdom, and China played central roles in brokering the final text, reflecting broad cross-regional engagement.
- Governments and non-state stakeholders, including scientific coalitions, industry observers, and civil society networks, contributed technical input that shaped provisions on MPAs, EIAs, and benefit-sharing modalities.

Data Snapshot and Contextual Indicators

- The **High Seas** constitute roughly 64 percent of the ocean area and 43 percent of Earth's surface, yet only about 1.2 percent of these areas are currently under formal protection
- Approximately 6.35 percent of the global ocean has some form of protection, with around 1.89 percent designated as no-take MPAs that prohibit extractive activities.
- Global marine ecosystems face pressures from commercial fishing, seabed mining interest, pollution, and warming-driven **acidification**, all of which the treaty seeks to moderate through preventive and area-based tools.
- Oceans generate about half of atmospheric oxygen and function as a primary carbon sink, so effective implementation of the treaty has direct climate-biodiversity co-benefits.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Which of the following is NOT among the four countries that provided the decisive ratifications for the BBNJ Treaty in September 2025?
(a) Sri Lanka (b) Morocco
(c) Sierra Leone (d) Bangladesh
- Which of the following countries is mentioned among the 143 nations that have signed the BBNJ Treaty to signal intent to ratify?
(a) India (b) Brazil
(c) Japan (d) Kenya
- Which of the following frameworks provided the basis under which the BBNJ Treaty was negotiated?
(a) WTO (b) UNEP
(c) UNCLOS (d) IMF
- Which of the following, along with the 1994 Part XI Implementation Agreement, is considered an implementing agreement under UNCLOS?
(a) UN Fish Stocks Agreement
(b) Paris Climate Agreement
(c) Kyoto Protocol Agreement
(d) Cartagena Protocol Treaty
- Which of the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is advanced by the treaty through conservation, sustainable use, and fair benefit-sharing in international waters?
(a) SDG 10 (b) SDG 12
(c) SDG 15 (d) SDG 14
- Which of the following best defines the High Seas under UNCLOS?
(a) Waters within territorial seas zone
(b) Waters inside inland river zone
(c) Waters beyond exclusive economic zone
(d) Waters within continental shelf zone
- Which of the following is empowered by the treaty to be designated and managed in the high seas for conserving biodiversity?
(a) Exclusive fishing zones
(b) Deep seabed reserves
(c) International shipping lanes
(d) Marine protected areas
- Which of the following accurately represents the number of ratifications that fixed January 17, 2026, as the entry-into-force date for the treaty?
(a) 60 ratifications (b) 45 ratifications
(c) 55 ratifications (d) 65 ratifications
- Which of the following functions as the treaty's decision-making body, expected to convene after additional ratifications?
(a) International Court of Justice
(b) Economic and Social Council
(c) Conference of the Parties
(d) Committee on Sustainable Development
- Which of the following is identified as having shaped draft procedures to ensure effective implementation of the treaty before COP1?
(a) Two PrepCom (b) Four Ministerial
(c) Five Working (d) Three Council
- Which of the following targets reflects the global commitment to conserve a significant share of marine biodiversity by the year 2030?
(a) 10x10 (b) 20x20
(c) 30x30 (d) 50x50
- Which of the following correctly states the membership strength of the drafting committee formed by the Ministry of Earth Sciences under Senior Advocate Sanjay Upadhyay?
(a) 8-member (b) 12-member
(c) 15-member (d) 18-member
- Which of the following is not among the countries that played central roles in brokering the final text of the treaty, reflecting broad cross-regional engagement?
(a) European Union (b) United States
(c) United Kingdom (d) Russian Federation
- Which of the following figures represents the share of the total ocean area covered by the High Seas?
(a) 54 percent (b) 64 percent
(c) 74 percent (d) 84 percent

SOLUTIONS

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

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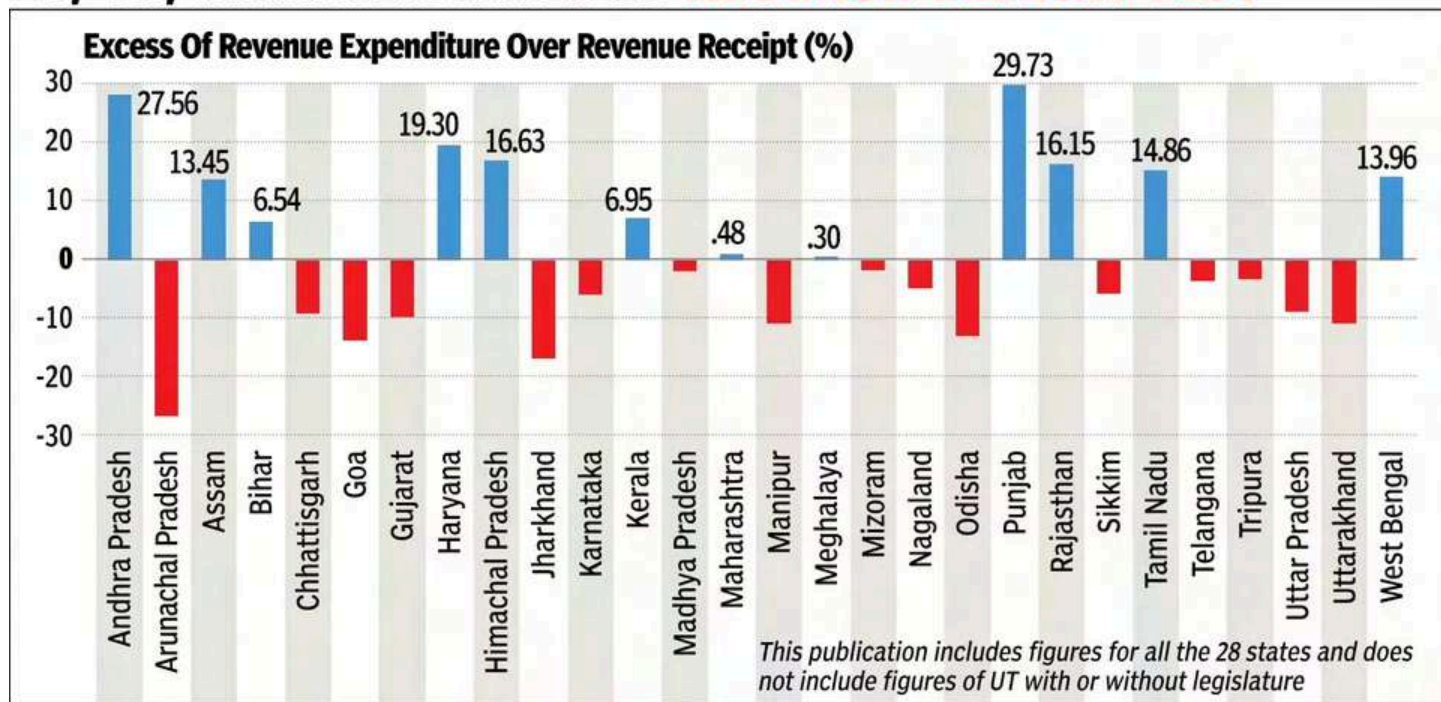
CAG REPORT ON THE FISCAL HEALTH OF STATES

INDICES & REPORTS

IN FOCUS

- The **Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India** recently released a decadal analysis report (2013–14 to 2022–23) evaluating the **fiscal health of Indian states**. The report gained national attention as it revealed that the aggregate public debt of states has tripled in the last decade – from ₹17.57 lakh crore in 2013–14 to ₹59.60 lakh crore in 2022–23.
- The CAG warned that the fiscal situation of several states has deteriorated, with a growing dependence on borrowings to finance even routine revenue expenditure, rather than using debt for developmental projects. It also highlighted the rising burden of salaries, pensions, subsidies, and interest payments, which together consume a significant share of states' revenue receipts.

AP, TN, MAHARASHTRA ON REVENUE-DEFICIT LIST



States with Revenue Surplus

- A total of 16 states recorded revenue surpluses in FY 2022–23, meaning their revenue receipts exceeded their revenue expenditure.
- Uttar Pradesh led all states with a revenue surplus of ₹37,000 crore, marking a major turnaround for a state once categorized among the “BIMARU” states.
- Gujarat followed with a surplus of ₹19,865 crore, showing strong fiscal consolidation and tax performance.
- Odisha recorded a surplus of ₹19,456 crore, reflecting effective expenditure control and improved revenue mobilization.
- Jharkhand achieved a surplus of ₹13,564 crore, while Karnataka had ₹13,496 crore, supported by high own-tax revenues.

- Chhattisgarh posted a surplus of ₹8,592 crore, and Telangana had a surplus of ₹5,944 crore, demonstrating prudent financial management.
- Uttarakhand reported a surplus of ₹5,310 crore, reflecting sound revenue management relative to expenditure.
- Madhya Pradesh recorded a revenue surplus of ₹4,091 crore, signifying fiscal improvement among erstwhile BIMARU states.
- Goa reported a revenue surplus of ₹2,399 crore, supported by strong tourism and service sector revenues.
- The northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim also featured among revenue-surplus states, mainly due to high central transfers and controlled expenditure.
- Of these 16 surplus states, at least 10 are governed by BJP-led governments, indicating stronger fiscal discipline in several BJP-ruled states.

States with Revenue Deficit

- The report identified 12 states that recorded revenue deficits in FY 2022–23, implying that their revenue expenditure exceeded their revenue receipts.
- Andhra Pradesh registered the highest revenue deficit of ₹43,488 crore, reflecting a heavy dependence on borrowing and central assistance.
- Tamil Nadu reported a deficit of ₹36,215 crore, largely due to high social sector spending.
- Rajasthan had a deficit of ₹31,491 crore, driven by populist schemes such as free electricity and medicine programs.
- West Bengal followed with ₹27,295 crore, facing persistent fiscal pressure despite central support.
- Punjab recorded a deficit of ₹26,045 crore, mainly due to high subsidy commitments and a large interest burden.
- Haryana posted a deficit of ₹17,212 crore, while Assam recorded ₹12,072 crore, both showing weak revenue–expenditure balance.
- Bihar had a deficit of ₹11,288 crore, and Kerala recorded ₹9,226 crore, reflecting rising salary and pension expenditures.
- Himachal Pradesh had a deficit of ₹6,336 crore, indicating financial strain despite receiving central aid.
- Maharashtra recorded a mild deficit of ₹1,936 crore, and Meghalaya posted a marginal deficit of ₹44 crore.
- These deficit states have increasingly become dependent on Revenue Deficit Grants from the Centre to finance their routine expenditure.

States Receiving Revenue Deficit Grants

- The CAG report revealed that the composition of revenue-deficit states is changing, with states like West Bengal, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, and Punjab joining those reliant on central Revenue Deficit Grants.
- West Bengal received the highest share of 16% of such grants in FY 2023 to bridge its fiscal gap.
- Kerala followed with 15%, Andhra Pradesh with 12%, Himachal Pradesh with 11%, and Punjab with 10%.
- The CAG noted that dependence on these grants has increased, indicating limited fiscal autonomy and structural weaknesses in the state finances.

States with Strong Own Revenue Capacity

- Some states have successfully boosted their own revenue generation, both from tax and non-tax sources.
- Haryana topped this category with over 80% of its total revenue coming from own tax and non-tax receipts, reflecting a strong local fiscal base.
- Telangana ranked second with over 79%, followed by Maharashtra (73%), Gujarat (72%), Karnataka (69%), Tamil Nadu (69%), and Goa (68%).
- The CAG identified six states—Haryana, Maharashtra, Telangana, Karnataka, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu—where States' Own Tax Revenue (SOTR) accounted for more than 60% of total revenue receipts. This demonstrates that these states rely largely on their own taxation capacity rather than central transfers.

States with Weak Own Revenue Capacity

- Several states, especially in the northeast and the Himalayan regions, continue to depend heavily on central transfers and grants.
- Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura all have SOTR below 20%, meaning the majority of their revenues come from central allocations.
- Bihar and Himachal Pradesh also fall in this category, with own tax and non-tax revenues below 40% of their total receipts. This heavy reliance on central resources limits their fiscal independence and responsiveness to regional priorities.

Revenue Composition and Central Support

- The CAG found that states' share in Union taxes accounted for about 27% of their total revenue receipts.
- Grants-in-aid and central assistance, including Finance Commission transfers, formed another 17% of total state revenues.
- In FY 2022–23, states collectively received ₹1,72,849 crore as Finance Commission grants, of which ₹86,201 crore were specifically Revenue Deficit Grants.
- The CAG emphasized that such high dependence on central allocations poses challenges to fiscal federalism and state-level financial accountability.

General Findings

A. Growth in Public Debt and Deteriorating Debt Ratios

- The CAG report shows that **the combined debt of all Indian states** increased **3.39 times in a decade** — from ₹17.57 lakh crore in 2013–14 to ₹59.60 lakh crore in 2022–23.
- The **average debt-to-GSDP ratio of states rose from 16.66 percent in 2013–14 to 22.96 percent in 2022–23**, indicating rising indebtedness relative to economic output.
- In 2022–23, states' **total public debt equaled 22.17 percent of India's national GDP**, showing the increasing weight of state liabilities in the overall fiscal landscape.
- States such as Punjab (40.35 percent), Nagaland (37.15 percent), and West Bengal (33.70 percent) recorded the highest debt-to-GSDP ratios, placing them in the "high-risk" category.
- In contrast, fiscally disciplined states such as Odisha (8.45 percent), Maharashtra (14.64 percent), and Gujarat (16.37 percent) maintained relatively low debt levels.
- The report noted that eight states have debt levels exceeding 30 percent of GSDP, while only six states managed to keep debt below 20 percent, revealing a sharp divergence in fiscal discipline.

B. Debt Relative to Revenue Receipts

- The report finds that the ratio of public debt to revenue receipts has been alarmingly high, fluctuating between **128 percent and 191 percent across the decade**.
- On average, **Indian states have borrowed amounts equal to around 150 percent of their annual revenue** receipts, indicating a persistent reliance on debt to sustain regular spending.
- This trend implies that states are increasingly using borrowed money to finance daily expenses, leaving little fiscal room for productive capital investment.

C. Rising Committed Expenditure: Salaries, Pensions, Subsidies, and Interest Payments

- The CAG observed a significant surge in committed expenditure, which includes salaries, pensions, and interest obligations.
- The total salary bill of all states increased 2.5 times in ten years, now amounting to over ₹16 lakh crore annually.

- Similarly, subsidy expenditure has more than tripled, with some states such as Punjab spending as much as 17 percent of their total expenditure on subsidies.
- On average, committed expenditure accounts for 43.49 percent of total revenue expenditure across states. In certain states, such as Kerala and Nagaland, the ratio is even higher, severely limiting fiscal flexibility.
- The report warns that the growing share of committed expenditure restricts states' ability to fund development projects, public services, and infrastructure.

D. Violation of the "Golden Rule" of Fiscal Policy

- The "Golden Rule" of public finance mandates that borrowings should be used only for capital investment and not for financing routine administrative expenses.
- However, the **CAG found that at least eleven states violated this principle by using borrowed funds to meet revenue expenditure obligations**, such as salaries and subsidies.
- The report specifically highlighted that in Andhra Pradesh and Punjab, less than 25 percent of their total borrowings were spent on capital projects, demonstrating a misuse of loans for non-productive purposes.
- This practice, the CAG cautioned, undermines long-term fiscal sustainability and limits future growth potential.

K. Sanjay Murthy

- K. Sanjay Murthy was sworn in as the Comptroller & Auditor General of India on 21 November 2024. He is the 15th CAG of India.
- Murthy is an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the 1989 batch, belonging to the Himachal Pradesh cadre.
- Article 148 provides for the Comptroller and Auditor General of India appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal, with salary and service conditions determined by Parliament, and with ineligibility for any further office under the Union or a state.



Appointment and Tenure

- The CAG of India is appointed by the President of India under his official warrant and seal. The CAG holds office for a term of six years or until attaining the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier. The CAG can resign at any time by submitting a written resignation to the President of India.
- The CAG can be removed from office only in the same manner as a judge of the Supreme Court, i.e., through a special majority of Parliament on grounds of proven misbehavior or incapacity. This process ensures the security of tenure and independence of the office from executive influence.

Salary and Conditions of Service

- The salary, allowances, and other conditions of service of the CAG are determined by Parliament through law. The CAG's salary is equivalent to that of a judge of the Supreme Court of India.
- Once appointed, the conditions of service cannot be varied to the disadvantage of the CAG during their term of office. The administrative expenses of the CAG, including staff salaries, are charged on the Consolidated Fund of India, ensuring full financial independence.

Audit Reports and Legislative Oversight

- After completing audits, the CAG submits its reports to the President or the Governor, who in turn places them before Parliament or the State Legislature.
- These reports are then examined by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the Committee on Public Undertakings (COPU) of Parliament or the Legislature.
- The PAC scrutinises the irregularities and audit objections pointed out in the reports and makes recommendations for corrective action.
- This process reinforces the principle of legislative control over public finances, ensuring executive accountability.

Landmark Contributions of the CAG

- The CAG has played a central role in exposing several major financial irregularities, including the 2G Spectrum allocation case, the Coal Block allocation scam, and irregularities in infrastructure contracts and welfare schemes.
- These reports have significantly influenced public policy debates and judicial scrutiny, reinforcing the credibility of the office.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following ratios was highlighted in the CAG report as rising to 22.96% in 2022-23, signaling higher state debt relative to economic output?
 - (a) Debt-to-GSDP
 - (b) Fiscal prudence
 - (c) Tax revenue
 - (d) Gross transfers
2. Which of the following best defines states' public debt, as described in the CAG report?
 - (a) State revenue and Union loans
 - (b) Central grants and Union loans
 - (c) Capital outlays and Union loans
 - (d) Market borrowings and Union loans
3. Which of the following best defines GSDP, as described in the CAG report?
 - (a) Value of goods and services produced within a state
 - (b) Value of goods and services produced within a country
 - (c) Value of goods and services produced within a continent
 - (d) Value of goods and services produced within the world
4. Which of the following indicates the number of states whose public debt crossed the threshold of 30% of GSDP, according to the CAG's decadal analysis?
 - (a) Four states
 - (b) Seven states
 - (c) Eight states
 - (d) Ten states
5. Which of the following describes the group of six states that maintained a debt-to-GSDP ratio in 2022-23?
 - (a) Below 20%
 - (b) Around 22%
 - (c) Near 28%
 - (d) Above 32%
6. Which of the following states recorded the highest debt-to-GSDP ratio in 2022-23, with 40.35%, as noted in the CAG report?
 - (a) Odisha
 - (b) Gujarat
 - (c) Nagaland
 - (d) Punjab
7. Which of the following principles is described in the CAG report as requiring debt to fund only capital expenditure and not day-to-day spending?
 - (a) Golden rule
 - (b) Fiscal code
 - (c) Budget law
 - (d) Debt norm
8. Which of the following states, despite keeping comparatively restrained borrowings, recorded liabilities of about 27% of GSDP, according to the CAG report?
 - (a) Assam
 - (b) Kerala
 - (c) Goa
 - (d) Haryana
9. Which of the following groups of states saw increases from low bases, with liabilities spanning around 40-60% of GSDP, indicating high leverage relative to state size?
 - (a) Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Kerala
 - (b) Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland
 - (c) Odisha, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Karnataka
 - (d) Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, and Jharkhand
10. Which of the following indicates the maximum age up to which the CAG can hold office, as provided under the CAG (Duties, Powers and Conditions of Service) Act, 1971?
 - (a) Sixty-two
 - (b) Sixty-three
 - (c) Sixty-four
 - (d) Sixty-five
11. Which of the following is entrusted to Parliament under Article 149, empowering it to legislate and define the scope of the CAG?
 - (a) CAG's service and leave
 - (b) CAG's funds and accounts
 - (c) CAG's duties and powers
 - (d) CAG's pay and pension
12. Which of the following Articles of the Constitution provides that the CAG's certification of net proceeds of taxes and duties shall be final?
 - (a) Article 270
 - (b) Article 271
 - (c) Article 273
 - (d) Article 279
13. Which of the following committees works with the CAG by reviewing audit reports, questioning departments, and ensuring that corrective measures are adopted?
 - (a) Rules Committee
 - (b) Petitions Committee
 - (c) Privileges Committee
 - (d) Public Accounts Committee
14. Which of the following best represents the number of principal audit reports submitted by the CAG, namely on Appropriation Accounts, Finance Accounts, and Public Undertakings?
 - (a) Three principal
 - (b) Seven principal
 - (c) Eight principal
 - (d) Nine principal
15. In which of the following countries does the office combine the roles of Comptroller and Auditor General, exercise ex ante control over public money, and include

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

the office-holder as a member of the House of Commons?

(a) Canada

(b) Australia

(c) Britain

(d) Ireland

SOLUTIONS

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

18

LADAKH'S PROTEST FOR SIXTH SCHEDULE STATUS

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

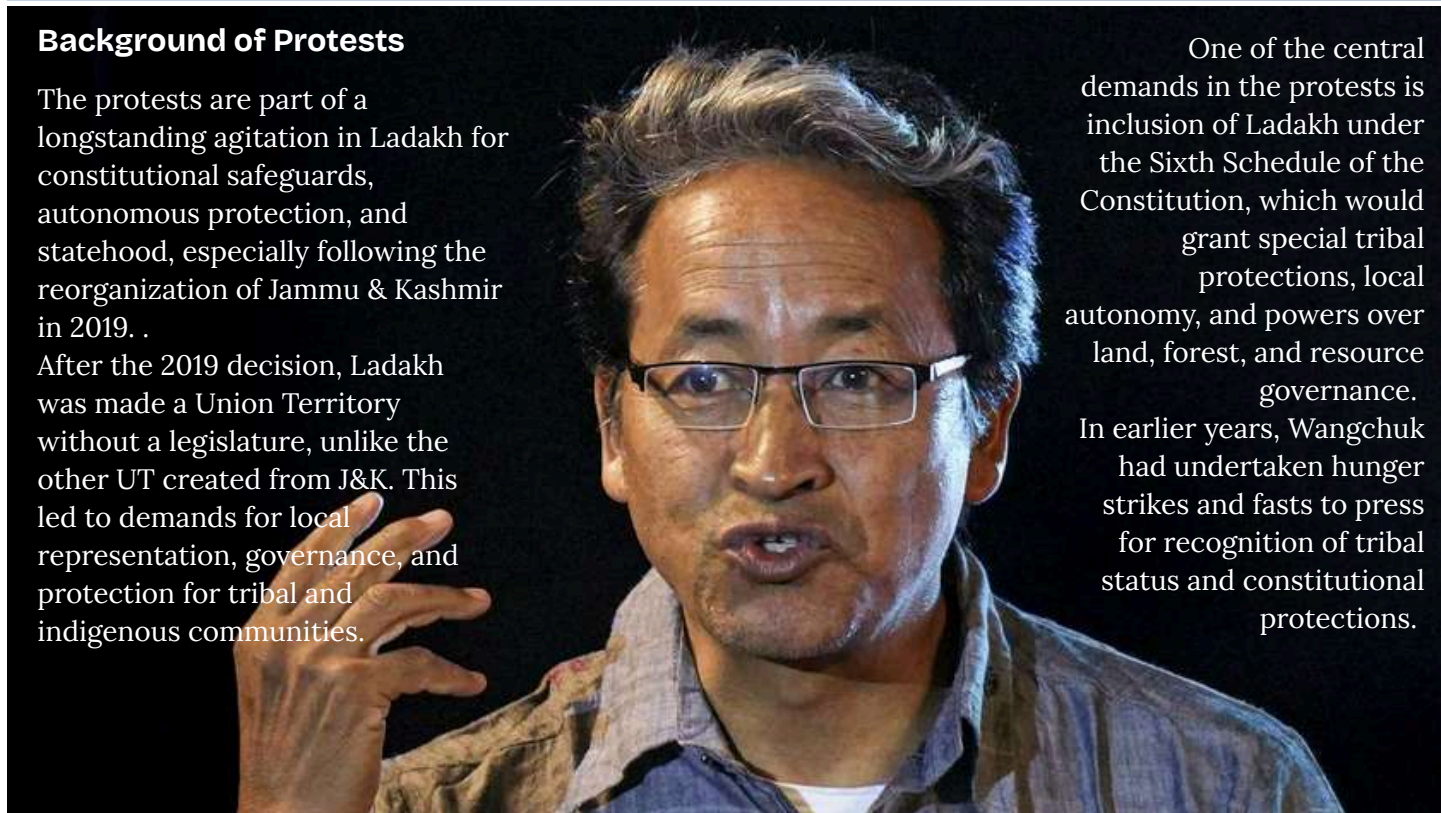
- On 26 September 2025, authorities arrested prominent Ladakhi activist Sonam Wangchuk in the aftermath of violent protests in Leh that resulted in four deaths.
- The protests had escalated after Wangchuk ended a 14-day hunger strike, and demonstrators clashed with security forces, torching buildings and vehicles.
- In response, the administration invoked the National Security Act (NSA) to detain him, while suspending mobile internet services in Leh and canceling his NGO's license, accusing him of provocative speech and incitement.

Background of Protests

The protests are part of a longstanding agitation in Ladakh for constitutional safeguards, autonomous protection, and statehood, especially following the reorganization of Jammu & Kashmir in 2019.

After the 2019 decision, Ladakh was made a Union Territory without a legislature, unlike the other UT created from J&K. This led to demands for local representation, governance, and protection for tribal and indigenous communities.

One of the central demands in the protests is inclusion of Ladakh under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, which would grant special tribal protections, local autonomy, and powers over land, forest, and resource governance. In earlier years, Wangchuk had undertaken hunger strikes and fasts to press for recognition of tribal status and constitutional protections.



Arrest of Soman Wangchuk

- Sonam Wangchuk was detained under the National Security Act, a preventive detention law that allows detention without formal charges for up to one year in certain circumstances.
- The official justification cited “provocative statements”, alleged incitement to violence, and purported links to anti-national conspiracy—claims which Wangchuk denies.
- After his arrest, the administration also revoked the FCRA license of his NGO (SECMOL / HIAL) and suspended digital and civic freedoms like internet services in Leh.
- Wangchuk was transported about 1,600 km to Jodhpur Central Jail in Rajasthan. His family and legal team have claimed that grounds of detention were not disclosed, and basic rights (access to lawyer, communication) were restricted.

National Security Act, 1980

- The National Security Act (NSA) is a preventive detention law enacted by the Parliament of India in 1980. It empowers the Central and State Governments to detain individuals to prevent them from acting in any manner prejudicial to national security, public order, or the maintenance of essential supplies and services.
- The law allows detention without trial for a specified period, making it one of India's most stringent security legislations.
- It is considered a legacy of colonial-era preventive detention laws, justified by the government as a tool for ensuring internal security but often criticized for human rights violations.



Historical Background



- Preventive detention provisions in India date back to the British colonial period, especially under the Defence of India Act (1915) and the Bengal Regulation III of 1818, which allowed detention without trial.
 - After Independence, Article 22 of the Constitution of India recognized preventive detention as an exception to the fundamental right to personal liberty (Article 21).
 - The first preventive detention law after independence was the Preventive Detention Act, 1950, enacted by the Nehru government.
- When this Act expired in 1969, the government relied on other temporary laws until enacting the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA), 1971, during the Indira Gandhi era.
 - Following widespread misuse of MISA during the Emergency (1975–77), it was repealed in 1978. However, a new version—the National Security Act (NSA)—was introduced in 1980, again under Indira Gandhi's government, to continue preventive detention powers in a “regulated” form.

Period of Detention

- A person can be detained for up to 12 months under the NSA. However, an initial detention order can be made for up to 3 months, after which it must be reviewed by an Advisory Board.
- The Advisory Board, consisting of three judges of a High Court, decides whether there is sufficient cause for continued detention. Based on the Board's opinion, the government may extend the detention period up to a maximum of 12 months. In special cases, the government can revoke or modify the detention order at any time.
- The detainee must be informed of the reasons for detention within five days of being detained (or within ten days, if there are exceptional circumstances). However, the government is not obliged to disclose facts that it considers against public interest to reveal.

Sixth Schedule of the Constitution

- The Sixth Schedule is embedded in **Article 244(2) of the Indian Constitution and is complemented by Article 275(1)**. It is designed to provide special administrative and governance arrangements for tribal areas in certain northeastern states—specifically Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.
- The Sixth Schedule establishes **Autonomous District Councils (ADCs)** and, where needed, Regional Councils, which have legislative, administrative, judicial, and financial powers over certain specified areas.
- These councils operate in “**autonomous districts**” and “**autonomous regions**” within the states. The Governor of the State has powers to reorganise or redefine the boundaries of autonomous districts/regions based on tribal composition and with commission reports.



Historical Background

Powers and Functions of ADCs / Regional Councils

- The district councils can make laws (ordinarily called “Acts” or “Regulations”) on specified subjects, such as:
 - Land management (except reserved forests), forest management, water resources, agriculture, village administration, inheritance, marriage, social customs, money lending and trading, transport, public health, and sanitation.
- **They also have judicial powers:** they may establish courts for cases in which both parties are from Scheduled Tribes, and where the maximum penalty does not exceed **5 years imprisonment** (or such lower limit as the council prescribes).
- On the executive side, the councils administer and oversee local functions within their jurisdiction, such as sanitation, roads, markets, water, etc. In terms of finance, councils may collect taxes, duties, tolls, fees, and rents for infrastructure, animal husbandry, vehicles, trade, markets, etc.
- The laws enacted by district/region councils must be approved by the Governor before they can take effect, and the State Legislature retains overriding power under certain conditions.

Safeguards and Limitations: The Sixth Schedule includes checks: the Governor can suspend a council, order an inquiry, or dissolve it subject to commission reports. The schedule ensures that these autonomous regions remain within the executive authority of the State, i.e., state laws and executive orders apply unless excluded. The Sixth Schedule is distinct from the Fifth Schedule, which applies to tribal areas in other states but offers less autonomy.

Why Ladakh Is Argued to Be Eligible for Sixth Schedule?

- **Tribal and Indigenous Communities:** Portions of Ladakh have tribal or indigenous populations whose culture, land, and traditional practices require constitutional safeguards. Protesters argue that Sixth Schedule status would help preserve these communities.
- **Loss of Autonomy Post 2019:** After the revocation of Article 370 in 2019, Ladakh became a Union Territory without legislature, and the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDC Leh and Kargil) lost substantial legislative authority. The demand for Sixth Schedule is partly to restore meaningful autonomy in governance. In 2019, the **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) formally recommended that Ladakh be included under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.** The NCST pointed out in its recommendation that the Scheduled Tribe population in several parts of Ladakh is extremely high.
- **Geographic, Cultural, Ecological Sensitivity:** Ladakh is ecologically fragile and remote; local administration under Sixth Schedule would better address environment preservation, resource rights, and sustainable development, with local communities having a say.
- **Fear of Exploitation:** People in Ladakh fear that central administration may allow external interests to exploit land and mineral resources without proper local consent—Sixth Schedule status could provide legal protection over land and resource rights.
- **Political Representation & Local Governance:** Inclusion under Sixth Schedule would institutionalize local councils with legislative, financial, and administrative powers in Ladakh, giving residents real decision-making power instead of being directly administered from Delhi.
- **Symmetry with Constitutional Safeguards Elsewhere:** Protesters often compare Ladakh's situation with tribal areas in the Northeast, arguing that if those regions can have Sixth Schedule protections, so should Ladakh, given its unique tribal, geographic, and historical context.

Reorganisation of Jammu & Kashmir (2019)

- On 5 August 2019, the Government of India revoked Article 370, ending Jammu & Kashmir's special status under the Constitution.
- The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 was passed by Parliament on 6 August 2019 and came into effect on 31 October 2019.
- The Act bifurcated the erstwhile State into two Union Territories — Jammu & Kashmir (with a Legislative Assembly) and Ladakh (without a legislature).
- The Legislative Council of J&K was abolished, and the new Assembly was reconstituted with 114 seats, including 24 reserved for Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.
- All Central laws became applicable to the two new Union Territories, replacing more than 100 State-specific laws that existed under Article 370.
- The President's Constitutional Order (C.O. 272) applied the entire Indian Constitution to J&K, superseding the earlier 1954 order.
- Both Union Territories are governed by Lieutenant Governors, and they share a common High Court — the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir.
- A Delimitation Commission (2020–2022) redrew assembly constituencies, increasing the number of elected seats in the J&K UT from 83 to 90, with seats reserved for Scheduled Tribes.
- The move aimed to promote development, integration, and better governance, but led to political detentions, communication blackouts, and ongoing Supreme Court challenges on its constitutionality.
- As of 2025, Jammu & Kashmir remains a UT awaiting fresh elections, while Ladakh continues under direct central rule, with growing demands for statehood and inclusion under the Sixth Schedule.

COMPARING 5TH AND 6TH SCHEDULE

BASIS	5 th Schedule	6 th Schedule
Applicability	Andhra, Telangana, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Odisha, HP, MH, MP, GJ, RJ. Note: Any States except Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram.	Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram.
Declaration	By President- can decrease, increase, alter its boundary lines, in consultation with the Governor.	By Governor- empowered to organize, reorganize autonomous districts.
Executive Power	- States executive power extends to those areas. - Centre extends to giving directions to the States.	- The tribal areas in the four states have been constituted as autonomous districts. - But they do not fall outside the executive authority of the State concerned.
Applicability of Law	Governor is empowered to direct that any particular act of Parliament or the State Legislature does not apply to a scheduled area or apply with specified modifications and exceptions.	Acts of Parliament or the State Legislature do not apply to autonomous districts and autonomous regions or apply with specific modifications and exceptions.
Autonomy	Panchayats (Extension to Schedule Areas) act 1996. - Self- governance through Gram Sabha for people living in 5th Schedule Areas.	- Greater autonomy compared to 5th Schedule. - Autonomous District Councils (ADC) have much wider powers vis-à-vis Tribes Advisory Councils.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following constitutional provisions was highlighted in the Leh protests of September 2025, where demonstrators sought both statehood and its inclusion?

- (a) Fourth Schedule (b) Sixth Schedule
(c) Eighth Schedule (d) Tenth Schedule

2. Which of the following individuals was named by the Union Home Ministry as responsible for instigating violence during Ladakh protests led by local groups like the Leh Apex Body?

- (a) Sonam Wangchuk (b) Aruna Roy
(c) Kailash Satyarthi (d) P. Sainath

3. Which of the following bodies recommended, that the Union Territory of Ladakh be included under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution after taking suo motu cognisance of local demands?

- (a) National Commission for Scheduled Castes
(b) National Commission for Scheduled Tribes
(c) National Commission for Minorities
(d) National Human Rights Commission

4. Which of the following legislations was cited by the Home Ministry in December 2019 as already providing autonomous hill development councils in Ladakh with powers “more or less in line” with the Sixth Schedule?

- (a) Panchayati Raj Act 1992
(b) Municipalities Act 1992
(c) LAHDC Act 1997
(d) Forest Rights Act 2006

5. Which of the following committees’ recommendations guided the framing of the Sixth Schedule, linked to Articles 244(2) and 275(1) for tribal self-rule?

- (a) Hunter Committee’s (b) Mandal Committee’s
(c) Shah Commission’s (d) Bardoloi Committee’s

6. Which of the following institutions are created under the Sixth Schedule for tribal self-rule, generally having 30 members and powers over subjects delegated by the Constitution?

- (a) Autonomous District Councils
(b) State Finance Commissions
(c) Inter-State Water Councils

(d) Village Panchayat Councils

7. Which of the following correctly identifies the region where the Sixth Schedule is currently operational, covering ADCs?

- (a) Northern India
(b) Eastern India
(c) Western India
(d) Northeast

8. Which of the following Acts provides the legal basis for hill councils in Leh and Kargil that function outside the Sixth Schedule framework, with restricted powers on taxation and land use?

- (a) Representation Development Council Act 1950
(b) Delimitation Development Council Act 2002
(c) Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council Act 1997
(d) Information Rights Development Council Act 2005

9. Which of the following constitutional amendments is referenced in connection with the reservation of one-third seats for women in LAHDC bodies, aligning them with panchayat benchmarks?

- (a) 71st Amendment’s
(b) 73rd Amendment’s
(c) 74th Amendment’s
(d) 75th Amendment’s

10. Which of the following initiatives was highlighted in 2025 as part of Ladakh’s development, with its first phase launched to promote sports and tourism in the region?

- (a) Khelo India Winter Games
(b) Women Entrepreneurship Mission
(c) Renewable Energy Expansion
(d) Infrastructure Connectivity Projects

11. Which of the following rivers sustain agriculture and local ecosystems in Ladakh, alongside the region’s potential for solar and wind energy development?

- (a) Ganga, Yamuna, Sutlej, and Beas
(b) Chenab, Ravi, Teesta, and Jhelum
(c) Indus, Zaskar, Shyok, and Suru
(d) Narmada, Tapi, Godavari, and Krishna

SOLUTIONS

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

19

26 NEW BIOSPHERE RESERVES:
UNESCO

ENVIRONMENT

IN FOCUS

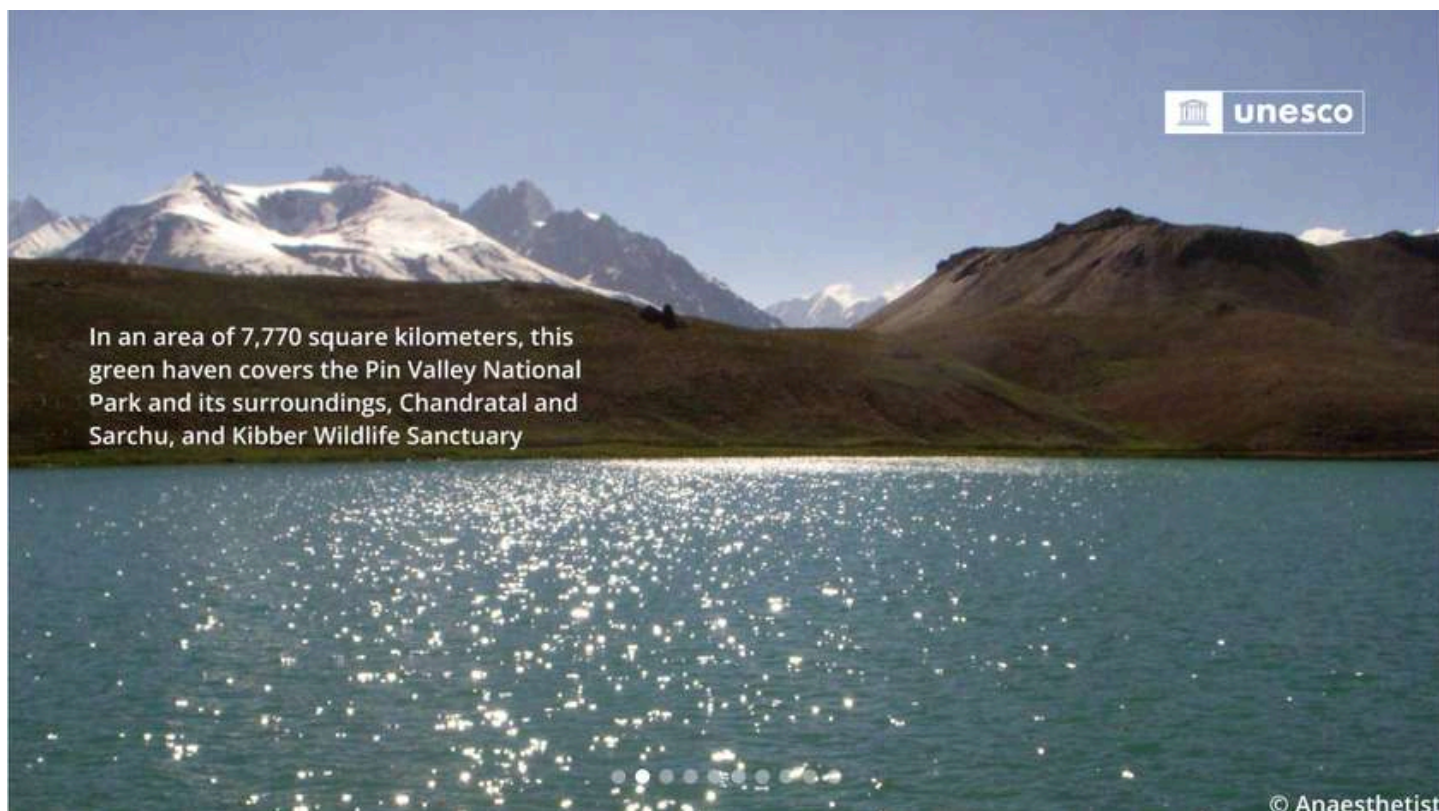
- During the **37th session** of UNESCO's International Coordinating Council of the **MAB Programme** in Hangzhou, China in late September 2025, the **Cold Desert** Biosphere Reserve in **Lahaul-Spiti** district of Himachal Pradesh was admitted to the **WNBR**, raising India's UNESCO-listed biosphere reserves to thirteen.
- The designation covers approximately 7,770 square kilometres in the Trans-Himalayan landscape and follows India's national recognition of the site as a biosphere reserve in 2009, making it the country's first high-altitude cold-desert biosphere reserve.
- UNESCO announced the inscription alongside twenty-five other sites, marking the largest annual intake in two decades and placing the Cold Desert's extreme cryo-arid ecosystem on the international conservation map.

UNESCO's 2025 Decision: Scale, Coverage, and Milestones

- UNESCO added twenty-six new biosphere reserves across twenty-one countries in 2025, taking the global network to seven hundred eighty-five sites distributed across one hundred forty-two countries and adding roughly one million square kilometres of protected natural areas since 2018.
- São Tomé and Príncipe became the first state whose entire territory is designated as a biosphere reserve, while six countries—Angola, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Iceland, Oman, and Tajikistan—received their first biosphere reserve designations this year.
- UNESCO emphasised that within biosphere reserves, countries are developing models that balance nature conservation with sustainable livelihoods, and it invited all member states to establish at least one biosphere reserve by 2035.
- The recognition of India's Cold Desert followed deliberations during the 5th World Congress of



Biosphere Reserves convened by UNESCO, which reviewed programme achievements and charted priorities for the next decade.



Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve (Himachal Pradesh): Location, Extent, and Connected Landscapes

- The reserve spans about 7,770 square kilometres across the Trans-Himalayan **Lahaul-Spiti** district, with altitudinal gradients ranging from approximately 3,300 metres to 6,600 metres that produce one of the coldest and driest ecosystems represented in the **World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR)**.
- The site encompasses the entire Spiti Wildlife Division and adjoining tracts of the Lahaul Forest Division, including Baralacha Pass, Bharatpur, and Sarchu, thereby linking high-elevation passes, glacial valleys, and alpine basins.
- The protected-area complex integrates Pin Valley National Park, Kibber Wildlife Sanctuary, the Chandratat wetland complex, and the Sarchu plains, creating a contiguous mosaic that supports ecological connectivity for wide-ranging fauna.

Zonation, Governance, and Management Architecture

- The Cold Desert is organised into three zones that together reconcile strict conservation with sustainable human use and scientific activity in keeping with the **MAB Programme** framework.
- The core zone extends to about 2,665 square kilometres and is maintained for strict protection of ecosystems, species, and genetic resources with minimal disturbance.
- The buffer zone covers about 3,977 square kilometres and is designated for compatible activities including research, ecological monitoring, conservation management, training, and environmental education.
- The transition zone spans roughly 1,128 square kilometres and is planned for community-centred sustainable livelihoods, facilitating low-impact economic activities aligned with conservation objectives.

Biodiversity Profile: Flora, Fauna, and Endemism

- Floristic assessments report approximately 732 vascular plant species within the reserve, including about thirty endemics and one hundred fifty-seven near-endemics of the Indian Himalayas that reflect adaptation to severe cryo-arid conditions.
- The vegetation assemblage includes hardy alpine grasses and medicinal taxa alongside rare stands of willow-leaved sea-buckthorn, **Himalayan birch**, and Persian juniper that occupy sheltered riverine and high-valley niches.
- The fauna includes apex and keystone species such as the **Snow leopard**, with associated prey like Himalayan ibex and blue sheep, and carnivores including Himalayan wolf; high-altitude raptors such as Himalayan snowcock and golden eagle contribute to a complete cold-desert trophic web.

People and Traditional Livelihoods

- Approximately twelve thousand residents live in dispersed villages within the reserve's broader landscape, practising yak and goat pastoralism, barley and pea cultivation, and traditional Tibetan herbal medicine as components of high-altitude subsistence economies.
- Community councils and Buddhist monastic institutions regulate seasonal grazing, water allocation, and the use of fragile alpine resources, thereby embedding customary governance within the biosphere-reserve management approach.

UNESCO-Recognised Biosphere Reserves in India (as of 2025)

- **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka)** – It was the first Indian biosphere reserve to be included in UNESCO's MAB network in 2000, known for its rich Western Ghats biodiversity and shola-grassland ecosystem.
- **Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve (Tamil Nadu)** – Added in 2001, it covers the chain of 21 islands between India and Sri Lanka, famous for its coral reefs, seagrass beds, and marine biodiversity.
- **Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve (West Bengal)** – Recognised in 2001, it includes the world's largest mangrove forest and is home to the Royal Bengal Tiger.
- **Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve (Uttarakhand)** – Added to the MAB list in 2004, it includes the Valley of Flowers and Nanda Devi National Park, both World Heritage Sites.

- **Nokrek Biosphere Reserve (Meghalaya)** – Designated in 2009, it lies in the Garo Hills and is renowned for its tropical semi-evergreen forests and as the gene sanctuary of *Citrus indica*, a wild ancestor of cultivated oranges.
- **Pachmarhi Biosphere Reserve (Madhya Pradesh)** – Recognised by UNESCO in 2009, it represents the Satpura hill ecosystem, famous for sal and teak forests, rock shelters, and the presence of tribal communities like the Gond and Korku.
- **Similipal Biosphere Reserve (Odisha)** – Included in 2009, it contains tropical moist deciduous forests and supports populations of tigers, elephants, and gaurs. It also features scenic waterfalls and a dense sal forest landscape.
- **Achanakmar–Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve (Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh)** – Recognised in 2012, it is an important watershed area where the Narmada, Son, and Johilla rivers originate, and is rich in mixed deciduous forests and tribal biodiversity.
- **Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve (Andaman & Nicobar Islands)** – Added to the MAB list in 2013, it preserves tropical evergreen rainforests, coral reefs, and the habitats of indigenous tribes like the Shompens and Nicobarese, along with rare marine species.
- **Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve (Kerala and Tamil Nadu)** – Included in 2016, it forms part of the southern Western Ghats, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, known for its medicinal plant diversity, evergreen forests, and tribal communities like the Kanikaran.
- **Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve (Sikkim)** – Recognised in 2018, it surrounds Mount Khangchendzonga, the world's third-highest peak, integrating sacred landscapes with glaciers, alpine meadows, and rich Himalayan biodiversity.
- **Panna Biosphere Reserve (Madhya Pradesh)** – Added in 2020, it is known for its Ken River ecosystem, tiger reintroduction success, and dry deciduous forests supporting leopards, vultures, and gharials.
- **Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve (Himachal Pradesh)** – Declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2025, it represents the high-altitude cold desert ecosystem of Lahaul and Spiti, characterized by sparse vegetation, snow leopards, Himalayan ibex, and unique Buddhist cultural heritage.

Did you Know?

India has 18 designated biosphere reserves, out of which 13 have been included in UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) under the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme as of 2025.



- A **Biosphere Reserve** is a UNESCO designation for extensive terrestrial, coastal, or marine ecosystems managed to demonstrate the integration of biodiversity conservation with sustainable development and logistic support.
- Biosphere reserves serve three functions that operate concurrently: conservation of biological and cultural diversity, socio-economically and environmentally sustainable development, and logistic support through research, monitoring, education, and training.
- The zonation model comprises core areas under strict protection, surrounding buffer zones dedicated to research and conservation-compatible uses, and transition areas where sustainable economic activities are promoted in harmony with ecological goals.

India's Biosphere Reserve Programme: Institutions, Funding, and Nomination Pathway

- India initiated its national biosphere-reserve programme in 1986 following the launch of UNESCO's **MAB Programme** and constituted the Indian MAB Committee to identify candidate sites and oversee programme implementation.
- Nationally, there are eighteen government-recognised biosphere reserves, of which thirteen are now part of the WNBR following the 2025 inscription of the Cold Desert site.
- Under the Centrally Sponsored Biosphere Reserve Scheme, financial assistance is provided in a 90:10 ratio to North Eastern Region states and the three Himalayan states, and in a 60:40 ratio to other states to support maintenance, improvement, and development of reserve management.
- State Governments prepare Management Action Plans for each reserve that are subject to approval and monitoring by the Central MAB Committee, ensuring alignment with UNESCO guidelines while retaining national sovereignty over site governance.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. During which of the following sessions of UNESCO's International Coordinating Council of the MAB Programme was the meeting in late September 2025?
 - (a) 34th session
 - (b) 35th session
 - (c) 36th session
 - (d) 37th session
2. Which of the following districts is home to the Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve of Himachal Pradesh, recently recognized under UNESCO's WNNR in 2025?
 - (a) Lahaul-Spiti
 - (b) Mandi-Kullu
 - (c) Solan-Sirmaur
 - (d) Una-Hamirpur
3. How many UNESCO-listed biosphere reserves does India have after the Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve in Lahaul-Spiti was admitted to the WNNR in 2025?
 - (a) Eleven
 - (b) Twelve
 - (c) Thirteen
 - (d) Fourteen
4. How many countries were covered when UNESCO added twenty-six new biosphere reserves to the World Network in 2025?
 - (a) Nineteen countries
 - (b) Twenty-one countries
 - (c) Twenty-three countries
 - (d) Twenty-five countries
5. Which of the following countries became the first state in the world whose entire territory was designated as a biosphere reserve by UNESCO?
 - (a) Costa Rica
 - (b) Maldives
 - (c) São Tomé and Príncipe
 - (d) Seychelles
6. Which of the following events convened by UNESCO reviewed programme achievements and future priorities, leading to the recognition of India's Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve?
 - (a) 5th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves
 - (b) 4th International Forum on Biodiversity
 - (c) 6th Global Summit on Protected Areas
 - (d) 3rd World Conference on Natural Heritage
7. Which of the following international frameworks includes the Cold Desert Reserve of Lahaul-Spiti, recognized for its cold and dry ecosystem with altitudinal gradients of 3,300 to 6,600 metres?
 - (a) World Network of Biosphere Reserves
 - (b) Global Convention on Protected Habitats
 - (c) International Programme on Eco-Regions
 - (d) United Nations Biodiversity Conservation Plan
8. Which of the following groups of places mark the coverage of the Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve across the Lahaul-Spiti landscape?
 - (a) Gangotri, Yamunotri, and Kedarnath
 - (b) Leh, Pangong Tso, and Kargil
 - (c) Baralacha Pass, Bharatpur, and Sarchu
 - (d) Chamba, Dalhousie, and Dharamshala
9. How many zones is the Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve divided into under the MAB Programme framework to reconcile conservation with sustainable human use and scientific research?
 - (a) Two zones
 - (b) Three zones
 - (c) Four zones
 - (d) Five zones
10. Which of the following apex and keystone species is highlighted as part of the fauna of the Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve?
 - (a) Himalayan snowcock
 - (b) Golden eagle
 - (c) Himalayan wolf
 - (d) Snow leopard
11. Which of the following best explains the role of Biosphere Reserves under the UNESCO framework?
 - (a) They act only as tourist attractions without conservation goals
 - (b) They are meant exclusively for protecting cultural monuments
 - (c) They integrate biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, and research-based support
 - (d) They function solely as industrial resource zones for local communities
12. Which of the following was established as India's first biosphere reserve in 1986 and later became the country's first UNESCO-listed site under the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNNR) in 2000?
 - (a) Nanda Devi
 - (b) Sundarbans
 - (c) Gulf of Mannar
 - (d) Nilgiri
13. How many of India's eighteen nationally recognised biosphere reserves are presently included in UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNNR)?

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- (a) Ten
- (b) Eleven
- (c) Twelve
- (d) Thirteen

14. How many Ramsar sites does India currently have after the inclusion of two additional wetlands in the Ramsar List?

- (a) Ninety-three
- (b) Eighty-nine
- (c) Ninety
- (d) Ninety-one

SOLUTIONS

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

20

UK-FRANCE AMONG OTHER
COUNTRIES RECOGNISE PALESTINE

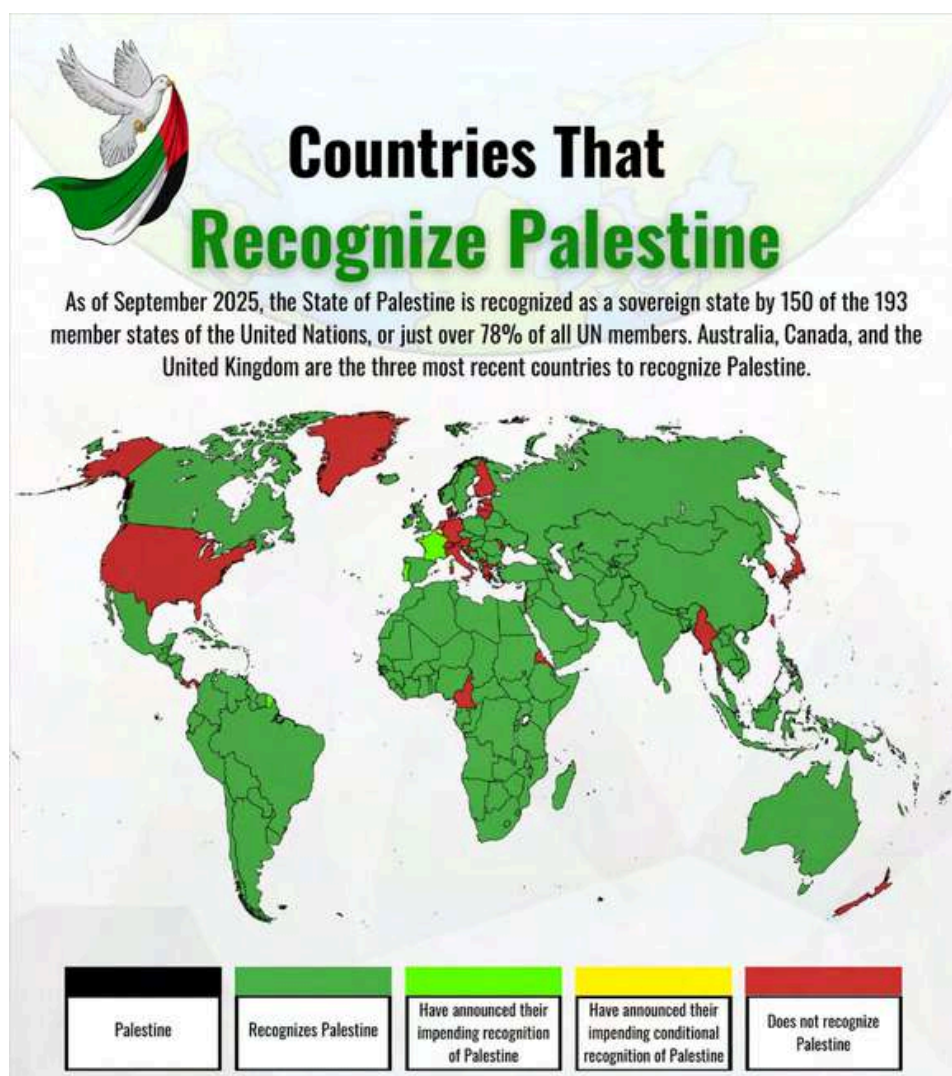
INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

- During the high-level segment of the **UN General Assembly** in late September 2025, **France** announced formal **State recognition** of **Palestinian statehood**, one day after the **United Kingdom**, **Canada**, and **Australia** confirmed recognition, and alongside **Portugal**, **Andorra**, **Belgium**, **Luxembourg**, **Malta**, and **Monaco**, which publicly aligned with the decision during the same UN week.
- Israel criticised these recognitions as a “reward for terrorism,” while governments granting recognition described the step as necessary to preserve a viable **Two-state solution** amid an ongoing **Gaza war** marked by mass civilian harm and deepening humanitarian distress.

Scope of the 2025 Recognition Wave

- France declared recognition at a UN gathering co-convened with Saudi Arabia that focused on reviving negotiations, and leaders from Australia, Canada, Portugal, and the UK addressed the meeting to frame recognition as a contribution to renewed diplomacy rather than an end-state settlement.
- With recognitions by the UK and France, Palestine now enjoys recognition from four of the five permanent members of the **Security Council**—**China**, **Russia**, **France**, and the **United Kingdom**—leaving the **United States** opposed to recognition while remaining Israel’s principal security partner.
- Multiple European governments paired recognition with signals of tighter scrutiny on export licences and components linked to Israel’s military supply chain, but they did not announce comprehensive arms embargoes, and they acknowledged that recognition alone would not halt the fighting in Gaza.



Legal Test of Statehood Under Montevideo Convention

- The 1933 **Montevideo Convention** identifies four attributes of statehood: a defined territory, a permanent population, a government, and the **capacity for inter-state relations**, and the present recognitions principally strengthen the fourth attribute by widening Palestine's diplomatic access and treaty-making avenues.
- **Territory:** Israel exercises practical control over the **West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip**, while settlement expansion and the Knesset's July vote supporting "annexation" of the West Bank further erode prospects for Palestinian territorial sovereignty; senior Israeli officials have publicly characterised Gaza as a prospective "real estate bonanza."
- **Permanent population:** Reporting cited by international inquiries describes mass casualty levels in Gaza and acute food insecurity, with cumulative deaths estimated beyond sixty-five thousand and large segments of the population facing famine-level deprivation during intensified operations
- **Government:** The **Palestinian Authority** functions as the de jure authority in limited West Bank enclaves under Israeli occupation, while **Hamas** has exercised de facto authority in Gaza since 2007 under blockade; recognition announcements were accompanied by calls for PA reform and for Hamas to disarm, which Hamas has rejected.
- **International capacity:** Growing recognition expands Palestine's diplomatic missions and participation rights and improves access to multilateral initiatives, while borders, security arrangements, and capital status remain unresolved matters requiring Israeli assent and negotiated modalities.

India's Stand and Record of Engagement

- Following independence, India consistently supported Palestinian self-determination and the Arab cause, rooted in its anti-colonial and non-alignment ideology. India **recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1974**, establishing ties before formal recognition of the Palestinian state.
- In **1988, India formally recognized the "State of Palestine"** shortly after the Palestinian declaration of independence, making it one of the early non-Arab countries to do so. Regarding Israel, **India recognised Israeli sovereignty in 1950, though full diplomatic relations were not established until 1992.**
- India officially supports the **"two-state solution"**, calling for a sovereign, independent, and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace with Israel within secure borders. India also endorses Palestine's membership in the UN, and regularly supports Palestinian causes in multilateral forums.
- Since formal ties began in 1992, India and Israel have built extensive cooperation in defence, intelligence, agriculture, technology, water, and trade sectors. Israel is among India's major defence and technology partners, supplying military systems, drones, surveillance technologies, and security solutions.
- India contributes to **UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees)**, supporting welfare and refugee assistance programs. India has increased its financial aid to Palestine, including a jump from USD 1.25 million to USD 5 million (yearly) toward UNRWA and other objectives. India has provided relief assistance to Palestine during crises and has engaged in development aid and capacity building for institutions in Palestinian territories.



The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has deep historical roots, with significant events shaping its trajectory over centuries. Below is a timeline highlighting key events:

1880s-1900: The roots of the conflict trace back to the rise of nationalist movements, including Zionism among Jews and Arab nationalism among Arabs living in the Ottoman Empire. Zionists sought to establish a national homeland for Jews in Palestine.

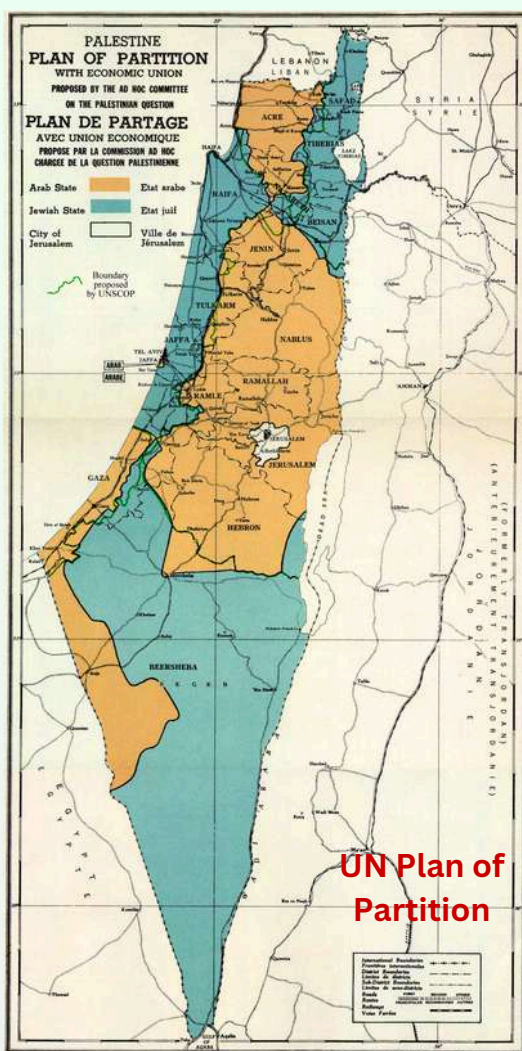
1917: Balfour Declaration

On November 2, 1917, **British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour** issued a statement expressing the British government's support for the establishment of a **"national home for the Jewish people"** in Palestine.

- This declaration was made in a letter to **Lord Rothschild**, a leader of the British Jewish community, and became a cornerstone for future Jewish immigration to the region.

1920: British Mandate for Palestine

Following World War I, the League of Nations granted Britain the mandate over Palestine, formalizing British administrative control and incorporating the Balfour Declaration's principles, thereby facilitating increased Jewish immigration.



1936-1939: Arab Revolt: In response to growing Jewish immigration and land purchases, Palestinian Arabs initiated a revolt against British rule and Jewish communities, seeking to end both and establish an independent Arab state.

1947: UN Partition Plan

The United Nations proposed **partitioning Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states**, with **Jerusalem under international administration**.

- Jewish leaders accepted the plan, while Arab leaders rejected it, leading to escalating tensions.

1948: Establishment of Israel and First Arab-Israeli War

On **May 14, 1948**, **Israel declared independence**. The following day, neighboring Arab countries invaded, resulting in a war that led to significant territorial changes and the displacement of approximately **700,000** Palestinians, an event Palestinians refer to as the **Nakba**, or **"catastrophe."**

1964: Palestine Liberation Organization

In **1964**, the **Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)** was established during the **first Arab League summit in Cairo**.

- Its founding charter called for the **destruction of the State of Israel** and the establishment of a **secular Palestinian State**.

1967: Six-Day War

In **June 1967**, Israel fought against Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in a conflict known as the Six-Day War.

- Israel captured the **West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights**, significantly altering the region's geopolitical landscape.

1987-1993: First Intifada

A Palestinian uprising, known as the **First Intifada**, erupted against Israeli occupation in the **West Bank and Gaza Strip**.

- It involved widespread protests, civil disobedience, and violence, leading to increased international attention on the Palestinian quest for statehood.

1993: Oslo Accords

- Israel and the **Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)** signed the **Oslo Accords**, aiming to establish a framework for future relations and the eventual creation of a Palestinian state.
- The agreement included mutual recognition and the establishment of the **Palestinian Authority for self-governance** in parts of the **West Bank and Gaza**.

2000-2005: Second Intifada

- The failure of peace talks and ongoing tensions led to the **Second Intifada**, a period of intensified **Israeli-Palestinian** violence, including

suicide bombings and military operations, resulting in significant casualties on both sides.

2005: Gaza Disengagement

- Israel unilaterally withdrew its settlers and military presence from the **Gaza Strip**, aiming to improve security and international standing.
- However, the move led to internal Palestinian power struggles and did not resolve broader conflicts.

2006: Hamas Electoral Victory

Hamas won the **Palestinian legislative elections**, leading to a **political rift with Fatah**. This division resulted in **Hamas taking control of Gaza**, while the **Palestinian Authority**, dominated by **Fatah**, maintained authority in the **West Bank**.

2008-2009: Gaza War (Operation Cast Lead)

Israel launched a **military operation in Gaza** in response to rocket fire, aiming to weaken Hamas.

- The conflict caused significant destruction and loss of life, drawing international concern over humanitarian conditions.

2014: Gaza War (Operation Protective Edge)

Another major conflict erupted between Israel and Hamas, leading to extensive casualties and infrastructure damage in Gaza. Ceasefires were brokered but failed to address underlying issues.

2023: Hamas Attack and Subsequent War

On **October 7, 2023**, **Hamas launched a large-scale offensive against Israel**, including rocket attacks and ground incursions, resulting in significant Israeli casualties and hostages.

- **Israel declared war** and conducted extensive military operations in Gaza, leading to a **high Palestinian death toll** and widespread displacement.

2025: Ceasefire Agreement

After **15 months of conflict**, **Israel and Hamas** agreed to a ceasefire involving the **exchange of Israeli hostages** for Palestinian prisoners.

- The truce allowed for the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza and was seen as a potential step toward ending hostilities, though challenges remained.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which nation formally recognised Palestinian statehood during the UN General Assembly high-level session in September 2025?
(a) Italy
(b) Spain
(c) France
(d) Australia
2. Which of the following humanitarian crises provided the immediate political and humanitarian context for several governments' decision to recognise Palestinian statehood as a step to preserve the Two-state solution?
(a) Gaza war
(b) Yemen conflict
(c) Afghanistan crisis
(d) Lebanon unrest
3. Which of the following countries co-convened the UN gathering with France, where France declared recognition of Palestinian statehood, focusing on reviving negotiations?
(a) Germany
(b) Egypt
(c) Saudi Arabia
(d) Turkey
4. How many of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council with recognitions by the UK and France, now recognise Palestine?
(a) Three
(b) Four
(c) Two
(d) Five
5. Which of the following conventions identifies the four attributes of statehood—defined territory, permanent population, government, and capacity for inter-state relations—strengthened by Palestine's recent recognitions?
(a) 1945 UN Charter
(b) 1919 Covenant of the League of Nations
(c) 1969 Vienna Convention
(d) 1933 Montevideo Convention
6. Which of the following territories are under Israel's practical control, with settlement expansion and annexation moves further undermining Palestinian claims to sovereignty?
(a) Sinai Peninsula, Golan Heights, and Negev Desert
(b) West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip
(c) Jordan Valley, Galilee, and Haifa District
(d) Rafah, Jericho, and Mount Carmel
7. Which of the following forms of authority is exercised by the Palestinian Authority in limited West Bank enclaves under Israeli occupation?
(a) Military authority
(b) De facto authority
(c) De jure authority
(d) Administrative authority
8. Which of the following groups has exercised de facto authority in Gaza since 2007 under blockade, while rejecting calls to disarm despite international recognition announcements urging reforms?
(a) Fatah
(b) Palestinian Authority
(c) Hezbollah
(d) Hamas
9. Which of the following countries is identified as the second-largest supplier of arms to Israel, after the United States, contributing to the supermajority of Israeli defence imports?
(a) France
(b) Germany
(c) United Kingdom
(d) Russia
10. Which of the following leaders declared, after the UK's recognition of Palestine, that a Palestinian state "will never be established" and that Israeli military operations in Gaza would continue regardless of hostage-release outcomes?
(a) Isaac Herzog
(b) Yair Lapid
(c) Benjamin Netanyahu
(d) Naftali Bennett
11. Which of the following UN bodies has granted Palestine "permanent observer state" status, showing broad support for its full membership despite repeated U.S. vetoes in the Security Council?
(a) UN General Assembly
(b) International Court of Justice
(c) UN Security Council
(d) UN Human Rights Council
12. Which of the following disputed territories is listed among the core issues—alongside borders, security, settlements, and refugees—that require detailed negotiations despite recognitions of Palestinian statehood?
(a) Golan Heights
(b) East Jerusalem
(c) Sinai Peninsula
(d) Jordan Valley



SOLUTIONS

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

NPLC's —————
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**University
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Surbhi Sachdeva

LNAT (2022 – 2023)



Kartikay Kataria

LNAT (2023 – 2024)



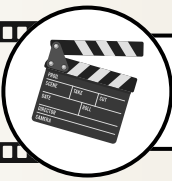
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MEDIA COVERAGE

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



India's Top Law Coach Speaks On Cracking Law Entrances



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

ANSH SINGHA • NEW DELHI

When your students bag five out of top 10 slots in elite law entrance test, it's a feat. But when you bag five out of top 10 slots in Legal Entrance Test or AILET, it's a feat. Nishant Prakash, the eminent corporate lawyer turned educator, will simply grin on being congratulated, showing the AILET results on Thursday.

Prakash Law Clusters and in just 10 years, he has established a reputation covered by law supremes nationwide, transforming the industry to become a leader in education reform. Further solidifying his role in education reform, he is part of a high-level National Education Policy 2020, in the state of Assam reflecting national education framework.

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Assam News

Renowned Educationist Nishant Prakash in Committee for Implementation of New Education Policy in Assam

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



the pioneer
NEW DELHI | SATURDAY | DECEMBER 10, 2022

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

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

Krishnakumar Rajasekhar
NEW DELHI

A petition challenging the correctness of the provisional answer key of the postgraduate Common Law Admission Test (CLAT) had on December 1 for admission to 24 national law universities has sparked a debate.

The Supreme Court on the petition on the ground of maintainability, orally remarked that litigation in exams tended to delay the results. A Bench headed by Justice of India Saroj Kumar Khanna gave the petitioners liberty to approach the jurisdictional High Court.

The petition, filed by Anam Khan and Ayush Agrawal, alleged that the provisional answer key released on December 2 contained significant errors, including incorrect answers to 12 questions.

Persons associated with the legal representation of Law Universities (LNU), said the final answer key was out by the time the case came up on December 9. The consortium denied the release of the final answer key and results to December 7 from December 10. "The provision

al answer key had mistakes which were not resolved even in the final answer key," Manish Khanna, advocate who appeared for the petitioners in the court, said. "There are pre-Court has promptly adjudicated and granted interim relief in petitions challenging the provisional answer key. In my opinion, it is better to stay from the apex all across India, seeking relief before High Court's terms of conflicting judgments only for the state's jurisdiction."

A corporate lawyer-turned CLAT mentor, Nishant Prakash, alleged that the CLAT (undergraduate) was also conducted in an equally unprofessional manner. "Four questions of the logical reasoning section were absolutely wrong which were later retracted by the consortium in the final answer key. There were answers in the provisional answer keys were changed later upon the students. I strongly believe that the consortium cannot be absolved just by saying that the majority of students had up wasting time trying these questions and could not complete the paper," he said.

S. Shanthakumar, Director of the Gujarat National Law University and vice-president, CNLU Governance, said "extreme care is always taken to avoid mistakes". "In law, the questions and the answer options in the paper are interpreted differently by different people," he said.



1

INDIA - EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION FTA NEGOTIATIONS

ECONOMY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

India and the **Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)** signed the **Terms of Reference** in Moscow on August 20, 2025 to launch **Free Trade Agreement** negotiations, with the ToR signed by India's Additional Secretary (Commerce) Ajay Bhadoo and EEC Deputy Director Mikhail Cherekaev. During the visit, Ajay Bhadoo met the EEC Minister in charge of Trade Andrey Slepnev, and both sides discussed the roadmap to formally commence negotiations, including organizational modalities and the constitution of negotiation groups. The India-EAEU economic relationship registered **India-EAEU trade of USD 69 billion** in 2024, marking a 7% increase over 2023, and both sides reaffirmed commitment to an early conclusion of the agreement to deepen the partnership. The EAEU comprises Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Federation, and the proposed FTA is expected to broaden market access for Indian exporters, support **MSMEs**, and strengthen resilience against external shocks.

Framework and Institutional Backdrop

- The EAEU is an international organization for regional economic integration with its legal personality derived from the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union, which entered into force in 2015.
- The Union's headquarters are located in Moscow, and its objectives include free movement of goods, services, capital and labor, coordinated economic policies, modernization of member economies, and enhanced competitiveness for stable development.
- The combined market size relevant to the prospective FTA is indicated at **USD 6.5 trillion** in GDP, providing significant scale for Indian trade and investment diversification.

Negotiation Timeline and Parallel Trade Tracks

- According to a statement from the Russian Embassy in India, the first negotiation round for the India-EAEU FTA is planned for early November in India to address core elements of the agreement, with intensive consultations to precede the meeting.
- The Government of India has not yet formally confirmed the specific dates for the first negotiation round, though engagement at ministerial and official levels has continued since the ToR signing.
- In parallel, India has scheduled the next India-EU FTA round for October 6-10, with interlocutors indicating that most issues are close to resolution and exploring an early-harvest arrangement subject to final political and technical closure.
- Additional trade engagements in the same window include the ASEAN FTA review meeting expected on October 6-7, India-Chile FTA talks slated for October 27-31, and India-Peru FTA talks planned for November 3-5.

Economic Rationale and Trade Patterns

- The 2024 two-way merchandise turnover between India and the EAEU reached **USD 69 billion**, reflecting momentum that the ToR seeks to institutionalize through tariff and non-tariff disciplines, rules of origin, and trade facilitation measures.
- The prospective agreement aims to expand India's market access in sectors such as textiles, pharmaceuticals, engineering goods and electronics by leveraging preferences across the EAEU customs space.
- Indian stakeholders expect the FTA architecture to bolster competitiveness vis-à-vis non-market economies through transparent disciplines and predictable market conditions across the EAEU.
- The ToR is designed to provide a negotiating framework that supports investment flows, addresses regulatory barriers, and promotes supply-chain integration aligned with India's export diversification strategy.

Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU):

- The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is an economic and political union established on 1 January 2015, aiming to promote regional economic integration among several post-Soviet states.
- The founding members of the EAEU are Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. Later, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan joined the bloc in 2015.
- The EAEU's headquarters are located in Moscow (Russia), while its Court is based in Minsk (Belarus) and its Economic Commission operates from Moscow.
- The Union was formed through the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union, signed in Astana, Kazakhstan, on 29 May 2014, which came into effect in 2015.
- The EAEU ensures the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labor among member states, similar in concept to the European Union's single market.
- It has established common policies in key sectors such as energy, industry, transport, and agriculture, and works toward creating a harmonized market and customs regulations.
- The Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) functions as the executive body of the EAEU, responsible for implementing treaties, monitoring trade policies, and coordinating economic integration.
- The EAEU collectively represents a market of over 180 million people and a combined GDP exceeding USD 2 trillion, making it a significant regional economic bloc in Eurasia.
- The Union maintains trade partnerships and free trade agreements with countries such as Vietnam, Iran, Serbia, and China, and is negotiating with India, Egypt, and Indonesia.
- The EAEU's strategic goal is to position itself as a bridge between Europe and Asia, enhancing connectivity through projects like Eurasian transport corridors and closer links with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

2

PROJECT 17A: INS HIMGIRI & INS
UDAYGIRI

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

- The Indian Navy commissioned **INS Udaygiri** and **INS Himgiri** at Visakhapatnam, marking the first simultaneous induction of two frontline frigates built at two different Indian shipyards under **Project 17A**. Both frigates are members of the **Nilgiri-class**, and the commissioning took place in the presence of the Raksha Mantri, who emphasised their role in safeguarding maritime interests across the full spectrum of naval missions.
- The event demonstrated concurrent production maturity at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), Mumbai, and Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, with INS Udaygiri delivered by MDL and INS Himgiri delivered by GRSE.

Programme Snapshot and Milestones

- Project 17A constitutes a seven-ship series of indigenous, multi-mission, stealth guided-missile frigates designed by the Indian Navy's **Warship Design Bureau** as a follow-on to the Shivalik (Project 17) class.
- The Cabinet approved the programme in 2015 with a four-ship build at MDL and a three-ship build at GRSE, and the shipyards adopted modular and integrated construction methods to compress build timelines.

Build List and Status (Project 17A)

- INS Nilgiri (F33), built by MDL, was commissioned on 15 January 2025 and is currently in active service.
- INS Udaygiri (F35), built by MDL, was commissioned on 26 August 2025 and entered active service on the same day.
- INS Himgiri (F34), built by GRSE, was commissioned on 26 August 2025 and is operationally in service.
- INS Taragiri (F41), built by MDL and launched on 11 September 2022, remains in trials and outfitting.
- INS Vindhyagiri (F42), built by GRSE and launched on 17 August 2023, is in the post-launch outfitting and trials phase.
- INS Dunagiri (F36), built by GRSE and launched on 15 July 2022, continues through trials and outfitting.
- INS Mahendragiri (F38), built by MDL and launched on 01 September 2023, is slated for delivery following trials.

INS Himgiri

- INS Himgiri is the second ship of the Project 17A (P-17A) class of stealth frigates, being built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) in Kolkata for the Indian Navy.
- It was launched on 14 December 2020 and is expected to be commissioned into service by 2026, featuring advanced stealth, automation, and modular construction technologies.
- The frigate is equipped with state-of-the-art radar, sonar, and weapon systems, including surface-to-air and surface-to-surface missiles, and advanced anti-submarine warfare capabilities.
- Project 17A ships, including INS Himgiri, are designed for multi-role operations, combining features of stealth, speed, and heavy firepower to enhance India's blue-water naval strength.

INS Udaygiri

- INS Udaygiri is the third stealth frigate under Project 17A, constructed by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) in Mumbai for the Indian Navy.
- It was launched on 17 May 2022 and is named after a mountain range in Andhra Pradesh, symbolizing strength and resilience.
- The ship incorporates enhanced stealth features, integrated platform management systems, and digitally networked combat systems to ensure superior situational awareness and operational readiness.
- INS Udaygiri represents a new generation of indigenously designed and built warships, aligning with India's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India) vision and the Navy's Make in India initiative.

3

NATIONAL DESIGNATED AUTHORITY
FOR CARBON MARKETS

ENVIRONMENT

IN FOCUS

The Environment Ministry notified the **National Designated Authority** to operationalise an **emissions trading** regime under **Article 6** of the **Paris Agreement**, thereby enabling India's participation in the UN-supervised carbon crediting mechanism established for internationally transferred mitigation outcomes. The Authority's notification follows the finalisation of Article 6 implementing rules at COP29 in Baku in November 2024, and it aligns market instruments with India's nationally determined contributions (**NDCs**) for 2030 across mitigation, transparency, and accounting pillars.

International Market Architecture Finalised at COP29

- Article 6 provides a structured framework for international cooperation through market and non-market approaches that allow host and buyer countries to generate, transfer, and use emission reductions subject to robust accounting and environmental integrity safeguards.
- Parties at COP29 (Baku, 2024) resolved outstanding design elements for the **A6.4 mechanism**, including governance, transparency requirements, credit unit issuance, host Party authorisations, and reporting procedures that collectively enable operational deployment.

India's 2030 NDC Benchmarks

- India has committed to reduce the emission intensity of its GDP by 45 percent by 2030 relative to 2005 levels, and this commitment frames domestic policies that decouple economic growth from greenhouse gas emissions.
- India targets 50 percent cumulative electric power capacity from non-fossil sources by 2030, and this target drives additions in renewable and other low-carbon capacity across central and state utilities.
- India aims to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5–3 billion tonnes CO₂-equivalent by 2030 through afforestation and reforestation programmes implemented under national and state missions.

National Designated Authority: Mandate and Composition

- The **National Designated Authority** is mandated to oversee, evaluate, and authorise Article 6.4 project activities in India so that they conform to national priorities, sustainable development criteria, and international accounting obligations under the Paris rulebook.
- The Authority consists of 21 members chaired by the Secretary, MoEFCC, with representation from External Affairs, Renewable Energy, NITI Aayog, the Steel Ministry, and other concerned departments, and the Environment Ministry provides the largest representation to ensure interdepartmental coordination.

Implementation Timeline: Key Milestones

- In November 2024, Parties at COP29 in Baku finalised outstanding elements of **Article 6**, which permitted operationalisation of the UN-supervised crediting mechanism for cooperative approaches.
- In July 2024, India adopted the **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme**, initiating a phased transition toward a rate-based emissions trading system with sectoral intensity benchmarks and tradable credits.
- On 22 August 2025, the Environment Ministry notified the **National Designated Authority**, and the notification detailed a 21-member composition chaired by the Secretary, MoEFCC, to evaluate, approve, and authorise A6.4 projects.
- On 16 September 2025, the UNFCCC recorded 114 DNAs globally and listed India's DNA contact details with the submitted A6.4-FORM-GOV-001, which indicated host Party readiness for participation.

4

REVISED NORMS OF GREEN
CREDIT PROGRAMME

ENVIRONMENT

IN FOCUS

The Union Environment Ministry revised the methodology for awarding green credits under the **Green Credit Programme**, and it linked tree-plantation credits to post-plantation ecological outcomes such as **canopy density** and verified survival rather than to the mere number of saplings planted. The revised framework provides that a tree-plantation green credit will be issued only after a minimum of **five years** of restoration, subject to achieving at least 40% canopy density, and it specifies that one credit corresponds to one surviving tree that is more than five years old following verification.

Policy Shift and Legal Notification

- The notification dated 29 August 2025 replaces the methodology first issued on 22 February 2024, and it formalises a quality-first approach that requires evaluation of vegetation status, canopy change, and survival before credit issuance.
- The notification states that tree-plantation credits are non-tradable and non-transferable, and it provides a limited exception for transfers between a holding company and its subsidiary companies for internal consolidation.

Recalibrated Credit Methodology

- The revised methodology awards one green credit for each new surviving tree only after completion of a minimum of five years of restoration on degraded forest land and after the site achieves at least 40% canopy density.
- The government specifies that green-credit calculation will be based on the measured vegetation status at the verified site, including the change in canopy density and the number of surviving trees that meet eligibility.

Programme Purpose and Operating Model

- The **Green Credit Programme** is designed as a market-based mechanism under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 to mobilise voluntary environmental actions by companies, institutions, and individuals and to create an inventory of degraded land for restoration.
- A technology-enabled portal supports transparent registration, monitoring, and verification, and it provides an inventory of eligible land parcels for adoption by public and private participants.

Comparison with the 2024 System

- The 2024 methodology provided credits within two years subject to a benchmark of 1,100 trees per hectare and allowed market-based trading without a survival-linked canopy requirement.
- The 2025 methodology withdraws market trading for tree-plantation credits, lengthens the minimum performance period to five years, and conditions issuance on verified survival and canopy outcomes to ensure durable ecological gains.

Verification, Evaluation, and Registry Architecture

- Applicants submit credit claims accompanied by a verification fee, and designated agencies undertake evaluation to confirm survival rates and canopy density prior to issuance of credits.
- The process includes third-party verification to validate site performance, and a **Green Credit Registry** records credits and enables transparent tracking of issuance, exchange, and permitted uses.

Institutional Roles and Land Allotment

- Under the programme, state forest departments allot degraded forest land parcels to participating entities for plantation and restoration, and they are responsible for establishing and maintaining the plantations during the performance period.

5

WHO'S WORLD MENTAL
HEALTH REPORT

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

The Union Environment Ministry revised the methodology for awarding green credits under the **Green Credit Programme**, and it linked tree-plantation credits to post-plantation ecological outcomes such as **canopy density** and verified survival rather than to the mere number of saplings planted. The revised framework provides that a tree-plantation green credit will be issued only after a minimum of **five years** of restoration, subject to achieving at least 40% canopy density, and it specifies that one credit corresponds to one surviving tree that is more than five years old following verification.

Prevalence and condition mix

- WHO estimates that 13.6 per cent of the world's population currently has a mental disorder on an age-standardised basis, and it records that prevalence rose faster than global population growth between 2011 and 2021.
- Anxiety and depressive disorders account for over two-thirds of all cases, and WHO attributes an annual economic burden of about one trillion US dollars to productivity losses associated with these conditions.

Age and sex differentials

- Young adults aged 20–29 experienced the sharpest rise in prevalence since 2011 at 1.8 per cent, while anxiety disorders commonly begin in childhood or adolescence and depressive disorders increase after age forty and peak between fifty and sixty-nine years.
- Males exhibit higher global rates of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorders, and intellectual disabilities, whereas females exhibit higher rates of anxiety, depressive, and eating disorders in the worldwide datasets.

Mortality and leading-cause status

- WHO reports that approximately 727,000 people died by suicide in 2021 and that suicide constitutes one in every one hundred deaths globally, with a leading-cause position among young people across income contexts.
- Projections indicate that suicide mortality will decline by only twelve per cent by 2030 at the current rate of progress, and this trajectory falls well short of the Sustainable Development Goal target to reduce the rate by one-third.

Investment and workforce

- Governments have allocated an average of two per cent of overall **health budgets** to mental health since 2017 without sustained growth, and the global median stands at only thirteen mental health workers per one hundred thousand people with the widest deficits in low-income countries.
- Treatment inequality is pronounced because fewer than ten per cent of people with psychosis receive care in low-income settings compared with over fifty per cent in high-income settings, and data gaps persist because only twenty-two countries submitted sufficient information to estimate psychosis coverage.

National strategies and service integration

- The National Mental Health Programme launched in 1982 integrates mental healthcare into general healthcare and supports district-level delivery alongside the National Health Policy 2017, which commits to primary-care integration and workforce development.
- The National Suicide Prevention Strategy notified in 2022 targets a ten per cent reduction in suicide mortality by 2030 and prioritizes early intervention, crisis management, and promotion activities for high-risk groups such as students, farmers, and young adults.

Statutes, rights, and protections

- The **Mental Healthcare Act** 2017 guarantees the right to mental healthcare, decriminalizes attempted suicide, and embeds dignity protections while aligning national practice with international norms on autonomy and consent.
- The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 recognises mental illness within the disability framework and aligns with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 to strengthen entitlements and anti-discrimination safeguards.

Digital and Community-Centred Responses

- The iGOT-Diksha platform launched in 2020 trains healthcare professionals and community workers in mental health identification, referral, and basic support competencies at scale across the public system.
- The **Tele MANAS** network launched in 2022 provides free twenty-four-by-seven tele-mental-health support through a toll-free helpline in twenty languages, and it extends counselling pathways and referrals to local facilities to bridge access constraints.

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6 NIRF INDIA RANKINGS 2025

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

On 5 September 2025, the Ministry of Education released the **NIRF 2025** results, which marked the tenth edition of the national ranking exercise and confirmed IIT Madras as number one in the Overall and Engineering lists for the seventh straight year while IISc Bengaluru retained the top rank among universities for the tenth consecutive year. The 2025 cycle introduced a **SDG category** to evaluate sustainability performance and instituted **negative marking** for retracted research papers, thereby embedding explicit accountability for research integrity within the scoring system.

Framework Origins and Purpose

- The National Institutional Ranking Framework was launched in 2015 by the then Ministry of Human Resource Development to create a transparent, indicator-based system that allows students, institutions, and policymakers to compare higher-education performance annually and to identify measurable areas of improvement.
- NIRF is distinct from NAAC accreditation because NAAC confers qualitative grades from A++ to D for overall educational experience, whereas NIRF assigns quantitative, year-specific ranks based on defined parameters and weightages that are common across categories.

Leaders by Category

- Overall top five were IIT Madras, IISc Bengaluru, IIT Bombay, IIT Delhi, and IIT Kanpur, and the Engineering top five were IIT Madras, IIT Delhi, IIT Bombay, IIT Kanpur, and IIT Kharagpur.
- In Management, the top five were IIM Ahmedabad, IIM Bangalore, IIM Kozhikode, IIT Delhi, and IIM Lucknow, while the Universities top five were IISc Bengaluru, JNU, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Jamia Millia Islamia, and Delhi University.
- Among Colleges, the top five were Hindu College, Miranda House, Hans Raj College, Kirori Mal College, and St. Stephen's College, and category leaders included AIIMS New Delhi in Medical for the eighth consecutive year, IIT Roorkee in Architecture and Planning for the fifth consecutive year, Jamia Hamdard in Pharmacy for the second consecutive year, and NLSIU Bengaluru in Law.

Scores and Comparative Insights

- IIT Madras recorded a perfect 100 in the **Perception score**, maintained since 2023 among the Overall top ten, and posted 90.58 in **Teaching, Learning & Resources** while its lowest score was 63.34 in **Outreach & Inclusivity**.
- IISc Bengaluru achieved 86.47 in **Teaching, Learning & Resources** and 98.89 in **Perception score**, alongside a lower 60.29 in **Outreach & Inclusivity**, which illustrates contrasting strengths across parameters within the leading university profile.
- JNU, ranked second among universities, registered 99.93 in **Graduation Outcomes** and simultaneously recorded 45.59 in **Research & Practice**, which was the lowest value for that parameter among the top ten universities.
- Within the Colleges category, Hans Raj College and Atma Ram Sanatan Dharma College both posted Research & Practice scores above 96 and thereby exceeded Hindu College's 66.92 on that metric, while Hindu College's **Perception score** of 96.08 surpassed Hans Raj College at 76.81 and Atma Ram Sanatan Dharma College at 47.98, which contributed to its first position.
- BITS Pilani entered the top ten universities for the first time since 2016 by rising from nineteenth place in 2024 to a top-ten position in 2025, which marked a significant movement within the Universities category table.

Governance Enhancements in 2025

- The introduction of **negative marking** for retracted papers directly links bibliometric counts with research ethics by reducing scores where retractions are recorded, and this change applies within the Research & Practice parameter to reinforce integrity norms in institutional outputs.
- The new **SDG category** measures institutional actions in sustainability and green practices, and it aligns ranking disclosure with national priorities for responsible growth in higher education through environment-linked performance indicators.

7

SAMPLE REGISTRATION SYSTEM
(SRS) STATISTICAL REPORT 2023

INDICES & REPORTS

IN FOCUS

The Sample Registration System Statistical Report 2023 records a nationwide decline in fertility and births, with India's Crude Birth Rate at 18.4 per 1,000 population in 2023 and the Total Fertility Rate at 1.9 children per woman, which is below the replacement level of 2.1. The same dataset reports a Crude Death Rate of 6.4 per 1,000 population in 2023 and an Infant Mortality Rate of 25 per 1,000 live births in 2023, and it notes concurrent shifts in age structure with a rising share of older adults.

Key National Indicators (2023)

- The **Crude Birth Rate** declined from 19.1 per 1,000 population in 2022 to **18.4** per 1,000 population in 2023, and this decline confirms a continuing reduction in the frequency of live births at the national level.
- The **Total Fertility Rate** fell to **1.9** children per woman in 2023 after standing at 2.0 in 2021 and 2022, and this level is below the **replacement level** threshold of 2.1 associated with long-run population stability.
- The **Crude Death Rate** is **6.4** per 1,000 population in 2023, and this value summarises deaths from all causes relative to the mid-year population.
- The **Infant Mortality Rate** is **25** per 1,000 live births in 2023, and this indicator measures deaths of children under one year of age per 1,000 live births.

Fertility Transition and Regional Variation

- Bihar reports the highest **Crude Birth Rate** at **25.8** per 1,000 population in 2023, and Tamil Nadu reports the lowest **Crude Birth Rate** at **12** per 1,000 population, which demonstrates wide interstate variation.
- Bihar records the highest **Total Fertility Rate** at **2.8** children per woman, and Delhi records the lowest **Total Fertility Rate** at **1.2** children per woman, while **eighteen** States and Union Territories have TFR values below **replacement level**.
- All States with TFR above **replacement level** in 2023 are in northern India, namely Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh, and this grouping identifies the remaining high-fertility belt.

Mortality, Infant Outcomes, and Birth Sex Ratio

- The **Infant Mortality Rate** of **25** per 1,000 live births in 2023 coexists with an **SRB** of **917** girls per 1,000 boys for the 2021–23 period, and this ratio summarises the sex composition at birth for that reference window.
- Chhattisgarh records the highest **Sex Ratio at Birth** at **974** girls per 1,000 boys, and Uttarakhand records the lowest **Sex Ratio at Birth** at **868** girls per 1,000 boys, and these values mark the current observed range across States.
- Treatment of mortality in the SRS shows the **Crude Death Rate** at **6.4** per 1,000 population in 2023, and this indicator is accompanied by infant survival measures to track early-life risks.

Ageing Profile and Population Structure

- The proportion of persons aged **60 years and above** increased by **0.7 percentage points** in one year to **9.7%** of the total population in 2023, and this increase indicates measurable **population ageing** in the latest SRS cycle.
- Kerala registers the highest share of older adults at **15%** of its population, and Assam, Delhi, and Jharkhand record the lowest proportions of population aged 60 years and above among the listed units.
- **Fertility Indicators:** The Total Fertility Rate expresses the average number of children a woman would bear during ages 15–49 if current age-specific fertility rates persist, and a value of 2.1 is used as replacement level under standard mortality assumptions. The Crude Birth Rate counts live births during a

- replacement level under standard mortality assumptions. The Crude Birth Rate counts live births during a year per 1,000 mid-year population and is used to compare the overall frequency of births across time and regions.

About the SRS Statistical System

- The Sample Registration System is implemented by the Office of the Registrar General of India as a continuous, large-scale demographic survey that collects population data by age, sex, and marital status, and it generates estimates for Crude Birth Rate, Total Fertility Rate, Age-Specific Fertility Rate, General Fertility Rate, Crude Death Rate, Infant Mortality Rate, and Sex Ratio at Birth at national and sub-national levels.
- The SRS combines continuous enumeration with independent retrospective sample surveys to validate events, and it provides annual statistical reports that allow time-series tracking of fertility, mortality, and age-structure indicators.

8

21ST ANNUAL GLOBAL INVESTOR
CONFERENCE 2025

INDICES & REPORTS

IN FOCUS

The Union Minister of Commerce and Industry addressed the **21st Annual Global Investor Conference 2025** and presented India's roadmap to attain **Viksit Bharat** status by 2047, and he anchored the narrative in Q1 FY2025 **GDP growth** of 7.8 per cent alongside strengthening macroeconomic indicators, rising manufacturing momentum, and record levels of private and foreign investment. The address highlighted ongoing reforms to improve **ease of doing business** through deregulation, policy simplification, decriminalisation of business laws, and tax reforms including the proposed **GST 2.0**, and it positioned quality-, sustainability-, and export-oriented manufacturing as pillars of long-term competitiveness.

Foundational Principles of the Vision (Viksit Bharat 2047)

- The strategy identifies **Agricultural Excellence** as a pillar that seeks to raise farm productivity and global competitiveness so that Indian producers can evolve into a reliable “food basket of the world” through technology adoption and efficient value chains.
- The **Zero-Poverty** objective commits to eliminating extreme deprivation by scaling targeted welfare delivery, expanding financial inclusion, and strengthening rural employment generation so that vulnerable households achieve sustained income security.
- The **Quality Education** pillar aims to provide universal access to affordable, high-quality schooling and higher education with a focus on rural and semi-urban youth so that learning outcomes translate into employability and innovation.
- The **Healthcare Access** pillar focuses on affordable, comprehensive, and quality public health systems that deliver preventive and curative services to every citizen through expanded coverage and reliable last-mile delivery.
- The **Skilled Labour** pillar targets one-hundred-per-cent workforce skilling so that workers can access meaningful jobs in high-growth sectors that demand industry-relevant competencies at scale.
- The **Women's Economic Participation** pillar seeks to raise the share of women engaged in economic activity to seventy per cent so that growth outcomes are gender-inclusive and labour-force participation rises across regions.

India's Economic Performance in 2025

- Real output expanded by 7.8 per cent in Q1 FY2025, and this represented the fastest quarterly expansion since 2020 on the back of robust domestic demand, resilient services, strong merchandise exports, and broad-based manufacturing gains.
- Private capital expenditure increased by sixty-six per cent and **foreign investment** inflows rose by fourteen per cent in the same period, and these movements indicated higher business confidence in the policy and growth environment.
- Headline CPI inflation was reported at about 1.5 per cent with support from stable commodity prices and prudent monetary settings, and this price environment coincided with rising real purchasing power and investment appetite.
- The Manufacturing PMI reached a 17.5-year high and signalled expansion in output, new orders, and employment consistent with **Make in India**-linked supply-chain localisation and scale effects.

Structural and Financial Stability Indicators

- Banking-sector performance improved through higher credit growth, increased depositor confidence, and stable asset quality, and this combination supported working-capital availability for firms across the formal economy.

- The sovereign credit rating moved from BBB- to BBB with a stable outlook, and the upgrade was underpinned by stronger external buffers, rising foreign-exchange reserves, and a balanced current account position.
- Domestic capital-market participation expanded as millions of new demat accounts were opened every month, and the broader investor base reflected rising household savings routed into equity and debt instruments.

Reforms to Enhance the Business Climate

- The government prioritised **ease of doing** business by deregulating sectors, compressing approval timelines, simplifying policies, and decriminalising business-law provisions so that compliance becomes predictable and transparent for enterprises of all sizes.
- The proposed **GST 2.0** reform envisages replacement of the four-slab structure with two principal rates of 5 per cent and 18 per cent while maintaining a 40 per cent rate for specified sin goods, and the simplification targets lower compliance costs and stronger consumer demand.
- Corporate-tax and personal-income-tax reliefs were implemented alongside reductions in the policy rate and the Cash Reserve Ratio by the central bank, and these measures aimed to ensure adequate credit availability within a low-inflation setting near 1.5 per cent.
- The Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal is being established so that tax disputes are adjudicated efficiently and litigation burdens—especially for MSMEs—are reduced through uniform appellate processes.

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9

VIKRAM 32-BIT MICROPROCESSOR
AND SEMICON INDIA 2025

SCIENCE & TECH

IN FOCUS

At **Semicon India 2025**, the Prime Minister received the **Vikram-32** launch-vehicle-grade microprocessor as a “Made-in-India” milestone, and the presentation underscored India’s progress under the **India Semiconductor Mission** with space-validated performance of **VIKRAM3201** and a widening pipeline of fabrication, packaging, and design projects. The event highlighted policy instruments such as the **PLI scheme** and **DLI scheme** and showcased academic-industry prototypes alongside new fab investments and **ATMP/OSAT** capacity, positioning India to deepen domestic value addition across design, manufacturing, and advanced packaging.

Programme Context and National Vision

- Semicon India 2025 adopted the theme “Building the Next Semiconductor Powerhouse,” and it served as a platform to demonstrate advances in chip design, wafer fabrication, advanced packaging, display technologies, and talent development within an integrated ecosystem.
- The **India Semiconductor Mission** launched in 2021 under MeitY provides a mission-mode framework with a total financial outlay of ₹76,000 crore, and its components include schemes for semiconductor fabs, display fabs, compound/photonic/sensor fabs, discrete semiconductor fabs, **ATMP/OSAT**, and the **DLI scheme** for design.

Schemes and Objectives

- The **PLI scheme**, the **DLI scheme**, and SPECS aim to encourage domestic semiconductor and display manufacturing, to nurture more than twenty Indian design companies toward a turnover exceeding ₹1,500 crore in five years, and to manufacture electronics components and semiconductors at scale.
- India’s semiconductor market was indicated to be on track toward USD 55 billion by 2026, and the infographic listed current import linkages with China, Taiwan, the United States, and Japan while emphasising end-use significance across aerospace, automobiles, communications, clean energy, information technology, and medical devices.

Indigenous Processor Milestone – VIKRAM3201 / Vikram-32

- **VIKRAM3201** was designed by ISRO’s Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre with fabrication and packaging at **ISRO SCL** (180 nm CMOS, Mohali), and it represents the first fully indigenous 32-bit microprocessor qualified for launch-vehicle avionics.
- The device is an advanced successor to the 16-bit VIKRAM1601 used in ISRO launch-vehicle avionics since 2009, and it is complemented by KALPANA3201, a 32-bit processor designed to operate with open-source development tools.
- The initial production lot of **VIKRAM3201** was validated in space on the PSLV-C60 SpaDeX mission, and this in-orbit demonstration established reliability for future guidance, navigation, and control roles.
- The processor is specified for spaceflight conditions with an operating temperature range from -55 °C to +125 °C, and it supports floating-point computation and substantial memory addressing for real-time avionics workloads.
- The microprocessor uses a custom instruction-set architecture tailored for the Ada programming language that is widely used in safety-critical systems, and this pairing enables deterministic execution and high-integrity software for launch vehicles.
- The 32-bit design processes data in 32-bit words and executes complex instructions required for sequencing, telemetry, fault management, and closed-loop control during ascent and orbital injection.

- The validated reliability profile and deterministic control features make the device relevant to defence guidance systems, civil aerospace control computers, automotive safety controllers, and energy-sector protection relays where long-life and harsh-environment performance are mandatory.

Ecosystem Expansion Announced at the Event

- The Electronics and IT Minister reported five semiconductor units under construction with one pilot line completed and two additional units scheduled to begin production within months, and he cited approval of ten major projects totaling over ₹1.60 lakh crore across six States.
- More than twenty-three domestic design startups have been supported under the **DLI scheme**, and the memento presented to the Prime Minister contained thirty-one additional prototype chips from IIT Roorkee, IIT Jammu, IIT Dhanbad, IIT Ropar, NIT Durgapur, NIT Calicut, and other institutes, which evidenced design-pipeline breadth.
- Capacity creation spans front-end wafer fabs, display-panel fabs, compound-semiconductor and sensor fabs, and back-end **ATMP/OSAT** facilities, and these links are intended to localise critical steps from design tape-out to assembly, test, and module integration.

Technology Background Referenced in the Display

- The examples listed included elemental semiconductors such as silicon and germanium and compound semiconductors such as gallium arsenide and cadmium selenide, and these materials provide tunable electrical properties for logic, RF, optoelectronics, and sensing.
- Semiconductors were defined as materials with conductivity between conductors and insulators, and this intermediate behaviour enables controlled switching and amplification essential to modern electronics.
- The national presentation connected semiconductor capacity with supply-chain resilience for strategic sectors including 5G/6G networks, electric mobility, power electronics, satellites, and medical devices, and it aligned with “Zero Defect, Zero Effect” quality and sustainability norms.
- The policy suite couples capital incentives with design support and infrastructure (electricity, water, ultrapure chemicals, and clean-room facilities) to lower entry barriers for advanced manufacturing while building a skilled workforce for high-reliability production.

10

SC'S INTERIM ORDER ON THE
WAQF (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2025

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

On 15 September 2025, the Supreme Court issued an **interim stay** on select provisions of the **Waqf Amendment 2025** while declining to suspend the entire statute, and it clarified that the stay would operate until the batch of petitions challenging the law is finally decided. A Bench of Chief Justice **B.R. Gavai** and Justice **A.G. Masih** heard nearly 65 petitions that alleged violations of **Article 26** and community autonomy, and it preserved the presumption of constitutionality for the statute except where immediate harm or arbitrariness was prima facie shown.

Petitions, Parties, and Proceedings

- The challenges were filed by multiple political leaders and organisations, and the petitioners argued that several amendments interfered with the Muslim community's right to manage religious affairs under **Article 26**, especially by expanding executive powers and altering board compositions.
- The Court recorded that the principal attacks focused on Section 3(r), Section **Section 3C**, Section 14 and allied clauses, and it reiterated that striking down a law is exceptional while targeted interim relief is appropriate when specific provisions appear arbitrary.

Provisions Stayed by the Supreme Court

- **Five-year practice requirement (Section 3(r)):** The amendment that allowed creation of a waqf only by a person "practising Islam for at least five years" was stayed because there was no mechanism to determine such practice, and the stay will continue until rules are framed establishing a verifiable procedure.
- **Collector's inquiry and record corrections (Section 3C):** The proviso that, upon initiation of a Collector's inquiry, a property would immediately cease to be treated as waqf was stayed so that waqf status remains intact during the pendency of the inquiry. Sub-sections that empowered the designated officer to order corrections in revenue and Waqf Board records were stayed because entrusting a revenue officer with title determinations was prima facie inconsistent with separation of powers. The Court directed that waqfs will not be dispossessed during adjudication before the Waqf Tribunal or courts, and that no third-party rights shall be created over such properties while proceedings are pending.
- **Representation of non-Muslims in councils and boards:** The Court capped non-Muslim membership in the **Central Waqf Council** (22 members) at four and in State Waqf Boards (11 members) at three, and it directed that boards should strive to ensure the ex-officio chairperson is from the Muslim community.
- **Provisions That Remain Operative:** The Court declined to stay the prospective omission of the doctrine of "waqf by user," and it noted there was no prima facie case for suspension while observing that existing properties registered as on 8 April 2025 under that claim remain protected. The earlier exclusion of the Limitation Act, 1963 was removed by the 2025 amendment, and the Court allowed this change to operate because it cures discrimination by requiring that actions against encroachments be filed within prescribed periods. Restrictions that barred conferral of waqf status on protected monuments and on notified tribal lands under the Fifth and Sixth Schedules were held constitutionally valid at the interim stage.
- **Directions During the Interim Period:** Property titles will not be altered on the basis of administrative inquiries, and only tribunals or courts may finally decide competing claims; until then, possession protection for waqfs and a bar on creating third-party interests will apply. The time for registration of waqfs was extended in the interim directions, and the Court indicated that detailed reasons would follow in the long order.

Structural Features of the 2025 Amendment (UMEED)

- The **Waqf Amendment 2025** (UMEED) clarified that Muslim-created trusts governed by general charity laws are distinct from waqfs, and it mandated that inheritance rights of women and children be satisfied before a dedication becomes waqf.
- The statute strengthened audits by requiring government-mandated audits for waqf institutions with annual income above ₹1 lakh and reduced the mandatory contribution to boards from 7% to 5% of net income.
- Appeals from Waqf Tribunals were provided to High Courts, and the **Central Waqf Council** continued to advise and oversee State Boards regarding recovery, management, transfer approvals, and protection of assets.

Constitutional Frame and Prior Rulings

- The petitions invoked **Article 26** to claim denominational autonomy, and the Court balanced this with the state's regulatory role, consistent with precedents that protect religious freedom while permitting reasonable regulation (e.g., *Bijoe Emmanuel*, *Shayara Bano*, *Bedekar* on non-essential practices).

11

**BIMA SUGAM: UNIFIED DIGITAL
MARKETPLACE FOR INSURANCE****POLITY & GOVERNANCE****IN FOCUS**

On 18 September 2025, the **Bima Sugam** India Federation launched a unified, national e-marketplace for insurance at IRDAI headquarters in Hyderabad, and the regulator described it as the first visible step toward **Digital Public Infrastructure** for insurance aligned with the vision of **Insurance for All** by 2047. The rollout follows a phased model in which initial web access provides information and guidance, and real transactions will go live over the coming months as insurers and ecosystem partners complete integrations under IRDAI-supervised security, compliance, and scalability standards.

What the Unified Marketplace Does

- The platform brings life, health, and general insurance—including motor, travel, property, marine, agricultural, and industry-specific covers—onto a single **unified marketplace**, and it allows users to buy, renew, manage, service, and initiate **claim settlement** for policies with end-to-end digital workflows.
- Policy records and **policy documents** are stored securely within a common registry so that customers, insurers, and authorised intermediaries can retrieve authenticated data for servicing, renewal, endorsements, and claims with audit trails across the lifecycle.
- The operating model features minimal platform charges, participation by all insurers as members, and widespread equity holding in the federation by market participants, which collectively lowers distribution costs compared with private aggregators that primarily sell policies without providing cradle-to-grave servicing.

Position Within the “Bima Trinity”

- **Bima Sugam** constitutes the transaction backbone that digitally connects manufacturers and distributors, **Bima Vistaar** provides a bundled product spanning life, health, property, and accident with simplified payout logic, and **Bima Vaahaks** deploy a women-led, last-mile network to drive awareness and enrollment in underserved areas.
- The Life Insurance Council and the General Insurance Council support the Trinity architecture to standardise processes, accelerate sandboxed product adoption, and shorten time-to-market for innovative protection offerings.

Product Spectrum Available on the Platform

- Life offerings include term insurance, participating and non-participating savings plans, annuity and pension contracts, and unit-linked products, and these categories are exposed via comparable, machine-readable attributes for informed choice.
- Health offerings include comprehensive medical and wellness products designed for individuals and families with cashless networks, portability workflows, and policy-year continuity captured in the central ledger.
- General offerings include third-party and own-damage **motor insurance**, domestic and international travel insurance, personal accident covers, and commercial lines such as property, marine, and agriculture, with the taxonomy kept extensible to host future IRDAI-approved products.

Sector Context and Penetration Goals

- India is the tenth-largest insurance market and is projected to become the sixth by 2032, and sector indicators show insurance density rising from USD 92 in FY23 to USD 95 in FY24 while penetration measured as premium-to-GDP eased from 4.0 per cent to 3.7 per cent against a global average near 7 per cent.

12

EU PROPOSED 'NEW STRATEGIC EU-INDIA AGENDA'

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

The European Commission and the High Representative announced a **EU-India Agenda** to elevate ties across trade, technology, security, connectivity, climate, and mobility, positioning the partnership to address shifting geopolitical realities and diversify supply chains. The agenda identifies five coordinated pillars—Prosperity & Innovation, Security & Defence, Connectivity & Global Issues, People-to-People, and Enablers—mirroring the institutional design to translate priorities into implementable initiatives. The European side affirmed its commitment to conclude a **Free Trade Agreement** with India by the end of 2025 and to table a joint roadmap for adoption at the next summit targeted in early 2026. Leaders on both sides publicly welcomed the upgrade; the exchange included a call between the European Commission President and the Indian Prime Minister, who reiterated India's commitment to an early and peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict.

Trade and Technology Track

- The negotiating teams aim to close the **Free Trade Agreement** by end-2025, with the 14th round scheduled in Brussels for 6–10 October and the principle that “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” guiding the talks.
- The EU signalled that outcomes must be commercially meaningful across tariff and **non-tariff barriers**, referencing India's **Quality Control Orders** in ongoing market-access discussions.
- Cooperation under the **Trade and Technology Council** prioritises semiconductors, AI, clean energy, and digital public goods, with a proposed EU-India Startup Partnership to accelerate scale-ups and venture linkages.
- Association with **Horizon Europe** would enable Indian entities to join collaborative R&D calls across health, climate, space, and advanced manufacturing with reciprocal scientific mobility.

Architecture of the Five Pillars**1. Prosperity, Sustainability, Technology & Innovation**

- The agenda prioritises finalising the **Free Trade Agreement** and expanding investment by unlocking untapped potential in bilateral commerce while reinforcing resilient supply chains through the **Trade and Technology Council**.
- It advances technology partnerships via a proposed EU-India Startup initiative and invites India to associate with **Horizon Europe**, alongside joint work on green transition, food security, health, climate resilience, and disaster management.

2. Security & Defence

- The partners will scale strategic consultations and practical cooperation in maritime security, cyber defence, counterterrorism, crisis management, and defence-industrial collaboration aimed at production, technology development, innovation, and secure supply chains.
- Launching negotiations for a **Security of Information** agreement is intended to enable the exchange of classified material and facilitate closer operational coordination, including work on space security, hybrid threats, and sanctions evasion such as shadow fleets.

3. Connectivity & Global Issues

- The agenda backs regional connectivity through the **India-Middle East-Europe Corridor** and the EU's **Global Gateway**, including trilateral cooperation with and in third countries to mobilise finance and standards-based infrastructure.
- It emphasises coordinated engagement in multilateral forums to strengthen international law, multilateral

values, and global governance while aligning positions on global economic and security questions.

4. People-to-People and Mobility

- The partners will pilot an **European Legal Gateway Office** to support **skills mobility** and will develop a comprehensive mobility framework that covers study, work, and research pathways.
- The plan expands interaction with civil society, youth, think tanks, and the business community, including the proposal to establish an EU-India **Business Forum**.

5. Enablers for Delivery

- The agenda calls for whole-of-government coordination, alignment with EU Member States via the Foreign Affairs Council, and strategic planning mechanisms to translate priorities into time-bound programmes with measurable outcomes.

Status, Timelines, and Public Signalling

- Public statements from Brussels and New Delhi welcomed the agenda; leaders confirmed intent to push the **Free Trade Agreement** to conclusion by end-2025 and to adopt a joint roadmap at the next summit planned for early 2026.
- The EU Trade Commissioner noted that India-EU trade expanded by over 90% in the last decade but remains below potential, while negotiators underscored the toughness of talks and the need for balanced, meaningful market access.

13

SC SEEKS CENTRE'S REPLY ON
J&K STATEHOOD RESTORATION

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

The **Supreme Court** on **October 10, 2025** directed the **Central government** to file its reply on petitions seeking a timeline for restoring **statehood** to **Jammu and Kashmir**, with different reports noting a response window of **four weeks** or **six weeks** ordered by a Bench of **CJI BR Gavai** and **Justice K Vinod Chandran**. The petitions seek enforcement of the Union's prior assurance to restore **statehood** after the **2019** bifurcation of the region into the **Union Territory** of **Jammu and Kashmir** and the **Union Territory** of **Ladakh**. The **Solicitor General** informed the Court that **Assembly elections** were held peacefully in Jammu and Kashmir and that an **elected government** has been installed while consultations between the **Centre** and the **UT administration** continue on the restoration question. Petitioners, including **Zahoor Ahmad Bhat** and **Ahmad Malik**, urged the Court to secure a reasonable timeframe for restoring **statehood** consistent with the Union's earlier assurance recorded during challenges to the **Article 370** changes.

Constitutional Background & Structural Context

- In its **December 11, 2023** judgment, the **Supreme Court** upheld the abrogation of **Article 370**, directed that **Assembly elections** in Jammu and Kashmir be held by **September 2024**, and recorded the Union's assurance that **statehood** would be restored at the **earliest**.
- Under **Article 3**, **Parliament** may reorganize existing **States** by altering boundaries, areas, or names and by forming new States, and such action proceeds on the **President's recommendation** based on ministerial advice.
- India's design as a **Union of States** under **Article 1** incorporates **Union Territories**, with the **Seventh Amendment** and the **States Reorganisation Act, 1956** establishing the framework for territorial restructuring.
- Arguments advanced in the current pleas stress that prolonged non-restoration impacts **federalism**, identified by the **basic structure** doctrine, while opposing views cite Jammu and Kashmir's **security** sensitivities as grounds for calibrated progression toward **statehood**.
- Historical precedents of elevating **Union Territories** to **States** include **Himachal Pradesh (1971)**, **Manipur (1972)**, **Tripura (1972)**, **Arunachal Pradesh (1987)**, **Mizoram (1987)**, and **Goa (1987)**, illustrating statutory pathways for status restoration.

Proceedings and Directions of October 2025

- On **October 10, 2025**, the Bench of **CJI BR Gavai** and **Justice K Vinod Chandran** heard multiple petitions pressing the Union to implement its assurance on **statehood** to Jammu and Kashmir "at the earliest," with media accounts recording a **four-week** or **six-week** period granted for the Union's response.
- The Court recorded the **Solicitor General's** statements that the **Assembly elections** in Jammu and Kashmir were conducted peacefully, that an **elected government** is in place, and that the **Centre** and the **UT administration** are engaged in consultations on the statehood issue.
- During the hearing, the Bench referenced the **Pahalgam** terror incident in **April** that claimed **26** lives as a factor among broader considerations relevant to the timing of **statehood** restoration.
- Counsel for petitioners emphasized the Union's "solemn undertaking" regarding **statehood** and sought a **reasonable timeframe**, while the **Solicitor General** characterized the matter as **sui generis** and cautioned against exaggerated depictions of unrest in the region.

Positions of Parties and Core Legal Claims

- Petitioners argue that extended delay in restoring **statehood** undermines **federalism** by sustaining **Union Territory** administration under a **Lieutenant Governor**, thereby constraining the authority of elected representatives despite the conduct of **Assembly elections**.
- The petitions rely on the **December 2023 verdict** that upheld the **2019** changes but noted restoration of **statehood** at the earliest, and they seek judicial directions to effectuate that assurance within a **reasonable timeframe**.
- The **Union** submits that substantial progress has occurred, including peaceful **elections** and the installation of an **elected government**, and states that restoration requires evaluation of **security, governance**, and other **broader factors** before a final decision.
- The government further indicates that consultations are ongoing with the **UT administration**, while disputing narratives that depict widespread unrest, and underscores that the restoration question involves **unique circumstances**.

Pathway, Implications, and Next Steps

- Restoration of **statehood** would require legislative action in **Parliament**, including modification or repeal of the **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019**, and introduction of a new bill under **Article 3** with **Presidential** recommendation based on ministerial advice.
- Restoration would recalibrate **Centre-State** relations by re-establishing a **State legislature** and expanding the remit of **elected representatives**, thereby strengthening **representation** and **accountability** consistent with **federalism**.
- The Court's directive for a **time-bound** response creates a defined procedural step for the **Union** to place its position on record, after which the Bench can assess compliance with the **December 2023** assurance and consider appropriate further orders.
- The evolution from **Union Territory** to **State** status in prior Indian examples demonstrates that status transitions are legally feasible, while the present case's **security** context and the Court-recognized **broader considerations** will shape the eventual timeline for **statehood** in Jammu and Kashmir.

14

'SNAPBACK MECHANISM' & IRAN
NUCLEAR DEAL (JCPOA)

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

The **E3** and the **EU** are engaging Iran to avert activation of the **snapback** mechanism that would automatically restore pre-2015 **UN sanctions** over Iran's nuclear programme unless full **IAEA access** and material accounting are restored before the mechanism's **October** expiry. Iran's Foreign Minister **Abbas Araqchi** is holding ministerial outreach with the **E3** and the EU's foreign policy chief while deputy-minister talks proceed, as the **30-day** reimposition clock has been initiated pending verifiable steps on inspections and enrichment concerns. The **United States** supports the **E3** assessment that Iran exceeds **JCPOA** limits yet cannot itself trigger **snapback** after its **May 2018** withdrawal, whereas **China** and **Russia** object that the European move is legally and procedurally flawed. The urgency arises from reported enrichment up to **60%**, an estimated **408.6 kg** of such material, and a total stockpile near **9,247.6 kg** as of mid-May 2025, alongside degraded monitoring, which together compress breakout timelines and elevate verification demands.

JCPOA Architecture and Snapback Operation

- The **JCPOA** of **July 2015** between Iran and the **P5+1** exchanged limits compatible with civilian use for sanctions relief and **IAEA monitoring**, including an enrichment cap of **3.67%** and strict stockpile limits verified by the agency before Iran's post-2019 rollbacks.
- The **snapback** procedure allows any participant to notify the **UN** of "significant non-performance," triggering a **30-day** window during which a continuation of sanctions relief requires an affirmative resolution that is structurally resistant to veto-based obstruction.
- Absent such a continuation, all pre-deal **UN sanctions** automatically return after **30 days**, and no member may veto the reimposition once the process is properly triggered under the mechanism's design.
- The mechanism's authority is **time-bound**, with automatic-restore powers expiring in **October**, making current calendars decisive for both diplomatic sequencing and enforcement outcomes.

Timeline Pressures and Security Council Procedure

- European governments aligned an end-of-**August** trigger to ensure the **30-day** clock runs under the **September** Council presidency and concludes before procedural complexities related to rotations, even though vetoes cannot block automatic restoration once triggered.
- Diplomats nevertheless assess that procedural delays could arise if the window drifts into **October**, when **sunset** provisions and presidency changes could complicate scheduling, documentation, and sequencing of any resolution to pause or extend relief.
- Deputy-minister talks were held in **Istanbul** on **July 25** and are scheduled in **Geneva**, marking the second round since the **mid-June** 12-day conflict, while ministerial calls continue to search for a narrowly tailored deferral pathway tied to inspections.
- Inspections were interrupted after **June** strikes due to security concerns and Iranian complaints, and Tehran later agreed in principle to resume **IAEA** cooperation, with sustained, unfettered access and full accounting set as European conditions for pausing the clock.

Positions of Principal Actors

- The **E3** assert that Iran has "willfully and publicly" departed from **JCPOA** limits through near-weapons-grade enrichment and excess stockpiles, and they offered in **July** to delay **snapback** if Iran restored site access, engaged the **United States**, and accounted for over **400 kg** of highly enriched material.
- Iran maintains that its programme is **peaceful**, cites a sovereign right to enrichment under **NPT** obligations for non-military use, and disputes **E3** standing after the U.S. withdrawal, arguing that

- European economic commitments were unmet and thus cannot ground restoration of **UN sanctions**.
- **China** and **Russia** issued a joint ministerial objection framing the **E3** attempt as legally and procedurally flawed, which cannot veto automatic reimposition if properly triggered but underscores divisions among original signatories and narrows space for consensus diplomacy.
- The **United States** supports **E3** concerns yet lacks **snapback** standing after **2018**, and exploratory **2025** understandings stalled following Israeli and U.S. strikes in **June** and the ensuing security fallout that disrupted **IAEA** inspections and complicated talks.

IAEA Role, Technical Status, and Risk Outlook

- The **IAEA** is a 1957-founded intergovernmental body headquartered in **Vienna** that promotes peaceful nuclear energy and prevents military use through safeguards agreements and **Additional Protocols**, reporting to the **UN** system with **178** member states and recognized by the **2005** Nobel Peace Prize.
- As of mid-**May 2025**, the agency reported roughly **408.6 kg** enriched up to **60%** within an overall **9,247.6 kg** stockpile, and it assessed that prior removal of cameras and barring of experienced inspectors in **2022–2023** degraded transparency and continuity of knowledge.
- Verification priorities now require restoring continuous monitoring, reconstructing material balance baselines, and accounting for all quantities, locations, and forms of enriched uranium as preconditions for any credible deferral of **snapback** within the **30-day** window.
- If **snapback** proceeds, automatic restoration of **UN sanctions** would revive broad restrictions across arms, missile-related activities, asset freezes, and travel bans, while Iranian signals about reconsidering **NPT** participation would amplify non-proliferation risks and complicate any future return to the **JCPOA** or a successor framework

15 INDIA-AI IMPACT SUMMIT 2026

POLIITY AND GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

The **India-AI Impact Summit 2026** will be hosted by **MeitY** at **Bharat Mandapam** in New Delhi on **19–20 February 2026**, marking the first time a Global South nation convenes this platform. The summit is anchored to the **People-Planet-Progress** sutras and operationalized through the **Seven Chakras**, which frame cooperation on human capital, inclusion, safe systems, resilience, science, democratized resources, and public-interest deployments. The Government unveiled the summit logo featuring the **Ashoka Chakra**, whose radiating neural flares signify ethically guided, inclusive digital transformation across languages, sectors, and regions. India announced eight indigenous **foundational models** and opened the first tranche of **IndiaAI Data Labs**, positioning national AI capacity for multilingual, scientific, industrial, healthcare, governance, and agriculture use-cases.

Summit Vision and Identity

- The summit's design commits to the **People-Planet-Progress** sutras, which require AI to serve diverse communities with dignity, align development with environmental stewardship and resource efficiency, and distribute benefits equitably through open access to datasets, compute, models, and applications.
- The **Seven Chakras** translate these principles into action by focusing on employment and skilling, linguistic and disability inclusion, safety testing and governance, resource-efficient and locally adaptable systems, open science and research collaboration, equitable access to critical AI infrastructure, and scaled applications for economic development and social good.
- The official identity centers on the **Ashoka Chakra** to symbolize constitutional values and responsible governance, with neural motifs indicating nationwide diffusion of AI across geographies and sectors.
- Senior leadership present at the unveiling included the Minister of Electronics & IT Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, the Minister of State Shri S. Krishnan, Additional Secretary Shri Abhishek Singh, the Principal Scientific Adviser Prof. Ajay Sood, IndiaAI COO Ms. Kavita Bhatia, and Prof. Stuart Russell, alongside other dignitaries.

Flagship Tracks and Global Expo

- The **India-AI Impact Summit 2026** will run a slate of flagship tracks: **UDAAN** Global AI Pitch Fest to spotlight startups from Tier-2 and Tier-3 hubs with emphasis on women and differently-abled leaders; global innovation challenges for youth and women to solve public problems; a one-day research symposium for frontier methods and evidence; and an AI Expo focused on responsible intelligence.
- The Expo plans to host **300+ exhibitors** from **30+ countries** across **10+ thematic pavilions**, creating a marketplace for deployable solutions aligned with safety, transparency, auditing, and interoperable assurance mechanisms.
- India's mission progress includes national **GPU capacity** expansion from a target of **10,000** to **38,000 GPUs**, enabling broader access for students and researchers and strengthening compute backbones for training and evaluation.

Skills, Labs, and Fellowships

- The first wave of **IndiaAI Data Labs—30 labs** across India—has been launched toward a **570-lab** network, with **27 labs** established with **NIELIT** in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities and **three Intel-supported labs** operational in **Mokokchung, Mhow, and Mohali**.
- Foundational courses in data annotation and curation will be delivered through this network to prepare learners for entry-level roles across image, text, and audio pipelines, thereby expanding skilled **human**

16

INDIA ADDS 7 NATURAL SITES TO
UNESCO TENTATIVE LIST

POLIITY AND GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

India has added **seven** natural sites to the **UNESCO Tentative List**, raising India's tally on the list to **69** properties comprising **49** cultural, **17** natural, and **3** mixed sites, which is the compulsory staging point before nomination to the **World Heritage Sites** list. India's inscribed **World Heritage Sites** remain **44**, with **Maratha Military Landscapes** as the newest addition, while the earliest Indian inscriptions in **1983** were **Agra Fort**, **Taj Mahal**, **Ajanta Caves**, and **Ellora Caves**. National stewardship is led by the **Archaeological Survey of India**, which compiles and submits Tentative List proposals, and India advanced global heritage diplomacy by hosting the **46th Session of the World Heritage Committee** in **July 2024** at New Delhi.

The New Additions: India's Seven Natural Sites

- The **Deccan Traps** at **Panchgani** and **Mahabaleshwar** in Maharashtra include well-preserved lava flows within **Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary**, providing global reference exposures for flood-basalt volcanism and expanding India's high-value geological assets on the **Tentative List**.
- The **St. Mary's Island** cluster in Karnataka exhibits rare columnar basalt formed during the Late Cretaceous, delivering an in-situ record of magmatism from roughly **85 million years** ago with clear educational and research value.
- The **Meghalayan Age Caves**—including **Mawmluh Cave**—anchor the Global Boundary Stratotype Section and Point for the Meghalayan Stage of the Holocene, documenting climate transitions and speleothem archives essential to Quaternary studies.
- The **Naga Hill Ophiolite** in Nagaland presents uplifted oceanic crust and mantle rocks on continental margins, offering direct access to mid-ocean ridge processes and plate-tectonic histories rare on the Indian subcontinent.
- **Erra Matti Dibbalu** near Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh comprises striking red sand dune systems recognized as a Geoheritage Monument in **2016**, preserving palaeo-environmental signatures and coastal geomorphology of high scientific interest.
- The **Natural Heritage of Tirumala Hills** in Andhra Pradesh features the **Eparchaeon Unconformity** and the **Silathoranam** natural arch within **Venkateswara National Park** of the **Seshachalam Biosphere Reserve**, capturing over **1.5 billion years** of Earth history in a contiguous landscape.
- The **Varkala Cliffs** in Kerala expose the **Warkalli Formation** of Mio-Pliocene age with perennial springs and distinctive marine erosion landforms, integrating geological significance with sustainable geotourism potential.

UNESCO Process and India's Heritage Profile

- Placement on the **Tentative List** is a formal prerequisite under the **World Heritage Convention (1972)**, requiring each State Party to identify sites of Outstanding Universal Value at least **one year** prior to any inscription dossier.
- India's portfolio now totals **69** Tentative List properties poised for future nominations, while **44** Indian **World Heritage Sites** are already inscribed and protected within national and international conservation frameworks.
- Committee oversight rests with the World Heritage Programme, and India's ratification in **1977** integrates domestic conservation with international evaluation, periodic reporting, and reactive monitoring cycles.

Governance, Milestones, and Next Steps

- The **Archaeological Survey of India** serves as the nodal authority to assemble comparative analyses, boundaries, integrity and authenticity assessments, and management plans needed to convert **Tentative List** entries into full nominations.
- Following the seven natural additions, India's next steps include preparing nomination dossiers with clear Outstanding Universal Value statements, robust long-term protection regimes, and stakeholder consultations across State agencies and local communities.
- India's hosting of the **46th Session of the World Heritage Committee** in **2024** signaled sustained commitment to multilateral heritage governance and positions New Delhi to advance future Indian nominations built on rigorous science, community participation, and verifiable conservation outcomes.

17 CRISIL STUDY "THALI INDEX"

ECONOMY

IN FOCUS

A new **Thali Index** analysis finds that in **2023–24** as many as **40%** of rural Indians and **10%** of urban Indians could not afford **two thalis** a day even after imputing **PDS** support, signalling **food deprivation** that headline poverty ratios do not capture. Using **HCES 2023–24** food expenditure, the study shows deprivation is higher when only market purchases are counted—up to **50%** in rural areas and **20%** in urban areas—and remains sizable after adding subsidised items. The affordability gap persists despite very low recent estimates of extreme poverty, indicating that an income-based **poverty line** can understate constraints on actual food consumption faced by households.

From Calorie Poverty Lines to a Food-Basket Metric

- Traditional poverty estimation in India derived thresholds from expenditures needed to meet minimum **calorie** requirements, classifying individuals below that benchmark as poor.
- The alternative **Thali Index** converts per-capita daily food outlay into the number of balanced meals—rice/roti, dal, vegetables, curd, and salad—thereby aligning affordability with energy, nourishment, and meal satisfaction typical of Indian diets.
- For **2023–24**, prices are fixed at ₹30 for a **vegetarian thali** and ₹58 for a **non-vegetarian thali**, consistent with all-India averages for home-cooked meals.
- Computation uses actual daily food spending from **HCES 2023–24**, including purchases and the imputed value of **PDS** and other welfare items, recognising that non-food essentials (housing, transport, telephony, health, education) compete for limited budgets.

What the Thali Index Reveals

- With only market purchases, up to **50%** of rural residents and **20%** of urban residents could not afford **two vegetarian thalis** per day; after including imputed **PDS** items, deprivation still measured **40%** (rural) and **10%** (urban).
- Rural fractiles show daily food outlay rising from ₹35.35 at the **0–5%** fractile to ₹129.22 at the **95–100%** fractile, converting to **1.18** to **4.31** vegetarian thalis; urban fractiles rise from ₹44.82 to ₹199.49, converting to **1.49** to **6.65** thalis, reflecting higher city-side command.
- When the standard is one **vegetarian thali** plus one **non-vegetarian thali** (₹88 total), up to **80%** of rural residents and **50%** of urban residents could not afford this combination in **2023–24**.
- Divergence with low poverty headcounts arises because poverty measures threshold **total consumption**, whereas the **Thali Index** evaluates **actual food spending**, the residual after essential non-food outlays; at inflation-updated poverty lines, as much as **30%** of rural and **20%** of urban residents could still not buy two vegetarian thalis if all income were hypothetically available for food.

PDS Effects, Leakage, and Nutrition Re-targeting

- Including imputed **PDS** support reduces the share unable to afford two vegetarian thalis to **40%** (rural) and **10%** (urban), confirming mitigation but leaving substantial **food deprivation**.
- In rural India, the **90–95%** fractile received **88%** of the per-capita subsidy of the **0–5%** fractile despite far higher total consumption, indicating leakage to better-off groups; in urban India, incidence is more progressive yet about **80%** still receive subsidised or free grain even when their food command exceeds the two-thali norm.
- Cereals intake appears roughly equalised across the distribution and forms about **10%** of average household budgets, limiting nutrition gains when the **PDS** focuses mainly on rice and wheat.

18

INDIA SECURES ISA LICENCE TO
EXPLORE POLYMETALLIC SULPHIDES

SCIENCE

IN FOCUS

India has secured a first-ever **International Seabed Authority** exploration licence to survey **polymetallic sulphides** in the **Carlsberg Ridge**, authorising work over about **3,00,000 sq km** in the northwest Indian Ocean. The agreement was signed in **September 2025** in **New Delhi**, and it is the first licence globally for exploration of such deposits in this ridge, which lies on the boundary between the **Indian** and **Arabian** tectonic plates and stretches from near **Rodrigues** Island to the **Owen fracture zone**. The deposits targeted are rich in **manganese, cobalt, nickel, and copper**, minerals crucial for batteries, renewable-energy hardware, and high-tech manufacturing, and the licence advances India's deep-sea resource strategy under global rules.

Legal and Geological Context

- Under **UNCLOS**, coastal states may claim **continental shelf** rights generally up to **350 nautical miles** (and, in the **Bay of Bengal**, in some cases up to **500 nautical miles**), while resources in the high seas' "Area" fall under the **International Seabed Authority**.
- Globally, **19 countries** hold ISA-granted exploration rights, and in total **29 exploration contracts** covering more than **1.3 million sq km** have been issued across the Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans.
- The **Carlsberg Ridge** is the northern section of the Central Indian Ridge at a divergent plate boundary, and the targeted **polymetallic sulphides** (also described as sulphur-rich nodules in reports) form around hydrothermal vents where metal-bearing fluids mix with cold seawater.

India's Timeline and Licence Scope

- India's seabed engagement began in **March 2002** with an ISA contract for **polymetallic nodules** in the **Central Indian Ocean Basin**, extended twice and currently valid until **24 March 2027**.
- A second ISA contract signed in **September 2016** granted exploration rights for **polymetallic sulphides** along the **Indian Ocean Ridge**, valid until **September 2031**.
- In **January 2024**, India applied for additional areas in the **Carlsberg Ridge** and the **Afanasy-Nikitin Seamount (ANS)**; the **ANS** request remains pending due to a competing claim from **Sri Lanka**.
- The new **September 2025** licence authorises exploration of a **~3,00,000 sq km** tract in the **Carlsberg Ridge**, adding to India's portfolio and positioning survey vessels to generate geological and environmental baselines for future decisions.

Strategic Significance and Risk Considerations

- The licence secures access to **critical minerals** that can reduce import dependence and bolster supply-chain resilience for electric mobility, grid storage, and electronics, while strengthening India's ocean-power profile.
- Exploration rights also confer geopolitical leverage by discouraging rival claims; India's 2024 applications were spurred partly by reports of **Chinese** survey activity in nearby waters, making timely access strategically valuable.
- Commercial exploitation remains controversial because deep-sea disturbance may cause irreversible biodiversity loss; India must balance strategic aims with **environmental safeguards**, impact assessments, and robust monitoring before any extraction.
- High capital costs, technological challenges in subsea robotics, and uncertain economics have slowed global mining, underscoring the current focus on surveys, data collection, and precautionary governance rather than immediate production.

19

ASI TO REVISE SARNATH PLAQUE,
CREDITS BENARES RULER'S FAMILY

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

The **ASI** is preparing a corrected main plaque at **Sarnath** to credit **Jagat Singh** of the Benares ruler's family with exposing the site's archaeological importance in **1787–88**, coinciding with a **UNESCO** team's review after India nominated Sarnath for the **World Heritage** List for the 2025–26 cycle. The revision challenges the older attribution to British officials **Mr. Duncan** and **Col. E. Mackenzie** (1798) and aligns the public record with archival references to an earlier digging ordered by **Jagat Singh** that first brought key remains to light. The **ASI Director-General** confirmed that the exposure year on the plaque will be revised and that updated text on recent excavations may be included as part of the site interpretation changes.

Historical Attribution and Plaque Revision

- The existing plaque lists successive British-era excavations by **Alexander Cunningham** (1835–36), **Major Kittoe** (1851–52), **F. O. Oertel** (1904–05), **Sir John Marshall** (1907), **M. H. Hargreaves** (1914–15), and **Dayaram Sahni**, whereas the new plaque will foreground **Jagat Singh's** 1787–88 digging as the first exposure.
- Museum records at Sarnath note that **Jagat Singh** ordered digging at the mound to obtain building material, during which a casket containing **Buddhist relics** was found, with parts presently held by the **Asiatic Society, Kolkata**.
- Earlier in 2025, a plaque at the **Dharmarajika Stupa** was already corrected to remove the description of **Jagat Singh** as a “destroyer,” and it now states that the structure “came to light” due to his actions and was once known as **Jagat Singh Stupa**.
- A family submission seeks parallel corrections on the cultural notice board, and the ASI has indicated that subjective colonial attributions on older plaques can be updated when later evidence supports revision.

Site Significance and Key Monuments

- **Sarnath**, about 10 km from **Varanasi**, is where the Buddha delivered the first sermon (Dharmachakra-pravartana) around **528 BCE**, initiating the **Buddhist Sangha** and anchoring the site's religious, historical, and cultural importance.
- Mauryan patronage under **Ashoka** established stupas, monasteries, and the **Ashokan pillar** whose **Lion Capital** is India's **national emblem**, with the capital preserved in the Sarnath Archaeological Museum.
- The **Dhamek Stupa**, initially attributed to **Ashoka** and enlarged later, is a massive cylinder about **43.6 m** high and **28 m** in diameter, and its lower courses exhibit floral and geometric motifs associated with **Gupta** art.
- The **Chaukhandi Stupa** commemorates the Buddha's meeting with his first disciples and bears a Mughal-era pavilion, while the **Mulagandha Kuti Vihar** (1931) built by the Mahabodhi Society contains frescoes depicting episodes from the Buddha's life.
- The precinct retains extensive monastic ruins from the **3rd century BCE** to the **11th century CE**, and the site also holds links to **Jainism**, with multilingual plaques including **Japanese** to serve international visitors.

Excavations, Timeline, and Evidence

- Formal protection began after **1861** with the establishment of the **ASI** under **Alexander Cunningham**, but the new interpretation foregrounds pre-colonial exposure by **Jagat Singh** and recognises activity predating **Ashoka**.
- Excavations led by archaeologist **B. R. Mani** in **2013–14** investigated the period between the Buddha and **Ashoka** and reported material suggesting sustained **Buddhist** activity at **Sarnath** for more than a century before Mauryan interventions.

20

EXTENSION OF PRESIDENT'S RULE
IN MANIPUR

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

President's Rule in **Manipur** has been extended by **six months** from **13 August 2025**, taking its validity to **February 2026**, after approval by the **Lok Sabha** and adoption by the **Rajya Sabha** through a statutory resolution. The extension follows the initial proclamation imposed on **13 February 2025**, with the **Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai** stating that there has been **one incident of violence** since imposition and **no deaths in the last four months**. The motion in the Upper House was carried by **voice vote** amid disruptions, and the Chair emphasized adherence to constitutional timelines for disposing statutory resolutions within their validity window.

Parliamentary Action and Timeline

- The **Rajya Sabha** passed the statutory resolution on **5 August 2025**, following the **Lok Sabha** approval a week earlier, thereby fulfilling the requirement that both Houses clear the proclamation within specified periods for continuance.
- The resolution extends central administration in Manipur beyond **13 August 2025** for a further **six months**, aligning with the constitutional scheme under which extensions occur in **six-month** blocks subject to parliamentary approval.
- During the same sitting, the Upper House also adopted a separate resolution to amend the **Second Schedule to the Customs Tariff Act, 1975**, marking additional legislative business completed alongside the Manipur measure.

Constitutional Framework for President's Rule

- **Article 356** empowers the President to assume a state's administration upon breakdown of constitutional machinery, acting on a **Governor's report** or otherwise, with the proclamation requiring approval by both Houses within **two months**.
- Once approved, **President's Rule** operates for **six months** at a time and may continue up to **three years**, with each renewal needing parliamentary approval and, beyond **one year**, either a **National Emergency** in force or an **Election Commission** certification that elections cannot be held.
- **Article 365** supports intervention when a State fails to comply with Union directions, while the **S.R. Bommai** judgment subjects the use of **Article 356** to **judicial review**, guarding against partisan misuse and enabling restoration when a viable majority emerges.
- Revocation can be issued at any time by the President, typically upon formation of a stable ministry or the successful conduct of assembly elections that restore regular constitutional governance.

Governance Implications and Next Steps

- With the extension to **February 2026**, executive authority in **Manipur** continues to be exercised by the **Governor** on behalf of the President, while the assembly may remain **dissolved** or in **suspended animation** as per the proclamation's terms.
- The Union has indicated continued **development** measures and security coordination, and any subsequent renewal will require fresh **parliamentary** approval based on a reviewed assessment of constitutional normalcy and election feasibility.
- Progress toward revocation will depend on restoration of **public order**, administrative stability, and readiness for **assembly elections**, consistent with the safeguards embedded in **Article 356** and reinforced by **S.R. Bommai**.

21

SAWALKOTE HYDROPOWER
PROJECT

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

The stalled **Sawalkote Hydropower Project** on the **Chenab River** in **Jammu & Kashmir** has been fast-tracked for appraisal after the **Indus Waters Treaty** was placed in **abeyance** following the **April 2025 Pahalgam attack**, with the Environment Ministry's **Expert Appraisal Committee** set to decide on environmental clearance. The **Forest Advisory Committee** granted an exemption from **cumulative impact** and **carrying capacity** studies in **July 2025**, citing the project's initiation in **1984** and the **2013** prospective applicability of such guidelines, while the final forest clearance remains contingent on environmental clearance. The project is described as a run-of-river scheme but proposes a **192.5-metre** concrete gravity dam and a **530 MCM** reservoir over **1,159 hectares**, making Sawalkote one of the largest planned hydropower projects on a **western river**.

Treaty Context & River Rights

- The **Indus Waters Treaty** signed on **19 September 1960** in **Karachi**, with **World Bank** facilitation, governs the distribution of the **Indus basin** between **India** and **Pakistan** across six main rivers.
- Under the treaty, **eastern rivers**—**Ravi**, **Beas**, and **Sutlej**—are for India's **exclusive use**, while **western rivers**—**Indus**, **Jhelum**, and **Chenab**—permit India only **limited, non-consumptive** uses such as certain irrigation, **run-of-the-river power**, very limited storage, and domestic uses subject to conditions.
- The **Indus Waters Commission** conducts a general **inspection every five years** in river parts, and it holds **regular meetings twice a year**, with **over 100** inspection tours and **over 100** meetings recorded to date.

Project Specifications & Clearances

- **Installed capacity** totals **1,856–1,865 MW** (Stage-I **1,406 MW**, Stage-II **450 MW**), with expected annual generation of **over 7,000 million units** once commissioned.
- The project proposes **846 hectares** of **forest diversion** across **Udhampur**, **Mahore**, **Batote**, and **Ramban**, requiring felling of **2,22,081 trees**, including **1,26,462** in **Ramban** district.
- Earlier, the **EAC** recommended environmental clearance in **January 2017**, but the final order was withheld pending forest clearance; the public hearing occurred in **January 2016** and baseline data are being refreshed through **NHPC** primary surveys in **July 2022**, **January 2023**, and **May 2023**.
- The **FAC** exemption followed letters from the **Power Ministry (11 June 2025)** and **Home Affairs (13 June 2025)** stressing strategic significance and the need for swift construction to leverage Chenab's potential.

Implementation Status & Regional Hydropower

- Multiple **tenders** have been floated for Sawalkote components after suspension of the **IWT**, signalling prioritised execution subject to the **EAC** decision and final statutory clearances.
- The **Chenab** already hosts major assets: the **390-MW Dulhasti** at **Kishtwar**, the **890-MW Baglihar** at **Ramban**, and the **690-MW Salal** at **Reasi**, creating a near "**bumper-to-bumper**" hydropower cascade on this **western river**.
- Under the treaty framework visualised in the river-basin map, India's **exclusive rights** lie on the **eastern rivers**, while **limited rights** on the **western rivers** have historically constrained storage and consumptive use, shaping design choices such as **run-of-the-river power** across the basin.

22 CHILD NUTRITION REPORT 2025

INDICES & REPORTS

IN FOCUS

A global UNICEF assessment reports that **one in five** children and adolescents aged **5–19** are living with **overweight**, with **obesity 9.4%** now exceeding **underweight 9.2%** for the first time, and it attributes rising risk to **ultra-processed foods** and weak protections in children's **food environments**. The report documents higher **chain outlet** density and pervasive **marketing** that increase exposure to unhealthy products, while school audits across **South Asia** found **unhealthy foods** and **sugary drinks** more available than fresh **fruits** or **vegetables**. Regulatory coverage remains limited globally, with only **18%** of countries having **mandatory school standards** and only **19%** imposing **national taxes** on unhealthy foods and **sugar-sweetened beverages**, underscoring large policy gaps.

Global Evidence from UNICEF

- The study links the growth of **convenience stores**, **supermarkets**, and **hypermarkets** (as “chain outlets”) to greater availability and promotion of **unhealthy beverages** and **snacks**, shaping children's purchases and habitual diets.
- The **U-Report 2023** poll across eight **South Asian** countries found that **unhealthy items** were more commonly stocked in **secondary schools** than **fresh produce**, indicating that retail and school settings jointly condition exposure.
- Data visualised in the review show rising counts of **overweight** among **5–9** and **10–14** cohorts, confirming that risk concentrates in middle childhood and early adolescence when marketing and **school canteens** heavily influence choices.

India's Trends and Drivers

- Indian indicators show rapid growth of **overweight/obesity**: prevalence among **under-fives** rose **127%** from **1.5% (NFHS-3, 2005–06)** to **3.4% (NFHS-5, 2019–21)**; among adolescents, girls increased by **125%** and boys by **288%** between the same rounds.
- Projections estimate **27 million** Indian children and adolescents with **obesity** by **2030**, accounting for **11%** of the global burden, if current trajectories persist.
- Diets have shifted toward **ultra-processed foods** and **sugary beverages**, with India's UPF market expanding from **USD 0.9 billion (2006)** to **USD 37.9 billion (2019)** at over **33%** annual growth, aided by **modern retail** penetration and targeted **digital ads**.
- Early-life determinants (maternal under-nutrition, sub-optimal **breastfeeding**) and lifestyle changes (**low activity**, high **screen time**) compound risk, while social norms in which women and girls often eat **last and least** exacerbate inequities.

Health, Economic Costs and Current Actions

- Childhood **obesity** raises lifetime risk of **diabetes**, **cardiovascular disease**, **hypertension**, and specific **cancers**, and it is harder to reverse than general overweight, heightening prevention value.
- The estimated cost of **obesity** in India was about **USD 29 billion** in **2019** ($\approx$ **1% GDP**) and could reach **2.5% of GDP** by **2060** without corrective measures, while **unhealthy diets** contribute substantially to the country's **disease burden**.
- Ongoing responses include **Fit India**, **Eat Right India**, **POSHAN Abhiyaan 2.0**, and **Mission LiFE**, plus actions such as the **Stop Obesity** campaign urging a **10%** reduction in household **cooking oil** use, school and workplace **sugar/oil boards**, and the adoption of **WHO** best-practice limits on **trans-fat**.

23

ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOUNTING ON
FOREST 2025

INDICES & REPORTS

IN FOCUS

The MoSPI released **Environmental Accounting 2025** on **25 September 2025** at the **29th CoCSSO** in Chandigarh, presenting India's first dedicated forest accounts aligned to the **SEEA** framework. The publication is issued in **two volumes**, providing national methodology and indicators (Volume I) and **state/UT** accounts with decadal changes and literature review (Volume II), with access available on the ministry website. Headline findings include a rise in **forest cover** to **7.15 lakh sq. km (21.76%** of geographical area), gains in **Recorded Forest Area**, higher **growing stock**, and substantial valuation of **provisioning services** and **carbon retention**.

Framework and Coverage

- India adopted the **SEEA** in **2018**, integrating environment-economy data to track assets, extent, condition, and ecosystem services within an internationally comparable statistical system.
- Volume I details four accounts: **Physical Asset Accounts** (area under forest cover classes over time), **Extent Accounts** (area and change of ecosystems), **Condition Accounts** (characteristics and quality, such as **growing stock**), and **Service Accounts** (valuation of provisioning, regulating, and cultural services).
- Volume II compiles **state/UT** statistics on forest assets, extent, condition, and services, highlighting **decadal** change and summarising work undertaken in selected jurisdictions.

Ecosystem Services Valuation

- Provisioning services (timber and non-timber) rose from ₹30.72 to ₹37.93 thousand crore between 2011–12 and 2021–22, equivalent to 0.16% of GDP in 2021–22; top state contributors were Maharashtra (₹23.78 thousand crore), Gujarat (₹14.15 thousand crore), and Kerala (₹8.55 thousand crore).
- Regulating services from carbon retention increased 51.82%, from ₹409.10 to ₹620.97 thousand crore between 2015–16 and 2021–22, equal to 2.63% of GDP in 2021–22; leading contributors were Arunachal Pradesh (₹296 thousand crore), Uttarakhand (₹156.6 thousand crore), and Assam (₹129.96 thousand crore).
- Cultural services are recognised within the service accounts, complementing provisioning and regulating values to reflect multi-dimensional forest benefits under SEEA.

Key Accounts and Indicators

- **Physical Asset:** From 2010–11 to 2021–22, forest cover increased by 17,444.61 sq. km (22.50% increase over the base used), reaching 7.15 lakh sq. km; the largest additions were in Kerala (4,137 sq. km), Karnataka (3,122 sq. km), and Tamil Nadu (2,606 sq. km).
- **Extent Account:** Between 2013–2023, net forest extent rose 3,356 sq. km, largely from reclassification and boundary adjustments; RFA shares rose notably in Uttarakhand (6.3%), Odisha (1.97%), and Jharkhand (1.9%).
- **Condition Account:** National growing stock increased by 305.53 million cu m (7.32%) during 2013–2023; the largest state contributions were Madhya Pradesh (136 million cu m), Chhattisgarh (51 million cu m), and Telangana (28 million cu m), with Andaman & Nicobar Islands (77 million cu m) leading among UTs.

24

CHINA TO RETAIN 'DEVELOPING
STATUS' BUT FORGO WTO BENEFITS

ECONOMY

IN FOCUS

China announced on **23–24 September 2025** that it will not seek **SDT** in current and future **WTO** negotiations while retaining its **developing status**, with confirmation by Premier **Li Qiang** and statements from delegate **Li Yihong** in **Geneva**. The **WTO** Director-General **Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala** stated that China “will no longer have access to **Special and Differential Treatment** in new **WTO agreements**,” describing the step as significant for **WTO reform**. **SDT** provisions grant developing members longer implementation periods, preferential market-access flexibilities, technical assistance, and selected exemptions; members self-declare status, and other members can contest misuse.

WTO Context and China's Position

- **Developing status** at the **WTO** is self-designated and does not automatically confer benefits under unilateral schemes such as the **GSP**; **SDT** in **WTO** accords is negotiated, agreement-specific, and time-bound.
- China will keep its **developing status** and previously acquired rights but will forgo **SDT** claims in new accords, presenting itself as a “responsible major developing country” willing to undertake stricter obligations while supporting **multilateralism**.
- China's economy is about **USD 19 trillion** in 2025, up from roughly **USD 1.3 trillion** at **WTO** accession in **2001**, situating it among large middle-income economies within **SDT** debates.

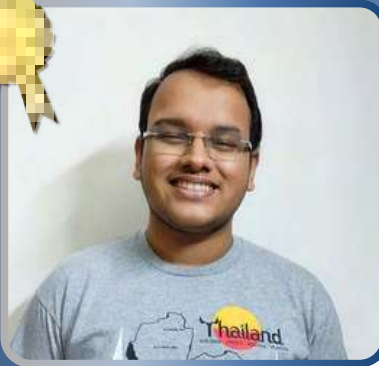
Implications for Negotiations and India

- The decision reduces a key negotiating impasse over blanket **SDT** eligibility and may facilitate progress on new **WTO** agreements by narrowing disputes about self-designation.
- The development enables **India** to advocate **SDT** frameworks that distinguish **large middle-income** from **low-income** developing members, using objective criteria while preserving targeted flexibilities for least-developed and small economies.
- India can press for calibrated **SDT**—longer timelines and capacity-building for weaker members, tighter thresholds for high-capacity members, and clearer review clauses in future **WTO** texts.

India's Trade Architecture Snapshot

- FTAs with neighbours include the India–Sri Lanka FTA, India–Nepal Treaty of Trade, and India–Bhutan Agreement on Trade, Commerce and Transit; these give tariff concessions subject to negative lists.
- Regional pacts include the India–ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (India + 10 ASEAN states), the SAFTA under SAARC, and participation in the Global System of Trade Preferences.
- CEPA/CECA agreements, which are broader than tariff-only FTAs, include CEPA with the UAE, South Korea, and Japan, and CECA with Singapore and Malaysia, covering services, investment, and regulatory cooperation.
- Other arrangements cited are India–Australia ECTA, an early harvest with Thailand, and the India–Mauritius CECTA, alongside PTAs such as APTA, SAPTA, India–MERCOSUR PTA, and India's PTAs with Chile and Afghanistan.
- An early harvest scheme precedes a comprehensive FTA/CEPA by liberalising a selected positive list of products, while PTAs grant limited tariff preferences on agreed lines rather than broad duty elimination.

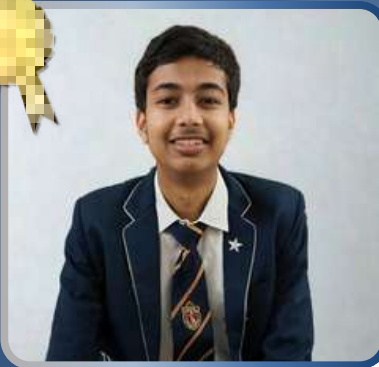
VOICES VICTORIES



AIR 2, CLAT 2025

DAIWIK AGARWALA

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



AIR 2, AILET 2025

CHAITANYA GHOSH

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



AIR 4, CLAT 2025

ADITYA GAUTAM ANKHAD

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

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

VOICES VICTORIES



AIR 6, AILET 2025

DHRUV KAMATH

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



AIR 10, AILET 2025

VIDISHA SINGH

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



AIR 24 AILET 2025
& OXFORD

SAMYUKTHA KOVILAKATH

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

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

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

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

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

SECTION-A: ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Passage:- 1 The latest storm over “free speech” came when Disney’s ABC yanked Jimmy Kimmel Live! after the host joked in the aftermath of conservative activist Charlie Kirk’s assassination. The White House nodded, boycotts trended, and corporate statements poured in like pre-mixed cocktails. The episode revealed something we often pretend to forget: Speech is never just speech. It is tied to owners, advertisers, regulators, and moods of power. We like to believe free speech is a clean switch – on or off. In truth, it is a mixer. Volume turned up here, cut down there, fine-tuned by those who control the sound system. The First Amendment in America protects citizens from the state, not from their bosses. A company can silence you in the name of brand safety or culture fit, and still claim to be defending freedom. The law keeps you out of prison, but it does not guarantee you a primetime slot or even the courage to raise your hand in a meeting.

Inside offices, “freedom” is usually reduced to posters and pep talks. Real speech is managed through appraisals, non-disparagement clauses, and a well-oiled culture of “fit”. Sociologists have long pointed to the chilling effect. Employees swallow harassment, bad leadership, and even honest ideas, because the risk of offending power outweighs the right to speak. The workplace is not a marketplace of ideas. It is a mall with security guards, where even your tone of voice is policed. And rulers? Show me one head of state who enjoys being mocked daily on front pages and television screens. Even in strong democracies, governments lean on media houses, whisper to platforms, and signal displeasure. In the Kimmel episode, political pressure hung in the background like humidity. Louis Brandeis once said the purpose of speech is to free us from irrational fears. Yet, in practice, it is fear – of advertisers pulling out, regulators frowning, mobs trending – that silences faster than any censor. Theorists have been saying this for a century. Walter Lippmann spoke of the “manufacture of consent.” Democracies, he argued, need managed persuasion to survive. Noam Chomsky later showed how ownership and advertising shape journalism long before a censor’s hand. By the time a talk-show host sits at the desk, the boundaries of expression have already been marked in pencil by economics and access.

[<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/donald-trump-jimmy-kimmel-free-speech-stephen-colbert-10260746/>]

Q1. What is the central claim of the passage?

- A) The Kimmel episode was an exceptional overreaction that could be solved if the state enforced the First Amendment more aggressively inside workplaces.
- B) Online mobs have replaced corporations and governments as the sole drivers of modern censorship, rendering legacy media irrelevant.
- C) Free speech operates within overlapping power structures—corporate ownership, advertising markets, and state pressure—so legal protections alone do not guarantee access, amplification, or nerve.
- D) Talk shows should avoid politics because advertisers want brand-safe neutrality, which is the only way to preserve freedom of expression.

Q2. In context, the word “yanked” (from the first paragraph) most nearly means:

- A) Abruptly withdrawn from broadcast, implying a sudden cancellation rather than a gentle or partial change.

B) Mildly criticized by executives while leaving the show’s schedule untouched.

C) Temporarily shifted to a later time slot pending routine review by standards and practices.

D) Quietly reprimanded without any external action or change to programming.

Q3. The passage compares free speech to a “mixer.” Which analogy best captures that comparison?

A) Constitution : prison :: umbrella : sunshine – each prevents a single, clearly defined harm in a binary way.

B) Volume knobs : song :: corporate/regulatory controls : public expression – different actors modulate how loudly ideas are heard.

C) Microphone : singer :: law : citizen – one merely holds the other without shaping the output’s dynamics.

D) Town square : debate :: mall : open assembly – both places offer identical freedoms regardless of private control.

Q4. The line “The law keeps you out of prison, but it does not guarantee you a primetime slot or even the courage to raise your hand in a meeting” most strongly implies that:

- A) The First Amendment is obsolete and should be replaced with comprehensive corporate speech codes.
- B) Once government censorship is absent, free speech challenges largely disappear.
- C) Rights to speak do not entail rights to private amplification, workplace protection from consequences, or guaranteed platforms.
- D) Employers who limit employee speech are acting unconstitutionally and can be prosecuted.

Q5. Choose the best revision that combines the ideas of governments quietly pressuring media/platforms and fear outpacing censors, while preserving the author’s tone and metaphorical texture:

- A) Governments in democracies are entirely neutral toward media, so only mobs cause fear that spreads faster than censors.
- B) Since democracies never pressure media houses, any fear that silences speech must come solely from advertising boycotts.

- C) Governments loudly censor the press every day, proving that fear is irrelevant to modern speech dynamics and metaphors like “humidity” are overstated.
- D) Even in strong democracies, governments lean on media and signal displeasure; like humidity, that pressure breeds a fear that often quiets speech faster than any censor.

Q6. What is the author chiefly doing by invoking Lippmann and Chomsky near the end?

- A) Dismissing earlier theorists as outdated for failing to anticipate talk-show controversies.
- B) Showing that a talk-show host misunderstood economics and media buying.
- C) Grounding the argument in established critiques that media constraints arise from ownership and advertising long before overt censorship.
- D) Arguing that “managed persuasion” is unconstitutional under the First Amendment and must be criminalized.

Passage:- 2 “Hindu girls called basavis were recorded in the 1890s as wearing male clothing and being given male privileges”. In fact, in early modernity, Indian women sent petitions to European magistrates to register them as men. It has been recorded in colonial documents. See this petition found in the Castes and Tribes in Southern India.

“Petition of _____ aged about 17 or 18

I have agreed to become a Basavi, and get myself stamped by my guru (priest) according to the customs of my caste. I request that my proper age, which entitles me to be stamped may be personally ascertained and permission granted to be stamped.”

While this practice was popular among elite Hindu castes, where daughters with no male siblings anointed themselves as mxn with the community’s support, there is also precedence of “cross-dressing” and transness among womxn from subaltern(ised) communities. The very fact that womxn’s armies were often led by Dalit womxn like Commander Kuyili and Jhalkari Bai points to an alternative queer protofeminist history that has been edited out by Brahmanical patriarchy in collusion with the British Empire. Kuyili was the feisty daughter of a cobbler who went on to command Queen Velu Nachiyar’s army, playing a crucial role in defeating the British at Sivaganga. She set herself on fire to blow up the enemy’s armoury. This was in 1780, the first time that “natives” fought a war for freedom from the East India Company on the subcontinent. The valiant Jhalkari Bai came from the Kori community of weavers. She rose to become the head of the Durga Dal, Rani Lakshmibai’s female brigade. Jhalkari Bai fought the British to the very end and died during the Revolt of 1857. Proto-nationalists and nationalists buried these womxn’s names as they weren’t highborn. As casteist Brahmanical patriarchs themselves, they didn’t care to celebrate these warrior heroines as viranganas. On the other hand, the British forgot about them as they did not contribute to the “Indian woman-as-victim” narrative nor did they align with the notion that Dalit womxn needed rescuing. For generations, Dalit womxn have fought for themselves. What they needed (/need) are allies.

Bahujan, Muslim, and Sikh (wo)men, meanwhile, were employed by enterprises, palaces, and armies. To guard, to fight, to perform their gender as they chose fit. For the Europeans, such womxn appeared to be Amazons, like some anachronistic remnant of Greek myths. They didn't know what to make of these dominant females. For these womxn displayed their masculinity every day in real life. They didn't shy away from employing their martial skills. And somehow, "native" mxn seem to have respected their boundaries. In fact, "natives" employed such women to protect their persons. Many kings (and queens) are known to have had all-female security units. The Urdubegis, for instance, were female soldiers who protected the Mughal royal family. They were known to have excellent weapon skills: "they were trained in the use of long-range weapons such as bows and arrows, and spears, as well as short daggers and swords".

[<https://scroll.in/article/1086464/indian-lgbtq-history-how-the-british-criminalised-those-who-were-sexually-agentive-and-queer>]

Q7. Which statement best captures the central thrust of the passage's argument?

- A) It reconstructs a suppressed lineage of gender-nonconforming and martial womxn across caste locations, showing how Brahmanical patriarchy and colonial narratives jointly erased or domesticated their visibility.
- B) It argues that British colonialism alone fabricated myths about Indian womxn while Indian elites consistently celebrated subaltern heroines in official memory.
- C) It offers a purely biographical tribute to Kuyili and Jhalkari Bai with no claims about caste, gender, or historiography.
- D) It maintains that all-female armies were a European invention later imported into India to discipline "native" men.

Q8. In the sentence "For the Europeans, such womxn appeared to be Amazons, like some anachronistic remnant of Greek myths," the word "anachronistic" most nearly means:

- A) deliberately mythical in order to deceive contemporary readers
- B) out of its proper time; belonging to an earlier period and therefore seeming temporally out-of-place
- C) culturally foreign yet perfectly synchronized with local custom
- D) unusually dominant in a way that is statistically uncommon

Q9. Which analogy most closely mirrors the passage's account of how Brahmanical patriarchy and British imperial discourse shaped public memory of these womxn?

- A) A single spotlight that brightens one actor while leaving everyone else in the dark.
- B) A loud street band drowning out a soloist, so the soloist can no longer be heard.

- C) Two semi-opaque filters layered over a lamp, jointly muting and screening certain wavelengths, so only select colors pass through and the rest fade from view.
- D) Two megaphones amplifying the same voice, doubling its reach and ensuring all nuances carry.

Q10. In the clause "dominant females" (line 30 of the passage), which option is the best antonym for "dominant" as used there?

- A) prevalent B) ascendant
- C) preeminent D) subordinate

Q11. Choose the option that best revises the second sentence of this pair for idiom and parallelism while preserving the author's meaning: "Bahujan, Muslim, and Sikh (wo)mxn, meanwhile, were employed by enterprises, palaces, and armies. To guard, to fight, to perform their gender as they chose fit."

- A) ...were employed by enterprises, palaces, and armies to guard, to fight, and to perform their gender as they saw fit.
- B) ...were employed by enterprises, palaces, and armies to guarding, to fight and perform their gender as they choose fitting.
- C) ...were employed by enterprises, palaces, and armies to guard, fight, and performing their gender as they had chosen fit.
- D) ...were employed by enterprises, palaces, and armies, to guard and to fight and to perform their gender as they chosen fit.

Q12. Which inference is most strongly supported by the passage?

- A) European observers fully approved of womxn's martial roles and routinely documented them with admiration.
- B) Kuyili's and Jhalkari Bai's legacies endured chiefly because nationalist historians prioritized subaltern narratives.

C) The Urdubegis' training suggests that Mughal rulers prohibited womxn from bearing arms in palace precincts.

D) The erasure of these figures stemmed from intersecting forces—upper-caste nationalist priorities and colonial “woman-as-victim” scripts—so what is needed is allyship rather than paternalistic “rescue.”

Passage:- 3 President Donald Trump's decision to charge new applicants for the H-1B highly skilled non-immigrant visa \$100,000, nearly six times the current fee, has caused widespread consternation that not only might the lives of tens of thousands of potential visa applicants in the tech space be impacted, leading to “humanitarian consequences” for families, as mentioned by India's Ministry of External Affairs, but there will also be widespread disruption among major tech companies in the U.S. that rely on hiring skilled workers under this visa. While the number of visas issued in this category has been capped at 85,000 per year since 2004, and allocations are decided through a lottery, reports based on U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services data suggest that applications for the upcoming fiscal year have dropped to a four-year low of nearly 3,59,000. Indian nationals typically account for 71% of these visas, yet data also suggest that close to 60% of these visa recipients earn less than \$100,000, which, over the longer term, implies that their employers may find it harder to justify hiring such specialised workers from abroad. The External Affairs Ministry's response to the White House action included a reiteration of the fact that “Skilled talent mobility and exchanges have contributed enormously to technology development, innovation, economic growth, competitiveness and wealth creation in the U.S. and India”, yet there is limited scope for South Block to apply pressure, diplomatic or political, to get the policy reversed.

However, the fallout for Indian citizens can be contained if there is a proactive approach by the Government to bolster India's infrastructure and undertake necessary reforms to improve the prospects for the Indian tech industry to make even greater strides than it has done so far. This might be achieved by capitalising on opportunities to develop new capabilities in the Artificial Intelligence space and exploring new markets across Asia, including China and Russia, and in parts of Europe, where the transatlantic contagion of nativist protectionism has not yet found willing takers. While the Trump order is set to expire within a year, there is no guarantee that it would not be extended, making it all the more pertinent for policymakers in India to evolve a long-term plan to reduce reliance of Indian tech workers on the shrinking pool of job opportunities in the U.S. economy. As India and other countries adjust to this new reality of the hostility of the Trump White House to welcoming future innovators, job-creators, and tax-payers to their shores, it is the U.S. rather than other nations that will suffer a shortage of scientific and engineering prowess to fuel economic progress.

[<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/h-1b-maybe-on-donald-trump-and-the-h-1b-visa-fees-hike/article70077214.ece>]

Q13. Which statement best captures the main idea of the passage?

- A) India can readily overturn the U.S. decision through diplomatic and political pressure, so no domestic response is necessary.
- B) The sharp H-1B fee hike will disrupt applicants and U.S. tech firms, India has limited leverage to reverse it, and the prudent response is to build domestic capacity and diversify markets while the U.S. risks a talent shortfall.
- C) The fee hike is purely a humanitarian issue for families and has no bearing on companies or long-term innovation trajectories.

D) The fee policy is unquestionably temporary and therefore requires only short-term coping measures from India.

Q14. In context, the word “consternation” most nearly means:

- A) acute dismay and anxiety in response to unsettling news
- B) careful neutrality in weighing complex policy choices
- C) stubborn skepticism despite mounting evidence
- D) mild curiosity about an unexpected development

Q15. Which revision best improves clarity and parallelism in this sentence while preserving meaning?
“...yet there is limited scope for South Block to apply pressure, diplomatic or political, to get the policy reversed.”

- A) ...yet there is limited scope for South Block applying pressure, diplomatic and political, in order to reverse the policy.
- B) ...yet there is limited scope for South Block to apply a pressure that is diplomatic as well as politically.
- C) ...yet South Block's scope is limited to applying pressure, whether diplomatically or politically, for reversing the policy.
- D) ...yet South Block has limited scope to apply diplomatic or political pressure to reverse the policy.

Q16. As used in “the hostility of the Trump White House,” which option is the best antonym for “hostility”?

- A) ambivalence
- B) leniency
- C) receptiveness
- D) assertiveness

Q17. Which statement is accurate according to the passage?

- A) The H-1B cap was raised above 85,000 after 2015 and applications are at an all-time high this year.
- B) Indian nationals account for 71% of H-1B visas, and fewer than 10% of recipients earn under \$100,000.

C) The External Affairs Ministry is well positioned to apply decisive pressure that will likely reverse the policy.

D) Applications fell to a four-year low of nearly 3,59,000 while the cap remains 85,000 since 2004, and though the order is set to expire within a year, extension remains possible.

Q18. Which of the following exhibits reasoning most similar to the policy approach the author recommends for India?

- A) A startup that faces a sudden hike in a critical supplier's prices invests in its own R&D and simultaneously cultivates alternative suppliers across regions to hedge dependence.
- B) A student, after a tough exam paper, decides to drop the subject entirely and hopes policies will change next year.
- C) A city whose chief trading partner raises tariffs chooses to buy even more from that partner to demonstrate goodwill.
- D) A firm that loses a major client responds by offering exclusive terms to that same client and avoiding all other markets.

Passage:- 4 The Indian cricket ecosystem has for long preferred to have its cake and eat it too when it comes to Pakistan. The material incentive of an India-Pakistan contest has proved impossible to forgo but at the same time, there are also domestic political constituencies to appease. Appearances have constantly mattered more than principles. The public has predictably chosen to ignore it for the most part despite being sufficiently aware of being taken for a ride. There's some routine outrage on the fringes every time there's an announcement of this fixture, which has become an annual event now, but few seem to care in the end. But the Pahalgam terror attack was perhaps a bridge too far for the public mood to remain dissuaded and by now it's clear that the cricket establishment spectacularly failed at gauging how much the people cared. Normal business could no longer pass off as professional obligation no matter how hard the BCCI tried feigning it. Barely a week after Pahalgam, Sony Sports Network stopped televising and streaming Pakistan's premier T20 franchise competition Pakistan Super League (PSL). It was an indication of where the public sentiment lay post the abhorrent attack in which 26 civilians were gunned down for their religious identity as their loved ones were made to stand and watch. The sentiment had only amplified with Operation Sindoor and the cross-border military hostilities that followed over the next few days.

Now, those in charge of running cricket in India do not give the most flattering account of their wisdom but it's still highly unlikely that they missed to read the mood on the street at the time. Holding an India-Pakistan game at the Asia Cup therefore merely in a few months' time has to have felt abundantly insensitive and crass to everyone involved in decision-making. They just counted on – like they always do – the fleeting nature of public mood that would have been consumed by a new set of headlines by then. But that faith turned out to be slightly misplaced. The public anger actually kept intensifying as the fixture approached closer. And this time, even the usually pliant voices had turned hostile. Deflecting the burden of the decision to play Pakistan on the BCCI too was no longer the reliable failsafe as people are clearer than ever in their understanding of the decision-making hierarchy in this matter.

The blame squarely lay with the government that may not have actively encouraged for the game to go on but didn't voice any clear objection either. It's not for nothing that the BCCI and the BJP have grown more and more impossible to tell apart ever since the latter's takeover of the former in 2019. The interests of the two greatly align in off-field matters. The game must go on, for it feeds one mouth too many in the cricket ecosystem, but the political fallout too needs to be mitigated carefully.

[<https://thewire.in/sport/india-pakistan-cricket-rivalry-posturing>]

Q19. Which statement best captures the central argument of the passage?

- A) The cricket establishment has consistently prioritised principles over profit by refusing to play Pakistan, and the public has applauded this moral clarity.
- B) India's cricket ecosystem habitually pursues the commercial lure of India-Pakistan matches while managing optics; after Pahalgam, this calculus misread public anger, exposing the tight alignment of BCCI-government interests.
- C) The author argues that boycotting all international cricket is the only way to honour national sentiment after any security incident.
- D) Public apathy toward India-Pakistan fixtures has deepened so much that administrators can reliably ignore any backlash without consequence.

Q20. In the phrase "even the usually pliant voices had turned hostile," the word "pliant" most nearly means:

- A) outspoken and defiant, often unwilling to compromise
- B) easily influenced or compliant
- C) technically proficient but emotionally detached
- D) outspoken at first but prone to quick reversals

Q21. Which of the following scenarios uses reasoning most similar to the passage's critique in the opening paragraphs?

- A) A university cancels exams during a flood despite losing fee revenue, because principles of safety override profits.
- B) A regulator bans a product permanently after a single complaint, prioritising appearances over all evidence.
- C) A media house refuses a sensational debate despite high ratings, insisting that standards come first.
- D) A broadcaster keeps scheduling a lucrative but polarising show after a tragedy, betting that outrage will fade while it profits from spikes in viewership.

Q22. What does the line "Deflecting the burden of the decision to play Pakistan on the BCCI too was no longer the reliable failsafe..." most strongly imply about the situation?

- A) The BCCI had formally refused to play Pakistan, forcing the government to step in and overrule it.

B) Fans were confused about who decides fixtures and mistakenly blamed players instead of administrators.

C) The public now recognises where power truly lies, so shifting blame onto the BCCI won't shield political authority from accountability.

D) Judicial intervention compelled the match to proceed, making questions of accountability irrelevant.

Q23. Which statement is accurate according to the passage?

- A) Operation Sindoor de-escalated tensions immediately, softening public sentiment before any broadcast decisions were taken.
- B) Within a week of Pahalgam, Sony Sports Network stopped televising and streaming the PSL; the massacre involved 26 civilians targeted for their religious identity.
- C) Administrators genuinely failed to notice public mood, which the author calls unsurprising given their historically flawless judgment.
- D) The author says Asia Cup scheduling was delayed by years to respect sentiment, and therefore drew no criticism.

Q24. Choose the best revision for idiom and clarity while preserving the original meaning of the sentence:

"Now, those in charge of running cricket in India do not give the most flattering account of their wisdom but it's still highly unlikely that they missed to read the mood on the street at the time."

- A) Now, those running Indian cricket may not inspire confidence, yet it is highly unlikely they failed to read the mood on the street at the time.
- B) Now, those running Indian cricket don't inspire the most flattering wisdom account but it's unlikely they were missing to read the street's mood then.
- C) Now, those in charge of running cricket in India are not the most flattering, but highly unlikely they missed reading the mood at the time.
- D) Now, those in charge of running cricket in India don't give the most flattering account of wisdom but it's still highly unlikely that they had missed to read mood on the street then.

SECTION - B : CURRENT AFFAIRS INCLUDING GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

Passage:- 1 When world leaders converge on New York City this week for the annual gathering of the United Nations General Assembly, the organization will be observing its 80th anniversary. But the mood is far from celebratory, as wars rage around the world, a budget crisis looms and questions abound about whether the U.N. is even relevant anymore. Year after year, U.N. officials and world leaders use the annual gathering to put forth lofty ideas and offer elaborate road maps for change. But tangible progress remains stubbornly elusive. Russia's war against Ukraine is more than three years old. The Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza has been raging for nearly two years. And the world is still nowhere near achieving its goals on development or a solution for climate change. Even the United Nations' global humanitarian aid work – one of the few areas where the organization has continued to excel and lead the world – is now threatened by budget cuts, donor apathy and staff reductions.

[<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/21/world/middleeast/un-general-assembly-80th-anniversary.html>]

Q25. The UN General Assembly's inaugural sitting and founding membership figures are best captured by which pair?

- A. 24 Oct 1945; 45 members B. 10 Jan 1946; 50 members
C. 10 Jan 1946; 51 members. D. 01 Nov 1945; 57 members

Q26. In the high-level general debate, the opening-speaker order traditionally is:

- A. Brazil first, then the United States
B. United States first, then Brazil
C. UN Secretary-General first, then the host country
D. Alphabetical by country name, rotating annually

Q27. Identify the correctly matched pairing from the 80th session's key meetings/participants:

- A. India & Germany chair an outreach to back Palestinian statehood
B. France & Saudi Arabia co-chair a meeting to build support for Palestinian statehood
C. President Zelensky chairs a Security Council session on Gaza
D. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio meets Russia's Foreign Minister on strategic cooperation

Q28. Which statement most accurately reflects the UNGA's role and powers?

- A. It can unilaterally impose binding sanctions like the Security Council

B. It was "created" only once the New York HQ opened in 1951

C. Permanent members have veto power within the UNGA's votes

D. It is the principal policy-making organ with one-state-one-vote; its resolutions usually carry political weight rather than binding force

Q29. Who is leading/representing the delegations of Russia and India at the 80th session?

- A. Vladimir Putin and Narendra Modi
B. Dmitry Medvedev and Nirmala Sitharaman
C. Sergei Lavrov and S. Jaishankar
D. Sergey Shoigu and Ajit Doval

Q30. Which attendee-related development is correctly stated?

- A. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian attends after Iran suspended cooperation with the IAEA
B. Qatar's Emir cancels attendance citing domestic scheduling conflicts
C. Premier Li Keqiang represents China in New York
D. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken holds a bilateral with S. Jaishankar on strategic ties

Passage:- 2 The GST Council's decision to reduce the rates of Goods and Services Tax (GST) is a major and commendable economic reform. The council's meeting on this reform lasted for 10 hours on Wednesday, during which many objections were removed, ways and means of compensating the states for the potential financial loss due to the rate reduction were discussed, allegations of discrimination against states with non-BJP governments were remedied and finally a decision was taken to implement the new rates by consensus. This decision will be implemented from the first Navratri i.e. September 22, which means that during the festive season that will last for the next three months, the common consumer will be able to buy many goods at cheaper rates than now.

Q31. Under which Constitutional Article was the GST Council established as a joint forum of the Centre and States?

- A. Article 279A (1) B. Article 246A (2)
C. Article 368 (3) D. Article 323B (1)

Q32. The Supreme Court's May 2022 decision clarified the status of GST Council recommendations. Which statement best represents it?

- A. The Council's recommendations are binding on both Union and States
B. The Council's recommendations are binding only on the Union, not the States
C. The Council's recommendations are advisory, not binding; Parliament and State legislatures both retain power to legislate on GST
D. The Council's recommendations are binding unless rejected by two-thirds of States

Q33. Under the GST 2.0 structure, which of the following items has been moved fully to the nil GST category?

- A. EVs with battery capacity above 350cc
B. Household soaps and hair oil
C. Basic foodstuffs such as UHT milk, paneer, chapati and roti
D. Cement and other construction materials

Q34. Which medium-term economic impact is most clearly linked to the GST 2.0 reduction on cement from 28% to 18%?

- A. Airlines benefit from lower input costs, reducing ticket fares
B. Housing and construction activity expands, boosting jobs and household demand
C. Automobiles become significantly cheaper, accelerating purchases
D. Insurance companies reduce premium charges across the board

Q35. Which potential short-term disruption was flagged in relation to the GST 2.0 rollout?

- A. Inflation spike due to lower tax collection
B. Automobile dealers fear customers will postpone purchases until the new rates apply
C. Real estate developers may halt new launches due to uncertainty
D. Exporters risk higher duties from the EU on construction materials

Q36. Which category of goods continues to attract the newly created 40% "special rate"?

- A. Luxury cars, tobacco products, and soft drinks
B. EVs, soaps, and shampoos
C. Medicines and insurance policies
D. Cement, TVs, and air conditioners

Passage:- 3 The Trump administration released a proposal on Tuesday (September 23, 2025) that would rework the H-1B visa selection process to favour higher-skilled and better-paid workers, according to a related Federal Register notice, a move that follows a White House proclamation on Friday introducing a substantial fee for the visas.

The new process, if finalised, would give heavier weight to applications by employers who pay high wages if annual requests for the visas exceed the set statutory limit, the notice said. The move aims to better protect Americans from unfair wage competition from foreign workers, it said.

[<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/us-h-1b-visa-process-high-skilled-workers-trump-administration-lottery-system/article70087225.ece>]

Q37. The Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), signed in 2018, is primarily aimed at:

- A. Establishing a joint India-US defense manufacturing hub in Bengaluru
B. Allowing India to procure Russian missile defense systems without sanctions
C. Granting India access to secure, encrypted US communication systems for military use
D. Creating a new trilateral defense pact among India, US, and Japan

Q38. Which of the following accurately reflects India's role within the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)?

- A. India maintains neutrality in the Indo-Pacific and avoids Quad participation
B. India is a dialogue partner but not an official member of the Quad
C. India is part of the Quad, which focuses on countering Russia's expansion into Europe
D. India is part of the Quad, participating in exercises like Malabar with the US, Japan, and Australia

Q39. Under the H-1B proclamation signed in September 2025, what was the mandated fee for a new visa petition?

- A. \$10,000 to be renewed annually for all petitions
- B. \$100,000 one-time fee imposed only on new applications
- C. \$50,000 fee shared between employer and employee
- D. \$2,000–\$5,000 depending on employer size

Q40. Which medium-term effect was projected from India's perspective following the H-1B visa fee hike?

- A. A reverse brain drain boosting India's domestic innovation ecosystem
- B. Collapse of India's IT export industry due to lack of H-1B visas
- C. Full relocation of Indian IT companies to the US to avoid higher fees
- D. Complete freeze on skilled worker mobility between India and the US

Q41. Which friction point has consistently affected India-US trade relations?

- A. India's opposition to US-Japan defense treaties in the Indo-Pacific
- B. Termination of India's Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) status by the US in 2019
- C. India's refusal to participate in US-led climate initiatives after COP27
- D. US objections to India's participation in the BRICS+ grouping

Q42. Which ongoing collaborative project best illustrates India-US space cooperation?

- A. NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite for Earth observation
- B. COMCASA enabling joint space command centers in Asia
- C. Chandrayaan-3, fully designed and executed with US funding
- D. Indo-Pacific RETAP mission for monitoring regional maritime borders

Passage:- 4 On Sunday, Nepal's then-Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli mocked youth protesters, who were planning a major agitation the following day in the capital, Kathmandu. By calling themselves the "Gen Z", the protesters seemed to believe they could demand whatever they wanted, he said. Less than 48 hours later, Oli was an ex-PM, and the Gen Z protest movement he had spoken dismissively of was discussing who should lead Nepal. That was after police firing on protesters on Monday killed at least 19 people, further inflaming passions. On Tuesday, protesters set fire to the parliament building and homes of several prominent politicians, as members of Oli's cabinet quit and pressure mounted on the PM himself – ultimately leading to his resignation. The combined death toll from clashes on Monday and Tuesday has now reached 31. Those dramatic events have turned the Himalayan nation into the latest cauldron of political change, after similar youth-led movements in Sri Lanka, in 2022, and Bangladesh, in 2024, also led to the overthrow of governments in those South Asian nations.

[Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/9/11/why-does-nepals-crisis-matter-to-south-asia-and-the-world>]

Q43. What event triggered the recent wave of political unrest in Nepal?

- A. Constitutional amendment to extend presidential term limits
- B. A sweeping government ban on major social media platforms.
- C. Military coup suspending parliamentary operations
- D. Cancellation of municipal elections by the Election Commission

Q44. Which provision of Nepal's Constitution has been at the centre of disputes between the executive and judiciary during the unrest?

- A. Article 69
- B. Article 85
- C. Article 76
- D. Article 101

Q45. Which year marked the promulgation of Nepal's new Constitution that formally transformed it into a secular, federal democratic republic?

- A. 2006, after the end of the Maoist insurgency
- B. 2008, following the abolition of monarchy
- C. 2020, after border disputes with India
- D. 2015, after the Constituent Assembly adopted the new charter

Q46. Which of the following treaties forms the cornerstone of India-Nepal relations, particularly governing matters of friendship, commerce, and transit?

- A. Shimla Agreement, 1972
- B. Mahakali Treaty, 1996
- C. India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1950

D. Indo-Bhutan Treaty of Perpetual Peace and Friendship, 194

Q47. Which structural feature of Nepal's democratic system makes coalition governments unstable?

A. The bicameral legislature dominated by royal appointees

B. The monarchy retaining emergency veto powers
C. Presidential dominance over the judiciary in constitutional interpretation

D. The proportional representation system combined with frequent party splits

Passage:- 5 The newly completed Bairabi-Sairang railway line, stretching 51.38 km, is an engineering marvel that traverses one of India's most difficult terrains. A railway, first conceptualised 26 years ago, is turning into a reality and is ready for operation in X. The newly completed Bairabi-Sairang railway line, stretching 51.38 km, is an engineering marvel that traverses one of India's most difficult terrains. It has brought X onto India's railway map after overcoming unprecedented challenges. The line features 48 tunnels, together spanning nearly 13 km and over 40 bridges. Among them, Bridge No. 196 stands out, rising 104 metres above the ground, making it taller than Delhi's Qutub Minar by 42 metres. Built through dense forests, steep hills, and landslide-prone zones, this rail line is a feat of persistence and planning. As the line nears formal inauguration, the Bairabi-Sairang project stands as a symbol of India's growing focus on Northeast infrastructure, bringing a remote state closer to the national mainstream track, finally.

[Source: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/northeast/2025/Sep/12/an-engineering-marvel-newly-built-bairabi-sairang-railway-line-set-to-become-gateway-to-growth>]

Q48. Which northeastern state's railway connectivity project faced sustained opposition from local groups fearing demographic changes?

A. Nagaland B. Meghalaya C. Mizoram D. Arunachal Pradesh

Q49. What is the global ranking of India's railway network by total size?

A. 2nd largest after the United States
B. 3rd largest after China and Russia
C. 4th largest after the US, China, and Russia
D. 5th largest, behind Japan

Q50. The integration of Mizoram's capital Aizawl into India's rail network carries what broader strategic significance?

A. It is mainly symbolic, with little impact on connectivity

B. It strengthens the Act East Policy by improving Northeast integration with Southeast Asia
C. It replaces the Siliguri Corridor as the only gateway to the Northeast
D. It reduces India's dependence on Bhutan for regional transport

Q51. Which was the inaugural route of Indian Railways, marking its first train service in 1853?

A. Delhi to Ambala B. Bombay to Thane
C. Howrah to Bardhaman D. Chennai to Arakkonam

Q52. The newly completed Bairabi-Sairang railway line connects which Indian state to the national railway network?

A. Tripura B. Manipur C. Mizoram D. Nagaland

SECTION C: - LEGAL REASONING

Passage:- 1 The Indian Easements Act, 1882, codifies the law relating to easements and licenses in India. An easement is a right possessed by the owner or occupier of certain land, known as the dominant heritage, to do or to prevent and continue to prevent something from being done in or upon certain other land, known as the servient heritage, for the beneficial enjoyment of his property. The essential elements of an easement include the existence of a dominant and a servient heritage, the right must be for the beneficial enjoyment of the dominant heritage, the ownership of both the dominant and servient tenements must be distinct, and it must be a right attached to the property rather than a personal right.

Easements can be categorized into various types based on their nature. A positive easement allows the dominant owner to perform an act upon the servient heritage, such as a right of way, whereas a negative easement restricts the servient owner from taking a particular action, such as constructing a building that blocks the light or air to the dominant heritage. Easements can also be classified as continuous and discontinuous, where a continuous easement operates without human intervention, such as natural water flow, while a discontinuous easement requires human action for its enjoyment, such as a right of way that necessitates the physical passage of persons or goods. Another classification includes apparent and non-apparent easements, where apparent easements have visible signs of their existence, such as a well-used pathway, while non-apparent easements do not have visible indicators, such as underground drainage rights. The modes of acquiring an easement are also significant. An easement can be acquired by grant when it is expressly created through a deed, by prescription when it is acquired through continuous and uninterrupted use over twenty years, by necessity when a property is landlocked, necessitating access through adjacent land, or by custom when a particular right has been historically recognized and followed in a locality.

Easements differ from licenses, although both allow the use of another's property. While an easement is a transferable right attached to the land, a license is a personal, revocable permission to use another's property without creating any proprietary interest. Easements can be extinguished through various means, including release when the dominant owner voluntarily gives up the right, expiration when the prescribed period or condition ends, unity of ownership when both the dominant and servient heritages are acquired by the same owner, and permanent change when the dominant heritage undergoes alterations making the easement unnecessary.

[Source: <https://blog.ipleaders.in/an-overview-law-of-easements-in-india/>]

Q53. Anita owns a farmhouse that can be accessed only by a dirt track running through Bharat's land. Anita has used this track openly and without interruption for 22 years, though Bharat never gave formal consent. Bharat suddenly erects a gate blocking Anita's access. Anita files a claim asserting an easementary right of way.

Which is the correct legal position?

- A. Anita has perfected an easement by prescription due to continuous use beyond 20 years.
- B. Anita can only claim an easement by necessity because her land is landlocked.
- C. Anita's claim fails because Bharat never gave formal written consent.
- D. Anita's claim fails because prescriptive rights cannot be acquired over private agricultural land.

Q54. Dev buys a small plot entirely surrounded by his vendor's larger estate. No public road touches his land. The sale deed is silent on access. Dev insists he must cross the vendor's land to reach the main road. The vendor refuses, arguing that no right was mentioned. What is the correct legal position?

- A. Dev cannot claim an easement since there was no express grant.
- B. Dev can claim a license only, which is revocable at the vendor's discretion.
- C. Dev is entitled to an easement by prescription if he crosses continuously for 20 years.
- D. Dev is entitled to an easement of necessity since his plot is landlocked after severance.

Q55. Farhan's house has an open, visible water channel that flows into his courtyard from Ritu's adjacent property. This has been functioning for decades. Ritu plans to divert the water. Farhan protests, claiming an easementary right. Which statement is most accurate?

- A. Farhan cannot claim because the channel was never expressly granted.
- B. Farhan has a claim because the channel is an apparent and continuous easement, visible and in use.
- C. Farhan's right depends solely on showing 20 years' usage, irrespective of whether the channel was apparent.
- D. Farhan has only a license, which ends once Ritu revokes it.

Q56. Leela lets her neighbor Nitin use her orchard path for 10 years to transport produce, with her oral permission. When Leela sells the orchard, the new owner bars Nitin from entering. Nitin sues claiming an easementary right. What is the correct legal determination?

- A. Nitin has an easement by prescription since he used the path for more than 10 years.
- B. Nitin has no easement because his use was permissive, amounting only to a license.
- C. Nitin retains the right because once an easement is granted it survives transfers.
- D. Nitin can claim an easement by necessity since the path was convenient for his produce transport.

Q57. Kavya owned House X with a right of way over Plot Y belonging to her neighbor. Later, Kavya purchased Plot Y herself. Five years later, she sold Plot Y to another buyer but continued using the right of way. The buyer objects. What is the correct legal position?

- A. Kavya retains her right because it was mentioned in her earlier deed.
- B. The easement was extinguished when Kavya united ownership of both tenements.
- C. The easement automatically revived once Plot Y was sold to a third party.
- D. Kavya can claim an easement by prescription afresh because she used the way during ownership.

Q58. Rohit's house derives air and light through open windows overlooking his neighbor Tarun's vacant land. Tarun now plans to build a tall wall that will block the windows. Rohit sues, claiming a negative easement to prevent the wall's construction. Which is the correct position?

- A. Rohit can succeed if he shows a recognized negative easement preventing obstruction of light and air.
- B. Rohit cannot succeed since negative easements are never recognized under Indian law.
- C. Rohit's claim is valid only if he proves continuous user for 20 years under prescription.
- D. Rohit can claim necessity since blocking light makes his house uninhabitable.

Passage:- 2 The doctrine of fair use serves as a pivotal exception within copyright law, permitting the limited utilization of protected works without obtaining prior consent from the copyright holder. This principle aims to balance the rights of creators with the broader public interest in the dissemination of information and the advancement of knowledge. In the Indian context, this doctrine is encapsulated under Section 52 of the Copyright Act, 1957, referred to as "fair dealing." This provision delineates specific purposes for which the use of copyrighted material is permissible without constituting infringement. These purposes include private or personal use, research, criticism or review, reporting of current events, and judicial proceedings. The interpretation of what constitutes fair dealing is not rigid; Indian courts assess each case based on its unique facts and circumstances, often considering factors such as the purpose of the use, the nature of the work, the amount and substantiality of the portion used, and the effect of the use on the potential market for the original work.

The advent of artificial intelligence, particularly models developed by organizations like OpenAI, has introduced complex challenges to the traditional understanding of fair use. OpenAI's language models are trained on extensive datasets that encompass a wide array of texts, including potentially copyrighted material. This practice has sparked legal debates globally, including in India, regarding whether the use of such material in AI training processes constitutes fair use or infringes upon copyright laws. A notable instance is the lawsuit filed by the news agency Asian News International (ANI) against OpenAI. ANI alleges that OpenAI utilized its news content to train ChatGPT without obtaining permission, leading to outputs that closely mirror ANI's original reporting. This case brings to the forefront the question of whether AI training methods can be considered transformative enough to qualify as fair use under Indian law.

The applicability of the fair use doctrine is assessed based on multiple factors, making it a flexible yet complex area of copyright law. Courts generally evaluate whether the use of copyrighted content serves a public interest and whether it adds new meaning or value rather than merely reproducing the original work. The doctrine has been widely applied in cases involving education, research, criticism, and even technological innovations such as search engines and digitization projects. However, its applicability to artificial intelligence remains unsettled. In traditional fair use cases, courts have looked favorably on transformative uses, where the original material is repurposed in a way that serves a new function. For instance, Google's digitization of books for search purposes was deemed fair use because it provided a novel means of accessing information without replacing the original works. Thus, the fair use doctrine remains central to the ongoing legal debate, requiring careful judicial interpretation in the evolving landscape of artificial intelligence and digital content consumption.

[Source: <https://www.ipandlegalfilings.com/how-fair-use-favors-openai-in-the-ani-lawsuit/>]

Q59. An Indian research consortium partnered with IITs and private firms to build an AI tool summarizing medical research. They used subscription-based journals without permission to train a model. The consortium argued the project was entirely for scientific advancement and public health. The trained model produced summaries of oncology studies that retained most technical terms but excluded experimental data. Several pharmaceutical publishers alleged that this harmed their subscription revenue since students began relying on the AI model's free summaries. The consortium countered that their work was non-commercial, grant-funded, and fell squarely under "research and education." However, evidence showed the model outputs were circulated widely in Telegram groups, displacing the market for official abstracts. The Delhi High Court must decide whether this training falls under fair dealing. Which conclusion is most consistent with the passage's principles?

A. The model's non-commercial purpose strengthens the case for fair use, but widespread displacement of paid subscriptions weighs heavily against exemption under Section 52.

B. The model's reliance on technical articles without reproducing verbatim passages constitutes transformative use, ensuring it is exempt from infringement even if subscription revenues are affected.

C. Since research is expressly listed under Section 52, any use of copyrighted academic material for non-commercial educational models is automatically exempt regardless of market consequences.

D. The consortium's partnership with private firms for public health impact renders the use permissible, since the larger interest in healthcare dissemination overrides individual copyright claims.

Q60. A Bengaluru start-up launched "QuickNewsAI," which scrapes ANI and Reuters feeds to produce bullet-

point digests. The service is ad-supported, attracting 5 million users within months. QuickNewsAI claims the digests are short and paraphrased, omitting direct quotes or images. Investigations show 80% of its content replicates the order of events and framing used in original ANI stories. ANI sues, alleging outputs "mirror" its reporting style, reducing readership on its paid app. QuickNewsAI argues fair dealing under reporting of current events, claiming its function is distinct from the original's narrative depth. The High Court must evaluate if QuickNewsAI's operation is fair dealing. Which is the most appropriate outcome under the passage's framework?

A. The service qualifies as fair dealing because reporting current events is explicitly covered, and paraphrasing avoids literal reproduction of content from ANI's feeds.

B. The outputs mirror ANI's market-substituting reporting style, making the use unfair despite invocation of current events exemption, since commercial displacement outweighs function.

C. QuickNewsAI's new format of "bullet-point" delivery constitutes sufficient transformative use, ensuring the model's legality regardless of its effect on ANI's market.

D. Since AI-based reporting remains unsettled in India, QuickNewsAI cannot be adjudged infringing until Parliament legislates specifically on AI and copyright issues.

Q61. An EdTech platform in Pune developed a tool where students upload textbooks, and the tool generates customized summaries with key concept maps. The company purchased some textbooks but encouraged students to upload PDFs from pirated sources. Its AI rewrites in simplified prose but retains large chunks of verbatim definitions. Sales reports from publishers showed marked decline in textbook sales in schools using the tool.

The company insisted that its work is educational and transformative, since it produces “learning aids” not literal reproductions. Authors sued for infringement, arguing the summaries cannibalized their primary market. The trial court must decide if this falls under fair dealing for education. Which is most consistent with the principles in the passage?

- A. The summaries, although meant for education, involve verbatim copying and market harm, making them infringing since the factors weigh against exemption.
- B. Because education is listed in Section 52, the AI tool’s purpose alone ensures legality even if textbooks are displaced in the school market.
- C. The creation of concept maps is sufficiently transformative, protecting the EdTech platform from liability irrespective of the market harm it causes.
- D. The pirated source PDFs create liability independently of fair dealing, but the summaries themselves are exempt since they serve students’ needs exclusively.

Q62. A multinational cloud company trains its generative AI on global datasets, including Indian news and novels. Its tool produces fluent Hindi-English narratives with stylistic resemblance to original works. Indian authors complain their readership on subscription apps has declined since readers now rely on the free AI outputs. The company argues its tool is transformative because it synthesizes inputs into creative expressions not identical to originals. However, experts demonstrate that in some outputs, the AI reproduces plot arcs and specific sentences. Litigation ensues under Indian law. Which legal assessment best reflects the passage’s reasoning?

- A. The outputs are automatically transformative since no verbatim reproduction occurs in most cases, so infringement claims must fail even with occasional overlap.
- B. The multi-factor approach requires assessing market harm, purpose, and substantiality; given verbatim overlaps and displacement, infringement is likely despite synthesis.
- C. The transformative argument outweighs all other considerations, since the tool generates new creative narratives, satisfying fair use principles conclusively.

D. The unsettled nature of AI means the company is immune until courts explicitly declare training datasets as infringing.

Q63. A law-tech start-up created an AI tool for litigation prep, trained on court judgments and headnotes from SCC Online. The tool provides instant case briefs, citing paragraph numbers. SCC claims copyright infringement, saying the AI displaces demand for their subscription. The start-up contends that judgments are public documents and their use is covered by judicial proceedings exemption. However, SCC insists its editorial headnotes and digests are original creative works. Evidence shows the AI reproduces not only judgments but also near-verbatim headnotes. Which is the correct outcome?

- A. The use of judgments alone is exempt, but reproduction of headnotes infringes since they are creative works, making liability partial but clear for headnotes.
- B. All use is exempt under judicial proceedings since judgments are public and headnotes are merely auxiliary.
- C. AI tools trained for litigation support inherently qualify as fair dealing regardless of headnote copying, given their transformative professional purpose.
- D. Since SCC’s loss of subscription shows market displacement, even judgment texts are protected and cannot be used without permission.

Q64. Which principle emerges from the passage as the core determinant of fair dealing under Indian copyright law?

- A. Transformative use alone is decisive in determining whether AI training or other activities qualify as fair use, regardless of other factors like market effect.
- B. Market substitution is the exclusive test, such that any impact on potential revenues conclusively establishes infringement, even in research or education.
- C. Courts employ a flexible, multi-factor test considering purpose, nature, substantiality, and market impact, with transformative value playing a key but not singular role.
- D. Since AI’s applicability is unsettled, the doctrine presently excludes AI uses until new legislation is enacted, making current disputes premature.

Passage:- 3 Assault, in legal terms, refers to a threat or an attempt to inflict bodily harm on another, combined with the apparent ability and intention to execute the act. Unlike battery, assault does not necessitate physical contact; the act or gesture itself, when capable of instilling reasonable apprehension of imminent harm, constitutes assault. Not every threat amounts to an assault; it requires both an intention to cause harm and the means to execute that intention. A mere verbal threat is insufficient unless accompanied by gestures or actions that reinforce the threat, creating a reasonable belief in the victim that violence is imminent. For

instance, a threatening posture or brandishing a weapon, coupled with the capability to carry out the threat, amounts to an assault. The intention behind the act is pivotal to determining whether it constitutes assault. An act performed without the intent to harm, such as accidentally striking someone during a conversation, does not qualify as assault. However, an intentional but unsuccessful attempt to strike someone, or a threatening gesture like raising a hand menacingly, can be categorized as assault. Similarly, presenting a loaded weapon or forcing someone to seek shelter to avoid harm are examples of unlawful assaults.

Words alone do not constitute assault but may lend context to gestures, either intensifying or negating the perception of an immediate threat. For instance, if a person draws a weapon and states that they would act under different circumstances, the words may negate the intent, indicating no immediate threat, thereby nullifying the assault claim. To establish a case of assault, three essential elements must be demonstrated. Firstly, the plaintiff must have apprehended immediate physical contact. Secondly, the apprehension must be reasonable, meaning the plaintiff must have a legitimate belief in the threat's imminence. Finally, the defendant's actions must be intentional, reflecting a purpose to create the apprehension of harmful or offensive contact. The defendant's intent can be specific, where the purpose is to instil apprehension, or general, where the defendant is substantially certain that their actions will lead to apprehension of harm. Harmful contact, in the context of assault, is defined as any act intended to injure, disfigure, impair, or cause physical pain. Offensive acts, on the other hand, are those that would violate a reasonable person's sense of personal dignity.

The notion of imminence in assault refers to the immediacy of the threat, judged objectively based on the circumstances. Imminence implies minimal opportunity for intervention before the harmful act occurs. Importantly, apprehension in assault is distinct from general fear. The victim need only be aware of the impending harmful or offensive act, not necessarily fearful of it. Thus, assault in law balances the elements of intent, the nature of the act, and the reasonableness of the apprehension to protect individuals from threats of immediate harm while maintaining clarity on the boundaries of lawful and unlawful conduct.

[Edited from <https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-5443-assault-and-battery-in-law-of-torts.html>]

Q65. Late evening, under a well-lit underpass, Priya (carrying a tripod) confronts Naveen after a near-collision between their bikes. Standing five meters away, Priya snaps the tripod shut, strides two steps toward Naveen, and yells, "You deserve a hit for this!" She raises the collapsed tripod above shoulder height. A low metal railing separates them but is waist-high and easy to step over. As Naveen steps back, Priya adds, "I'll teach you a lesson now," leaning forward with the tripod poised. A cyclist passes between them; Priya pauses briefly, then continues advancing. A traffic constable is visible 30 meters away but not yet approaching. Naveen keeps both hands up, saying "Stop." Priya's grip tightens; the tripod is clearly within striking distance if she takes one step over the railing. Decide if this is assault.

A. Assault is made out because Priya's threatening posture, raised tripod, and proximity created a reasonable, immediate apprehension of harmful contact, supported by apparent ability to execute the threat despite the minor railing.

B. No assault occurs because Priya never crossed the railing, and a physical barrier, however minor, negates the possibility of immediate contact, defeating any reasonable apprehension of harm.

C. No assault occurs because Priya used only words expressing anger, and words—even hostile ones—cannot amount to assault without actual physical contact causing injury.

D. Assault is made out only if Naveen proves he was actually fearful; mere awareness without demonstrated subjective fear cannot satisfy the apprehension element.

Q66. At a startup's Friday mixer, Arjun, known for elaborate pranks, stands two meters from his teammate Meera, who is sipping coffee. He swings his open palm toward her cheek, stopping five inches short, bursts out laughing, and says, "Relax—it's just for the team reel." Meera startles, steps back, and says "Not funny." Arjun immediately repeats the motion, this time even closer, adding, "I'd never actually hit you." Several colleagues

watch, filming. A desk edge is behind Meera; stepping back further risks bumping into it. Arjun's hand is steady; he appears perfectly able to land a slap at any moment. HR is not present. After a third feint, Meera leaves, visibly shaken, later alleging assault. Decide.

A. No assault: Meera suffered no harmful contact; without physical touching or injury there can be no assault, only perhaps discourteous behavior or workplace rudeness.

B. Assault: Meera had reasonable apprehension of immediate, offensive contact from intentional, repeated feints within striking distance, despite Arjun's words claiming he would not hit her.

C. No assault: Arjun's express denial ("I'd never actually hit you") negates intent and immediacy, converting the gestures into a harmless jest understood by onlookers as mere content creation.

D. Assault only if Meera proves she actually feared pain or injury, since apprehension requires demonstrable fear rather than mere awareness of a possible slap.

Q67. Zara exits a grocery store at night. Fifteen meters away, Vikram waves a wooden stick and shouts, "If it weren't for the CCTV and these people, I'd break your arm for taking my spot." He lowers the stick, paces, and adds, "One day when no one's here, you'll get it." Several bystanders and a security camera are nearby. Vikram never approaches closer than ten meters. He tosses the stick into his car trunk, glares, and drives off. Zara files a tort complaint for assault based on the incident, stating she felt insulted and concerned about future safety, but she did not think a blow was coming right then. Is this Assault?

A. Assault is established because any threat to cause bodily harm, whether immediate or future, with any weapon in sight automatically creates the requisite apprehension of imminent contact.

B. No assault is established because Vikram's statements were explicitly conditional on different circumstances, negating immediacy; distance and withdrawal of the stick further undercut any immediate apprehension.

C. Assault is established as soon as a weapon is displayed and angry words are used, even if the speaker states they will act only when others are not present.

D. No assault is established only because Zara admitted she felt concern but not fear; since fear is essential, her subjective testimony defeats the claim.

Q68. At a crowded diner, two friends, Leela and Om, argue over a split bill. Om, visibly irritated, places a closed pocketknife on the table, untouched, and says in a flat tone, "Let's not escalate." Moments later, he picks up the knife but keeps it closed, gesturing toward the

exit and saying, "I'm leaving." Leela, upset, says, "Put that down." Om replies, "If I wanted to hurt someone, I would have done it outside," and pockets the knife. He never opens it, never moves closer than an arm's length, and turns away to go. Leela files a tort claim for assault, asserting the sight of the knife in his hand made her believe an attack was about to happen.

A. Assault is clearly made out because possessing any knife in hand during an argument necessarily creates immediate apprehension of painful, harmful contact, regardless of whether the knife is closed or movement limited.

B. No assault is made out because Om never touched the knife; without handling the instrument, there can be neither intent nor apparent ability to inflict harm during the exchange.

C. No assault is made out because Om's closed knife, lack of advancing movement, and words implying no present action together negate immediacy; gestures did not create reasonable apprehension of immediate contact.

D. Assault is made out only if Leela can prove that the closed knife, by itself, would cause disfigurement or impairment upon contact even without opening—otherwise the contact would not be "harmful."

Q69. During a heated debate outside a lecture hall, Saira accuses Dev of plagiarism. Dev raises his clenched fist at head level and lunges forward a step, stopping short as classmates intervene. He snarls, "You'll pay for that," keeping his fist poised. Saira, positioned against a noticeboard, has no easy retreat. Dev's friends form a semicircle, leaving only a narrow passage. Dev then swings his fist toward Saira's face but stops a few inches away when a tutor shouts his name. He smirks and says, "I wasn't going to hit her anyway." Saira files for assault, arguing the raised fist and near-strike created imminent apprehension of harmful contact. Dev argues he never intended to hit, pointing to his last remark. Decide this case.

A. Assault is established because Dev's intentional near-strike and menacing posture created reasonable apprehension of immediate harmful contact, and his later denial cannot undo the immediacy shown by his physical gestures.

B. No assault is established because Dev's final statement that he never intended to hit conclusively negates the intention element, converting the episode into mere bluster without legal significance.

C. No assault is established because classmates' presence ensured intervention time, thereby defeating the imminence requirement for an assault claim in crowded academic settings.

D. Assault is established only if Saira proves actual physical pain was likely; otherwise, the contact would have been merely offensive, which cannot ground assault.

Q70. Which option most accurately synthesizes the elements and standards for assault in the provided passage?

A. Assault requires demonstrable fear of imminent injury, evidenced by physiological signs or testimony; mere awareness is insufficient unless accompanied by tangible physical pain or post-event distress.

B. Assault is established when the defendant intentionally creates a reasonable apprehension of immediate harmful or offensive contact, shown by gestures/actions evidencing apparent present ability; words may reinforce or negate imminence depending on context.

C. Assault turns solely on the defendant's subjective state of mind; if they disclaim intent verbally at any point, all preceding gestures are legally negated, and no apprehension can be considered reasonable thereafter.

D. Assault is proven whenever a weapon is displayed in an argument, regardless of distance, conditional phrasing, or the defendant's capacity to execute the threat at that particular moment.

Passage:- 4 The following are some of the most important provisions of the Act of 1988:

Section 3 of the Act of 1988 addresses the necessity of carrying a driving licence. It states that- A person cannot drive a vehicle in a public place until and unless they possess a valid and authorised driving licence. Additionally, they are not permitted to operate any transport vehicle, except for a motor-taxi or a motor bike for personal use or rental under any scheme, unless their driving licence specifically authorised them to do so. These requirements apply to an individual who operates a motor vehicle in India unless specified by the Central Government. Age restrictions related to driving of motor vehicles: Section 4 of the Act of 1988 deals with the age limitations for driving motor vehicles. It states that- No individual below the age of 18 years is allowed to operate a motor vehicle in public. However, any individual who reaches the age of 16 years or older is allowed to drive a motor vehicle with an engine capacity of less than 50cc. No individual under the age of 20 years is allowed to drive a public transportation vehicle. No individual shall be granted a learner's or permanent driving licence for a specific class of motor vehicle unless they meet the requisite qualifications to drive that class of vehicle.

Responsibility of motor vehicle owners for violations of Sections 3 and 4: Under Section 5 of the Act of 1988, it is provided that no owner or person in charge of a motor vehicle shall allow anyone who does not meet the requirements of sections 3 or 4 to drive the motor vehicle.

Restrictions on holding driving licences:

Section 6(1) of the Act of 1988 provides that no individual shall hold a driving licence while a valid licence is in effect, except for a learner's licence.

Section 6(2) of the said Act provides that the holder of a driving licence or learner's licence shall not allow it to be used by anyone else.

Section 6(3) of the said Act provides that nothing in this section shall prevent a licensing authority, as specified in subsection (1) of Section 9 of the said Act, from expanding the classes of vehicles that the driving licence permits the holder to drive.

Restriction on issuing learner's licence for certain types of vehicles

Section 7(1) of the Act of 1988 provides that no individual shall be granted a learner's licence to drive a transport vehicle unless they have held a driving licence for a light motor vehicle for at least a period of one year. This subsection shall not apply to e-carts or e-rickshaws.

Section 7(2) of the said Act provides that no individual under the age of eighteen years shall be issued a learner's licence to drive a motorcycle without gear unless they have written consent from their guardian.

[https://blog.ipleaders.in/motor-vehicle-act-1988/#Offences_covered_under_the_Act]

Q71. Riya, aged 17, rides a 49cc, gearless moped to school on public roads. She has no licence yet. Her parents email the RTO giving written consent for a learner's licence the previous evening, but the RTO has not issued any licence. She is stopped by traffic police and booked for driving without a licence and for being a minor. She argues that Section 4 allows a person over 16 to drive sub-50cc vehicles and that guardian consent was submitted. Which statement is most accurate?

- A. Riya may lawfully drive because Section 4 permits 16+ to drive <50cc, and guardian consent suffices even without any licence being issued.
- B. Riya may lawfully drive because the offence is only the absence of a printed licence; guardian consent creates a temporary right until issuance.
- C. Riya cannot drive without a valid licence under Section 3; Section 4 only sets age minima, not a licence waiver; consent enables a learner's licence, which must be issued first.
- D. Riya may drive only on private roads; on public roads the guardian's consent automatically converts to a temporary learner's licence for 30 days.

Q72. Arun, aged 19, holds a valid LMV driving licence. During a festival, he volunteers to drive a public transport minibus owned by a charitable trust on public roads. He is stopped and charged under Section 4 for age violation. What is the correct legal position?

- A. He violates Section 4 because no individual under 20 may drive a public transportation vehicle, regardless of holding any other licence category.
- B. He may drive because charitable trips for public benefit fall within exceptions for social service and are exempt from age restrictions.
- C. He may drive because a valid LMV licence includes all sub-classes of vehicles below 7,500 kg, including public transport minibuses during festivals.
- D. He may drive because the charitable trust's supervisory driver sat beside him, satisfying learner supervision requirements by analogy.

Q73. Meera owns a hatchback. Her cousin Sid, aged 17, asks to drive it on a quiet public road "just for practice." Meera knows Sid is under 18 and has no licence. She nevertheless hands over the keys and sits in the passenger seat. The police stop the vehicle and prosecute both. Which option correctly states Meera's legal exposure?

- A. Meera is not liable because she was physically present and could have intervened, so control never left her as "person in charge."
- B. Meera is not liable because Section 5 applies only to commercial vehicle owners, not private car owners.

C. Meera is liable only if Sid causes an accident; otherwise Section 5 is not triggered.

D. Meera is liable under Section 5 because she allowed a person who does not meet Ss.3 and 4 requirements to drive her vehicle in a public place.

Q74. Rahul holds a valid driving licence issued in State X for LMV. While on deputation in State Y, he applies for and obtains a second driving licence for the same class from State Y RTO to avoid renewal hassles. He also hands his State X licence to his colleague to use as ID for a trip. Which violations arise?

- A. No violation—inter-state administration justifies multiple licences and temporary handover as identification, not "use" under S.6(2).
- B. Rahul violates S.6(1) by holding another driving licence while a valid licence is in effect; and S.6(2) by allowing his licence to be used by another person.
- C. Only S.6(3) applies because the authority could have expanded classes, making a second licence unnecessary but not unlawful.
- D. Only S.6(2) applies because lending a licence as ID is equivalent to "use," but multiple licences are permitted for different states.

Q75. Karan, aged 24, wants a learner's licence to drive a transport vehicle (goods carrier). He has held an LMV licence for 10 months. The RTO refuses, citing Section 7(1). Karan argues the rule is technical and demands an exception. Separately, his friend Leela, aged 23, seeks a learner's licence to drive an e-rickshaw; she has no prior licence. Which outcome fits the statute you were given?

- A. Both Karan and Leela must wait until they each complete one year as LMV holders; the rule is uniform for transport-type vehicles.
- B. Karan qualifies because 10 months is "substantial compliance," and Leela qualifies because e-rickshaws are public-transport vehicles serving last-mile needs.
- C. Karan does not qualify because S.7(1) requires at least one year holding an LMV licence; Leela qualifies because the subsection does not apply to e-carts/e-rickshaws.
- D. Neither qualifies because learner's licences for any vehicle require at least one year of LMV holding plus separate transport authorization endorsements.

Q76. Dinesh holds a valid LMV driving licence. He signs up for a city-approved motor-taxi rental scheme to drive his personal motor-taxi part-time. He has no specific "transport vehicle" authorization/endorsement. He argues an LMV is enough because the scheme concerns his own vehicle in a rental program. What follows from Section 3 as you've set it out?

A. He cannot operate a transport vehicle unless his licence specifically authorises it; the fact it is a motor-taxi under a rental scheme does not remove the authorisation requirement.

B. He may operate the motor-taxi because the scheme's approval substitutes for individual transport authorisation, aligning with local permit rules.

C. He may operate because LMV licences cover any vehicle under 7,500 kg, and private motor-taxis are merely "personal use."

D. He may operate if he drives only outside peak hours, because the scheme limits traffic density and reduces safety risk.

A. Once the authority expands classes under S.6(3), Priya automatically satisfies S.7(1), because training authorization counts as "holding LMV for one year."

B. S.6(3) expansion inherently includes the power to waive time-bound eligibility conditions in S.7(1), so Priya qualifies immediately.

C. The authority may expand classes only after Priya completes the training; therefore no learner's licence is ever required for transport vehicles.

D. S.6(3) lets the authority expand classes of vehicles a licence permits, but it does not waive the separate statutory pre-condition in S.7(1); Priya must still complete one year LMV holding.

Q77. The licensing authority proposes to "help" Priya by expanding the classes on her existing LMV driving licence under Section 6(3), adding an endorsement that she may train for transport vehicles. Priya has held LMV only for 8 months and now applies for a learner's licence for a transport vehicle. What is correct?

Passage:- 5 Article 12 of the Indian Constitution defines "State" for the enforcement of Fundamental Rights under Part III. It includes the Government of India, State Governments, Parliament, State Legislatures, local authorities, and "other authorities" within Indian territory or under government control. The interpretation of "other authorities" has been subject to extensive judicial scrutiny. In *Rajasthan Electricity Board v. Mohan Lal* (1967), the Supreme Court held that "other authorities" include any entity created by the Constitution or a statute that exercises governmental or quasi-governmental functions. This decision expanded the scope beyond entities performing sovereign functions.

The instrumentality test, first formulated in *Sukhdev Singh v. Bhagatram* (1975), states that corporations performing public functions and subject to government control qualify as State instrumentalities. The Supreme Court ruled that statutory corporations like the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), and Industrial Finance Corporation (IFC) were covered under Article 12 because they performed vital public functions under significant government regulation. In *Ramana Dayaram Shetty v. International Airport Authority of India* (1979), the Court laid down five key factors to determine whether an entity is an instrumentality of the State:

1. Government Funding – If the government owns or substantially finances the entity.
2. Deep State Control – If the government exercises pervasive supervision over its affairs.
3. Public Functions – If the entity carries out functions of national importance similar to government duties.
4. State-Conferred Monopoly – If it enjoys special privileges or exclusive rights granted by the government.
5. Transformation of a Government Department – If an entity originates as a government department but is later restructured as a separate entity.

These factors are not exhaustive or decisive individually; rather, the Court considers the cumulative impact. In *Ajay Hasia v. Khalid Mujib* (1981), these principles were applied to an educational society registered under the Jammu and Kashmir Societies Registration Act, 1898. The Court ruled that it was an instrumentality of the State, given that the government controlled its management, funding, and policies. Further, a delegation of function does not observe a state entity from liability. The judiciary's status under Article 12 has been debated. Courts are not considered "State" when performing judicial functions but can be when exercising administrative powers. In *Naresh Mirajkar v. State of Maharashtra* (1966), the Supreme Court ruled that judicial

orders do not violate fundamental rights as they merely adjudicate disputes. This broad interpretation of "State" ensures that entities wielding government-like power remain accountable under Fundamental Rights. It prevents arbitrary action and upholds constitutional protections against powerful public authorities.

[Source: Edited from <https://blog.ipleaders.in/instrumentalities-of-the-state-under-article-12-of-indian-constitution/>]

Q78. The Government of India, seeking to enhance the efficiency of public transportation, establishes "National Urban Transit Authority" (NUTA), a statutory body that regulates metro rail services across the country. The authority is entirely funded by the government, and its board members are appointed by the Ministry of Transport. However, in order to increase efficiency, the government outsources operational control of metro services to "Swift Transit Pvt. Ltd.," a private company. A group of metro employees working under Swift Transit Pvt. Ltd. files a petition alleging the violation of their fundamental rights by NUTA, arguing that it is an instrumentality of the State under Article 12. Will the claim be maintainable?

A. No, since NUTA has delegated its operational control to a private company, it does not function as an instrumentality of the State anymore.

B. Yes, since NUTA is entirely funded and controlled by the government, and regulatory authorities performing public functions fall under the scope of Article 12.

C. No, because Swift Transit Pvt. Ltd., the actual employer of the employees, is a private entity and not the State under Article 12.

D. Yes, but only if the employees prove that the government directly interferes with their employment conditions under Swift Transit Pvt. Ltd.

Q79. A state government forms the "Rural Electricity Development Corporation" (REDC) to promote electricity supply in remote villages. The government holds 49% of the share capital, while private investors hold the rest, with the majority of directorship posts also being private investor held. The company enjoys monopoly status under an exclusive license granted by the government. A consumer alleges that REDC overcharges for electricity and files a petition in the High Court, claiming REDC is a State instrumentality. Will the petition be maintainable?

A. No, because the government does not hold the majority of shares, making it a private entity beyond the scope of Article 12.

B. Yes, because despite the government's minority stake, the corporation enjoys a government-conferred monopoly and performs public functions.

C. No, because the corporation's financial backing is primarily private, and control over pricing decisions is independent of the State.

D. Yes, but only if it can be shown that the government actively influences REDC's day-to-day decision-making.

Q80. The Indian Railways outsources its catering services to a private company, "Gourmet Express Pvt. Ltd." A passenger, served spoiled food on a train, files a complaint against Indian Railways, alleging deficiency of service under Article 12. The Railways argue that catering is handled by a private entity and they are not responsible. Can the Railways be held liable?

A. No, because Gourmet Express is an independent private contractor, and liability cannot be transferred to the Indian Railways.

B. No, because catering services are a commercial activity and do not involve governmental functions under Article 12.

C. Yes, because the Railways are a statutory corporation performing public functions, and outsourcing does not absolve them of responsibility.

D. Yes, but only if the contract between the Railways and Gourmet Express explicitly states liability for food quality.

Q81. Which of the following statements is not correct in the context of the passage?

A. An entity must satisfy all five factors listed in *Ramana Dayaram Shetty v. International Airport Authority of India* (1979) to be considered an instrumentality of the State.

B. Courts have ruled that institutions performing regulatory functions may be included under Article 12 even if they operate with some financial independence.

C. The judiciary is generally not considered a part of the State under Article 12 unless it is exercising administrative functions.

D. The Supreme Court has interpreted the definition of "State" under Article 12 broadly to ensure accountability of government-like entities.

Q82. A state government establishes "Heritage Conservation Board" (HCB) to protect and regulate historic monuments. The government provides 80% of its funding, while the rest comes from private donations. The board has the power to issue guidelines on monument preservation, conduct inspections, and impose fines on violators. However, it functions as an autonomous body with its own internal policies and

decision-making. A real estate developer, penalized for illegal construction near a protected site, challenges the penalty, arguing that HCB is not a "State" under Article 12 and, therefore, its orders cannot be challenged under fundamental rights. Will the challenge succeed?

A. Yes, since HCB is an autonomous body with independent decision-making and not directly controlled by the government.

B. No, because HCB is heavily funded by the government and performs public regulatory functions, bringing it under Article 12.

C. Yes, since government funding alone does not determine whether an entity is a State under Article 12.

D. No, unless the developer proves that the government actively interferes in HCB's day-to-day decision-making.

Q83. A private airline company, AirLux Pvt. Ltd., is granted an exclusive contract by the government to operate flights in remote areas under the "National Connectivity Scheme." The airline receives subsidies and logistical support from the government but remains privately owned, with complete autonomy in hiring, pricing, and operational policies. A consumer, denied boarding despite a confirmed ticket, files a petition alleging that AirLux is an instrumentality of the State and must comply with fundamental rights protections. Can AirLux be considered a "State" under Article 12?

A. No, because despite government subsidies, AirLux remains a privately owned company with full control over its commercial operations.

B. Yes, since AirLux enjoys a state-conferred monopoly and receives government subsidies, bringing it within the purview of Article 12.

C. No, unless the petitioner can prove that the government directly interferes in AirLux's management and operational decisions.

D. Yes, because any entity receiving government financial support and privileges qualifies as a State instrumentality.

Q84. The Union Government launches a flagship STEM-access programme and facilitates the creation of "National Inclusive Tech Education Society" (NITES) as a registered society (under the Societies Registration Act). The founding Memorandum of Association names the Union Education Secretary as ex officio Chair, reserves to the Ministry the power to approve budgets, appoint/remove key office-bearers, vet policies, and direct compliance with central guidelines. NITES runs national entrance testing centres, publishes admissions merit lists, and administers need-based scholarships using 90% Union grants and 10% private CSR. NITES terminates a candidate's scholarship after a "confidential" disciplinary note. The candidate files an Article 32 petition alleging violation of equality and natural justice, contending NITES is "State." Decide if the petition will succeed.

A. No, because NITES is a registered society and not a statutory corporation; only statutory corporations can be "other authorities" for Article 12 purposes.

B. Yes, because government funding, pervasive administrative control, and public-law functions in national admissions/scholarships cumulatively render NITES an Article 12 instrumentality.

C. No, unless the candidate proves that the Union directly instructed the termination decision in this particular case.

D. Yes, because any body involved in education automatically falls under Article 12 irrespective of control or funding.

SECTION D: - CRITICAL REASONING

Passage:- 1 As the United Nations General Assembly convenes for its 80th session this week, there is a sinking sense that US President Donald Trump is bent on deconstructing the world's premier multilateral forum. The UN survived his first-term onslaught (2017-21), widely seen then as an aberration in US policy. This time, Trump is more powerful, less constrained, and moving decisively to reduce the UN's salience in the global order. In his speech today, Trump is expected to pat himself on the back as a peacemaker, boasting of "ending seven wars" in the first eight months of his second term. For Indian audiences weary of that refrain, it is worth recalling that he is speaking, in part, to his populist base. One of the central themes of the America First movement has been opposition to "endless wars" and denunciation of liberals and Democrats as the "war party" squandering American blood and treasure. Trump promised to be a "peace president" in his January inaugural. But these boasts about peace cannot conceal the movement's hostility to the UN. In Trump's telling, he is doing a better job than the UN Security Council (UNSC), the body charged with maintaining international peace and security.

Trump's approach to the UN signals a deeper shift in US foreign policy — a retreat from multilateralism toward unilateralism. His maiden UN speech in 2017 laid out the template. In a definitive repudiation of globalism, he framed national sovereignty as the "fundamental principle" of international relations. International cooperation, he said, was acceptable but never at the cost of national decision-making or prosperity. In Trump's worldview, there is no room for the "supra-nationalism" that enthralled liberals after the Cold War. Trump's emphasis on sovereignty and his critique of intrusive liberal internationalism resonated with many developing countries, including India. But his 2017 speech also heralded a string of withdrawals and funding threats. In his first term, he left the Paris Climate Agreement, UNESCO, the Human Rights Council and the Iran nuclear deal. He threatened cuts to UN agencies and questioned the value of peacekeeping. The Biden administration reversed this approach. In the second term, Trump has doubled down — turning disruption into comprehensive policy.

The big difference now is an ideological playbook: The Heritage Foundation's Project 2025. The conservative manifesto brims with scepticism of internationalism. It calls for slashing US contributions to agencies seen as undermining sovereignty or promoting "radical social policies" such as gender equality and LGBTQ rights. It goes further than cutting funds, seeking to transform multilateral bodies into instruments of American policy and even floating the possibility of leaving the UN if it fails to align with administration objectives. UN policies supporting sustainable development or climate mitigation are a no-go for Trump.

[<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/c-raja-mohan-writes-on-its-80th-birthday-and-after-trump-a-question-whose-un-is-it-anyway-10265266/>]

Q85. Which option best states the author's overall conclusion about Trump's current approach to the UN?

- A) Trump's rhetoric about "ending wars" shows the UN has become completely obsolete and should be disbanded.
- B) Trump is pursuing an ideologically driven retreat from multilateralism that aims to reduce the UN's salience, now with more power, fewer constraints, and a policy playbook to act on it.
- C) Trump's pro-sovereignty framing is a temporary negotiating tactic to extract budget efficiencies from multilateral agencies.
- D) Trump's 2017 speech was merely symbolic; his

present stance affirms stable US commitment to multilateralism.

Q86. In the phrase "a definitive repudiation of globalism," the word "repudiation" most nearly means:

- A) cautious postponement
- B) formal rejection or disavowal
- C) partial reinterpretation
- D) reluctant endorsement

Q87. The passage's critique relies on which unstated assumption?

- A) Developing countries uniformly oppose national-sovereignty arguments at the UN.

- B) The UN Security Council is constitutionally barred from acting without US concurrence.
- C) Rhetoric aimed at a domestic populist base never affects actual foreign policy.
- D) The UN's standing and leverage are materially dependent on sustained US participation, funding, and cooperation.

Q88. Which of the following, if true, most weakens the author's thesis that Trump is "moving decisively to reduce the UN's salience"?

- A) Several developing countries echo sovereignty language while privately lobbying for more UN funds.
- B) The administration criticises certain agencies but continues routine US mission staffing in New York.
- C) Despite Project 2025, the administration substantially increases US assessed contributions and personally leads successful UNSC initiatives widely seen as enhancing the UN's centrality.
- D) The US delays—but does not cancel—some voluntary contributions pending audits of agency performance.

Q89. Which inference is best supported by the discussion of "Project 2025"?

- A) Project 2025 urges embracing UN sustainable-development and climate agendas to rebuild global trust.
- B) Project 2025 provides an ideological manual to slash funds to sovereignty-challenging agencies, reshape bodies to serve US policy, and even contemplate leaving the UN if it won't align.
- C) Project 2025 is a bipartisan document drafted under the Biden administration to restore UNESCO ties.
- D) Project 2025 confines itself to cultural issues and avoids structural proposals affecting the UN.

Q90. Which statement would most strengthen the author's contention that disruption has become comprehensive policy in Trump's second term?

- A) Independent budget trackers show a sharp, sustained decline in US payments to multiple UN agencies alongside formal directives to condition cooperation on alignment with administration priorities.
- B) Think-tank commentary notes that Trump's "peace president" rhetoric polls well among his base.
- C) Several UN ambassadors praise the tone of Trump's latest speech as lively and engaging.
- D) The US delegation hosts a well-attended reception during UNGA week.

Passage:- 2 Robert Redford, who died on September 16, was one of the most iconic movie stars. He was also a highly secure leading man, shining in solo roles while also generously sharing the screen with his male co-stars – evident from Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, The Sting and Spy Game. In All The President's Men, Redford has top billing and equal screen time with Dustin Hoffman. The movie is proof of Redford's conviction for being part of something bigger and more important than him. The film is part of Alan J Pakula's paranoia trilogy. Alongside Kluge (1971) and The Parallax View (1974), All The President's Men (1976) imagines the American government as the biggest violator of the rules it has laid down for its citizenry, an opaque and sinister force that commits crimes from behind the scenes. All The President's Men has a character who literally operates in the shadows and changes the course of events. William Goldman's screenplay is adapted from the book of the same name by The Washington Post journalists Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward. The film revolves around the infamous Watergate scandal in 1974. The newspaper's investigation showed that US President Richard Nixon, who was pursuing a second term, was involved in spying on the rival Democratic Party.

All The President's Men reveals the importance of dogged reporting in holding rulers accountable for their actions. Available to rent on Prime Video, the film that has been beautifully shot by the legendary cinematographer Gordon Willis is a tribute to both the value and allure of journalism. Redford and Hoffman play Woodward and Bernstein respectively – young and brash reporters keen on making a mark at one of America's most storied newspapers. Woodward initially works on the Watergate story alone, later forming a partnership with Bernstein. The movie is an excellent press procedural. Like police detectives chasing down clues so that their case will ultimately stand up in court, Woodward and Bernstein follow the bread crumbs that can plausibly connect a bunch of arrested men with the country's top leader. Jason Robards beautifully plays the newspaper's charismatic editor Benjamin Bradlee, who has the habit of putting his feet up on his desk. Bradlee's withering comments push Woodward and Bernstein to put in the hard work that will make their stories credible.

All The President's Men is among very few films to accurately portray the way in which journalism works. There's nothing flashy or heroic about the editorial meetings, the numerous phone calls, the meetings with sources. The movie mostly takes place in a cavernous newsroom packed with reporters hunched over messy desks – later seen in David Fincher's *Zodiac* (2007). The reporting is rigorous but thrilling too. An undercurrent of ruffled cool, a kind of casual sexiness, is unmistakable. What can be more alluring than journalists chasing the truth? By giving investigative journalism the intensity of a hunt, the movie arguably inspired generations of viewers to consider a career in the media.

[<https://scroll.in/reel/1086823/start-the-week-with-a-film-the-value-and-romance-of-journalism-in-all-the-presidents-men>]

Q91. Which option best captures the passage's central claim about Redford and All the President's Men?

- A) Redford's secure star persona and the film's rigorous, accurate depiction of investigative reporting together show how cinema can hold rulers to account and inspire audiences toward journalism.
- B) Redford's generosity toward co-stars undermines his screen presence, making the film feel less compelling than his earlier solo vehicles.
- C) The film's value is mainly aesthetic; its portrayal of journalism is flashy, heroic, and largely irrelevant to civic accountability.
- D) Government paranoia is overstated in Pakula's trilogy, which romanticises reporters at the expense of historical accuracy.

Q92. In "the importance of dogged reporting," dogged most nearly means:

- A) rashly opportunistic, chasing headlines for quick attention
- B) methodical yet emotionally indifferent to outcomes
- C) stubbornly persistent
- D) flashy and attention-seeking over substance-focused

Q93. The author concludes the film "arguably inspired generations... to consider a career in the media." Which assumption does this most rely on?

- A) Most viewers already knew the Watergate story before watching the film.
- B) Cinematic portrayals of professional life can materially influence viewers' career aspirations.
- C) All newsroom films produced after 1976 were directly modelled on Pakula's style.
- D) Viewers always prefer accurate depictions over sensational ones.

Q94. Which of the following, if true, would most weaken the claim that the film "accurately portray[s] the way in which journalism works"?

- A) The production rebuilt The Washington Post newsroom on a soundstage rather than shooting in the actual office.

B) Contemporary critics praised the film's lighting and camera work more than its performances.

C) The screenplay compresses the timeline of events to fit a theatrical runtime.

D) Multiple editors and reporters from the period attest that several core reporting practices shown (e.g., sourcing protocols, verification thresholds) were dramatized in ways contrary to the Post's standards at the time.

Q95. Which new piece of evidence would most strengthen the passage's portrayal of Redford as a "highly secure leading man" who "generously" shares the screen?

- A) A retrospective essay argues that Redford's presence overshadows Hoffman in the final act.
- B) Studio marketing materials place Redford alone on the poster to maximise star power abroad.
- C) A trade report reveals Redford negotiated a higher salary than Hoffman despite equal billing.
- D) Production notes and timing sheets show Redford voluntarily ceded lines and ensured equal billing and near-equal screen time for Hoffman despite having top billing.

Q96. The passage says there is "nothing flashy or heroic" in the film's depiction of work, yet calls the reporting "rigorous but thrilling" and "alluring." Which option best resolves this apparent tension?

- A) The newsroom scenes were filmed with fast edits and stylised action, creating thrill despite inaccuracy.
- B) The thrill derives mainly from star charisma; accuracy is incidental to audience engagement.
- C) Procedural rigor creates suspense through high stakes, careful verification, and incremental revelations –so authenticity and excitement can coexist without flashiness.
- D) The author contradicts themselves; both claims cannot be true simultaneously.

Passage:- 3 The Supreme Court of India recently reaffirmed that secularism is a fundamental principle and part of the basic structure of the Constitution of India. While this is a welcome restatement, it is concerning that the Court has to periodically reiterate this foundational aspect of Indian nationhood. The need arose from a misguided petition that sought to communalize a moment of celebration for all Indians. The Karnataka government had invited International Booker Prize-winning Kannada writer Banu Mushtaq, who is Muslim, to inaugurate the Mysuru Dasara festival at the Chamundeshwari Temple – which she did on Monday. This festival, a State-sponsored cultural event that is not purely religious, serves as an occasion for all communities to come together and share in the joy of the festival. The petition filed in the Court alleged that Ms. Mushtaq's participation violated Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution, which guarantee freedom of religion. A Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta rightly dismissed the petition, clarifying that the Dasara festival is a State event, not a private religious ceremony. The Court emphasised that the State cannot discriminate based on religion when organising public events and questioned whether the petitioner had even read the Constitution's Preamble, which unambiguously promotes equality and secularism. The Karnataka High Court had previously upheld the government's decision, stating that a person of one faith participating in the events of another does not violate anyone's constitutional right. The constitutional right to practise and profess religion cannot be interpreted as a right to restrict others from participating in a faith's practices. Restricting participation in any public gathering based on religion is indefensible in a pluralistic society. Although some places of worship still limit access to certain groups, such practices remain a source of legal and ethical debate. Those who perceive a threat to their religion from someone who is voluntarily and happily joining its festivities are either cynical or cunning. In fact, over many centuries and across different geographies, festivals and pilgrimages have united India's diverse population, often transcending social barriers. The acceptance of this shared, mixed cultural heritage is a common thread among all Indian political parties, even amid their disagreements. However, a new group of political opportunists is exploiting this harmony by creating communal rifts, turning the logic of coexistence on its head. As the Supreme Court has demonstrated, these individuals need to be held accountable.

[<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/basic-structure-on-the-mysuru-dasara-festival/article70080897.ece>]

Q97. Which option best states the author's overall conclusion about the controversy and the courts' role?

- A) The petitioner correctly showed that Articles 25–26 bar people of other faiths from inaugurating any temple-linked event, and the State should refrain from such invitations.
- B) Secularism, as part of the Constitution's basic structure, requires the State to keep public, State-sponsored festivals non-discriminatory; the petition was rightly dismissed because Dasara is a State event to which inclusion, not exclusion, applies.
- C) India should prohibit members of minority faiths from inaugurating festivals at temple premises to avoid offending believers.
- D) The Karnataka High Court contradicted the Supreme Court by holding that cross-faith participation violates Articles 25–26.

Q98. In “a misguided petition that sought to communalise a moment of celebration,” communalise most nearly means:

- A) to celebrate collectively across communities,

emphasising togetherness

- B) to nationalise a private event by bringing it under government control
- C) to depoliticise an issue by keeping it away from sectarian debates
- D) to inject sectarian/identity division into an otherwise civic or inclusive occasion

Q99. Which of the following, if true, would most weaken the Court's reasoning as summarised in the passage?

- A) Some private citizens on social media expressed discomfort with a Muslim writer inaugurating a temple-linked event.
- B) A few past editions of Dasara featured exclusively Hindu dignitaries at inaugural ceremonies.
- C) The State's publicity materials used more temple imagery this year than in previous years.
- D) The inauguration ceremony is shown by official records to be a private religious rite controlled by an autonomous temple trust, with the State only providing logistical funding; access and roles are governed by the trust's religious rules.

Q100. The author's argument relies most centrally on which assumption?

- A) Articles 25–26 grant no protection to any religious denomination for any practice inside temple premises.
- B) Any festival conducted near a place of worship is automatically a public event.
- C) The Mysuru Dasara inauguration, as organised, is a State-sponsored public cultural function, not a private religious ceremony, so constitutional non-discrimination norms apply.
- D) Muslim participation in Hindu festivals necessarily promotes secularism regardless of legal classification.

Q101. Which of the following, if true, would most strengthen the passage's position?

- A) A Government Order predating this year's festivities designates Mysuru Dasara as a State cultural programme open to all communities and forbids organisers of State events from discriminating by religion.
- B) A prominent social leader says inclusion "feels right," though no official documents are cited.

C) A survey finds that a plurality of locals support the petition, even though they have not read the Preamble.

D) A historian notes that Dasara once involved only palace rituals and attendance by nobility.

Q102. Which inference is best supported by the passage's treatment of Articles 25–26 and the Preamble?

- A) The freedom to profess and practise religion includes a veto over who may attend or inaugurate any event connected to that religion.
- B) The freedom to profess and practise religion protects one's own practice, but does not create a right to restrict others from participating in public events; the Preamble's equality/secularism reinforce this reading.
- C) Because some places of worship still restrict access, all similar restrictions are constitutionally immune from scrutiny.
- D) If a festival occurs in a temple precinct, constitutional norms of equality never apply to any part of it.

Passage:- 4 Kerala has given India a truly unique gift – a female superhero who doesn't conform to the usual tropes. Lokah Chapter 1: Chandra, Malayalam cinema's first female-led superhero film, has not only broken box office records, but it has done so with a relatively unknown lead actress, Kalyani Priyadarshan. This success is a testament to the audience's hunger for stories where women wield power rather than endure suffering. The film's success carries profound irony. India, a land that worships powerful goddesses – Durga the warrior, Kali the destroyer and Lakshmi the provider – simultaneously perpetrates some of the world's most devastating violence against its daughters.

National Crime Records Bureau data from 2022 reveals 6,450 dowry deaths, nearly 18 women killed every single day. Uttar Pradesh alone accounts for every third dowry death in India, with 11,488 women killed over five years. Meanwhile, a UN report from 2020 had estimated that some 4,61,500 girls in India were not born between 2013 and 2017 due to prenatal sex-selection. The stark contradiction of goddess worship alongside gender-based violence makes Kerala's cinematic breakthrough all the more significant. The state, which consistently ranks among India's most progressive, has not just delivered entertainment, but a cultural intervention. Lokah reimagines what female power looks like on screen, challenging traditional narratives and paving the way for a more inclusive future. What sets Lokah apart is the deliberate and authentic involvement of women throughout its creation. Director Dominic Arun worked with co-writer Santhy Balachandran, an Oxford graduate who brought social science expertise to complement Arun's grasp of Malayalam pop culture. Colourist Yashika Routray shaped the film's visual aesthetic, while rapper Reble contributed to its musical landscape.

This wasn't tokenism; it was a strategic collaboration that ensured authentic female perspectives permeated every aspect of the storytelling process, from dialogue nuances to costume choices and body language. Producer Dulquer Salmaan's decision to champion this project deserves particular recognition. As one of Malayalam cinema's biggest stars, his production house Wayfarer Films could have pursued safer, more conventional projects. Instead, Salmaan backed a vision that placed a woman at the centre of India's superhero universe, even when he initially expected the film might struggle commercially. His willingness to use his platform and resources to amplify female-centric narratives demonstrates how male allies in positions of

power can fundamentally alter industry dynamics. The film cleverly weaves Kerala folklore, specifically the legend of Kalliyankattu Neeli, a yakshi or vampiric spirit, into contemporary superhero mythology. This approach challenges traditional narratives where supernatural women are often portrayed as malevolent forces requiring male intervention. In Lokah, Chandra is the hero of her own story, summoned not as a threat but as a protector, wielding power that serves justice rather than vengeance. Critics and audiences have embraced this reversal of gender dynamics. The movie's success, without relying on big-name male stars, proves that the audience is craving change. International audiences have responded equally enthusiastically, with the film performing exceptionally well in overseas markets and becoming the second-highest-grossing Malayalam film internationally.

[<https://thewire.in/gender/keralas-superhero-revolution-lokah-chapter-1>]

Q103. Which option best captures the passage's central conclusion?

- A) Kerala's Lokah: Chapter 1 – Chandra signals a cultural inflection point: a female-led superhero, built through substantive women's involvement and allyship, subverts sexist tropes and proves audiences will reward such change at home and abroad.
- B) Lokah succeeds mainly because Malayalam cinema traditionally avoids male stars, so any film without them will perform well.
- C) The film's overseas gross shows Indian audiences remain indifferent to gendered tropes, though foreigners are receptive.
- D) The real lesson is that goddess worship guarantees a safer India for women, which cinema merely reflects.

Q104. In the sentence "This wasn't tokenism; it was a strategic collaboration...", tokenism most nearly means:

- A) ceremonial seniority granted to overqualified leaders
- B) spontaneous teamwork that lacks any planning
- C) a mere symbolic inclusion of marginalised people without real authority or impact
- D) mandatory quotas that always improve quality

Q105. The author infers that the film's success "proves that the audience is craving change" (female-led, no big male star). Which of the following, if true, would most weaken that inference?

- A) The film released during a holiday weekend.
- B) A rival studio postponed a major action film by two weeks.
- C) Average ticket prices were slightly lower than last quarter's.
- D) Independent box-office audits show a majority of tickets were sold through steep "1+1" discount schemes and corporate bulk deals; exit polls report spectacle/visual novelty, not gender inversion, as the top reason for attendance.

Q106. The claim "This wasn't tokenism; it was a strategic collaboration that ensured authentic female

perspectives permeated every aspect..." depends on which assumption?

- A) All films with women in any crew role are automatically authentic.
- B) Male directors cannot understand female perspectives at all.
- C) Audience reception is determined solely by who is on the crew.
- D) The women credited (writer, colourist, rapper, etc.) had meaningful decision-making influence across key creative choices rather than serving in merely decorative or easily overruled roles.

Q107. Which of the following, if true, would most strengthen the passage's claim that Dulquer Salmaan's allyship "can fundamentally alter industry dynamics"?

- A) Internal distribution memos show Salmaan diverted prime festival slots and marketing budgets from his own acting vehicle to Lokah, secured 250 extra screens, and negotiated premium showtimes that comparable woman-led films historically struggled to get.
- B) Social media praise calls Salmaan "supportive," but no changes to budgets, show counts, or release windows are documented.
- C) A rival producer says he personally dislikes superhero films.
- D) The studio café ran a "women-in-film" week during release.

Q108. Which inference is best supported by the folklore-to-superhero move described?

- A) The film argues that all supernatural women are benign and require no oversight.
- B) By recasting a yakshi figure as a protector-hero, the film directly counters the trope that supernatural women are malevolent and must be contained by male intervention.
- C) Kerala folklore is inherently feminist, so no subversion is needed.
- D) International success proves folklore adaptations are the only viable route for feminist cinema.

SECTION E: - QUANTITATIVE TECHNIQUES

Passage 1: The Utopian Government was newly formed in 2021. It came in with an election promise to spread literacy among all its people, both men and women. In the process of fulfilling this promise, it appointed Mrs. Peter to conduct a survey for the government to check the literacy rates in the country so that appropriate action can be taken by the Government. However, the government was disappointed by the results because the literacy rates were lower than what they had anticipated. Using the data given in the table, answer the following questions:

Town (Population)	Literacy Rate	Male Population (Number)	Female Population
A (10,000)	55%	60%	
B (25,000)	70%	50%	
C (49,000)	50%	22,000	
D (65,000)	80%	30,000	

Q109. What percentage of the entire country's population is female (correct to one decimal place)?

A. 52.7% B. 53.5% C. 51.3% D. 50.5%

Q110. If 60% of males in Town B are literate, and the overall literacy rate of B is 70%, then what percentage of females in B are illiterate?

A. 60% B. 70% C. 80% D. None of the above

Q111. The number of females in Town B is what percentage of the number of males in Town A?

A. 66.67% (about two-thirds of males in A)
B. 123.22% (slightly more than males in A)
C. 208.33% (just over double the males in A)
D. 42.5% (well under half the males in A)

Q112. If 60% of females in Town D are literate, what is the number of literate males in Town D given the town's overall literacy rate as specified in the passage?

A. 10,000 B. 11,000 C. 12,000 D. 11,500

Q113. What is the average literacy rate of the entire country (i.e., all four towns combined)?

A. 51.5% B. 52.6% C. 53.7% D. 54.8%

Q114. Suppose a data-revision sets Town D's literacy rate to 80% (populations and male/female splits unchanged). What would be the new overall literacy rate of the country (all four towns combined), correct to one decimal place?

A. 65.9% B. 66.8% C. 64.1% D. 62.4%

Passage 2: There is a bank called XYZ Bank Pvt. Ltd is a bank in Bengaluru. They recently upped their game by offering loans among the poor and needy in Bengaluru. They offer 4 different schemes, with different stakeholders being targeted in the schemes. The first scheme directed at MSME's offer a loan for investment worth Rs. 45,000 at an interest rate of 9%. The second scheme directed at small restaurants offers a loan at Rs. 20,000. The third scheme being offered to COVID-19 heroes such as doctors provides a loan for 4 years with interest worth Rs. 9800 being paid back. The final scheme, offered at homemakers and home caterers provides a loan a cost of Rs. 25,000. Mr. Sam wants to check the burden such loans would put on the borrowers and hence wants to make certain calculations. Hence, he has asked you for your help. Using the data in the question, answer the following questions:

Q115. If the third scheme offers an interest rate of 14%, what is the loan amount if interest is calculated using simple interest?

A. ₹17,000 B. ₹17,500 C. ₹18,000 D. ₹18,500

Q116. If the loan towards MSMEs is given out for 6 years, what is the simple interest at the end of 6 years?

A. ₹23,500 B. ₹24,300 C. ₹26,200 D. ₹27,000

Q117. If the loans to homemakers offer an interest of ₹8,275 in 3 years, what is the rate of interest provided the interest is compounded annually?

A. 7% B. 8% C. 9% D. 10%

Q118. Assume that the scheme to restaurants offers a rate of interest equal to 7.5%, when the interest is simple annually for 2 years. What is the interest amount?

A. ₹2,000 B. ₹3,000 C. ₹4,000 D. ₹5,000

Q119. If Mr. Sam takes a loan worth INR 9,800, what is the difference between the compound and simple interest at 8% for a time frame of 2 years?

A. ₹62.72 B. ₹71.40 C. ₹56.25 D. ₹83.76

Q120. For the MSME scheme, what is the total amount payable (principal + interest) after 6 years?

A. ₹68,500 B. ₹69,300 C. ₹70,200 D. ₹71,800

SECTION A: - ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Passage 1:

1) Correct option: C - (Difficulty: Medium) – Line refs: 3–4, 5–10, 19–22, 26–27

The passage repeatedly insists that “speech is never just speech” and is tied to owners, advertisers, regulators, and power moods (lines 3–4). It reframes free speech as a mixer rather than an on/off switch (lines 5–7), stresses that the First Amendment protects against the state but not bosses (line 8), and notes companies can silence for “brand safety” (line 9) while the law doesn’t guarantee a platform or courage (line 10). Later, it details governmental pressure (lines 19–20) and fear trumping censors (lines 21–22). Finally, Chomsky’s ownership/advertising point (line 26) and the “boundaries of expression... marked... by economics and access” (line 27) nail the claim.

A is incorrect because the author never calls the Kimmel episode an isolated overreaction or proposes state enforcement inside workplaces; the problem is structural, not episodic.

B is wrong because the author includes mobs among pressures but foregrounds corporations, advertisers, and governments as co-determinants; it’s not “solely” mobs.

D is a prescriptive claim (“should avoid politics”) that the author doesn’t endorse; the point is diagnostic, not a call for apolitical content.

2) Correct option: A – (Difficulty: Easy) – Line ref: 1
“Yanked” in line 1 clearly signals abrupt removal of Jimmy Kimmel Live! after the joke; it connotes a sudden, forceful action, not a soft adjustment. In broadcast parlance, to yank a show is to pull it from airing, typically immediately or on short notice. This aligns with the controversy’s framing as a “storm” and the cascade of reactions that followed, implying decisive network action.

B is incorrect because “mildly criticized” doesn’t match the decisive programming consequence the passage implies.

C is wrong since a routine time-slot shift lacks the force and controversy implied by “yanked.”

D is incorrect because a “quiet reprimand” suggests internal discipline without public program changes, contradicting the public, program-level action described.

3) Correct option: B – (Difficulty: Medium) – Line refs: 5–7

The mixer metaphor (lines 5–7) explains that speech is modulated—volume up here, down there—by those controlling the sound system. Option B mirrors this:

volume knobs controlling a song map onto corporate/regulatory controls modulating public expression. The essence is calibrated amplification, not binary permission.

A is incorrect because the umbrella analogy is binary and preventive; it doesn’t capture modulation or multi-actor adjustment.

C mistakes the relation as merely holding/allowing (“microphone : singer”), not shaping relative loudness and reach.

D misreads the workplace/metaphor: the “mall with security guards” appears later (lines 15–16) to show private control limits, but it isn’t the specific “mixer” idea of adjustable amplification.

4) Correct option: C – (Difficulty: Medium) – Line refs: 8–10

The author distinguishes state protection from private amplification: the First Amendment shields citizens from the state (line 8), but companies can still silence for brand safety (line 9), and “the law... does not guarantee... a primetime slot or even the courage...” (line 10). Thus, legal rights don’t entail private platforms, employer insulation, or guaranteed audience.

A is incorrect: the author never calls the First Amendment obsolete or prescribes corporate codes as a remedy.

B is wrong: the passage emphasizes that even absent overt state censorship, private and economic structures modulate speech; challenges persist.

D is incorrect because employer limitations are not framed as unconstitutional; the First Amendment constrains the state, not private bosses (line 8).

5) Correct option: D – (Difficulty: Hard) – Line refs: 19–22

D best fuses the two claims: (i) even strong democracies feature subtle government pressure (lines 19–20) and (ii) fear often silences faster than censors (line 22). It preserves the metaphoric “humidity” texture and causal arc: pressure → pervasive fear → silencing. The syntax is balanced, concise, and faithful to tone.

A is incorrect because it asserts neutrality that the passage denies (lines 19–20) and blames only mobs, ignoring advertisers/regulators.

B is wrong for the same neutrality claim, and it over-attributes fear solely to advertising boycotts, omitting governmental pressure.

C is incorrect because it flips the passage: it asserts “loud” daily censorship and dismisses fear and metaphor as irrelevant, contradicting the author’s emphasis on subtle pressure and fear’s speed (lines 20–22).

Q6) Correct option: C — (Difficulty: Medium) — Line refs: 23–27

By citing Lippmann’s “manufacture of consent” (lines 23–25) and Chomsky on ownership/advertising shaping journalism (line 26), the author grounds the present case in a long tradition of critique showing that constraints arise from economics and access long before overt censorship. The concluding line that boundaries are “marked in pencil by economics and access” (line 27) synthesizes these authorities with the thesis.

A is incorrect: the author uses, not dismisses, these theorists to bolster the argument.

B is wrong: the focus isn’t a host’s misunderstanding of economics; it’s structural media dynamics.

D is incorrect: the author doesn’t declare managed persuasion unconstitutional; the point is descriptive/diagnostic, not a constitutional indictment.

Passage 2:

7) Correct option: A — (Difficulty: Medium) — Line refs: 11–12, 21–23, 27–33, 35–38

The passage knits together evidence of gender-nonconformity (basivis; petitions for registration as “mxn”) and subaltern martial leadership (Kuyili, Jhalkari Bai), then argues these histories were suppressed by Brahmanical patriarchy and colonial frames (lines 11–12; 21–23). It also widens the lens to Bahun/Muslim/Sikh (wo)mxn employed in martial roles (lines 27–33) and the Urdubegis (lines 35–38), underscoring a pattern rather than isolated anecdotes.

Why others are wrong

B claims Indian elites “consistently celebrated” subaltern heroines; the text says the opposite—protonationalists/nationalists “buried these womxn’s names” (lines 21–22).

C reduces the piece to biography; but the author explicitly makes historiographical and caste/gender claims (lines 11–12; 21–25).

D asserts all-female armies were a European invention—the passage situates such units in Indian courts (Urdubegis) (lines 35–38), not as imports.

Q8) Correct option: B — (Difficulty: Easy) — Line ref: 29
“Anachronistic” in “like some anachronistic remnant of Greek myths” (line 29) means out of time—as if these living womxn belonged to an earlier epoch. Europeans perceived them as temporally misplaced “Amazons,” i.e., something that shouldn’t exist now but does. Why others are wrong:

A imputes deception, which the sentence doesn’t suggest; it’s about perception of temporal mismatch, not intent to mislead.

C says “culturally foreign yet synchronized,” which contradicts the temporal nuance of “anachronistic.”

D equates the word with “unusually dominant,” confusing power with time; “dominance” is discussed elsewhere (lines 30–32), not in the definition of “anachronistic.”

9) Correct option: C — (Difficulty: Hard) — Line refs: 21–23

The text posits two overlapping discourses—Brahmanical patriarchy (protonationalists/nationalists) and British imperial narratives—each muting certain histories for distinct reasons (lines 21–23). Option C’s dual-filter metaphor captures how combined screening determines which stories get through while others fade. Why others are wrong:

A shows a single spotlight (one agent), whereas the passage stresses two agents acting in concert.

B is a noise metaphor (crowd vs soloist), but the passage isn’t about volume competition; it’s about selective filtration/erasure by two systems.

D depicts amplification, the opposite of what happened; the text describes erasure and forgetting, not boosting.

10) Correct option: D — (Difficulty: Easy) — Line ref: 30
“Dominant females” (line 30) refers to womxn who displayed their masculinity and exercised martial authority; the clearest antonym is “subordinate.” It inverts the power relation implied by “dominant.” Why others are wrong:

A “prevalent,” B “ascendant,” and C “preeminent” are all near-synonyms of dominance or upward power/standing, not antonyms. Only D captures the opposite—reduced rank or control.

11) Correct option: A — (Difficulty: Medium) — Line refs: 27–33

Option A corrects the fragment and restores parallelism (“to guard, to fight, and to perform”), while also fixing the idiom to “as they saw fit.” It fluidly links the roles (employment by enterprises/palaces/armies) with the purposes (guard/fight/perform gender), exactly mirroring the author’s meaning in the surrounding sentences that describe these womxn’s martial and gender-performative functions (lines 27–33). The coordination with a single subject and a clear series preserves voice and maintains the author’s cadence and scope (multiple institutions, multiple roles). Why others are wrong:

B mixes forms (“to guarding, to fight and perform”), breaks parallelism (“to guarding” vs “to fight”), uses the non-idiomatic “choose fitting,” and drops the Oxford comma inconsistently—thus ungrammatical and stylistically jarring.

C again breaks parallelism with “guard, fight, and performing,” and “had chosen fit” is an awkward

tense/idiom mismatch that alters the immediacy of the author's claim.

D inserts a disruptive comma before the infinitive chain and uses "they chosen fit," which is ungrammatical; the triple "to" is clunky, and the idiom remains incorrect.

Q12) Correct option: D — (Difficulty: Medium) — Line refs: 21–26, 35–38

Option D synthesizes two explicit strands: (i) upper-caste protonationalists/nationalists who "buried these womxn's names" because they weren't highborn (lines 21–23), and (ii) British discourses that forgot them because they didn't fit the "Indian woman-as-victim" script or paternalistic "rescue" narrative (lines 23–26). The text also asserts that Dalit womxn "have fought for themselves" and what they need is allies, not rescuers (line 26), aligning directly with the option's final clause. The mention of the Urdubegis—female soldiers trained in a range of weapons (lines 35–38)—further undercuts simplistic victim narratives and supports the inference of intersecting erasures rather than absence of agency. Why others are wrong:

A misreads European response: the passage says Europeans saw such womxn as "Amazons," didn't know what to make of them, and forgot them—hardly "full approval" or consistent admiration (lines 28–26).

B inverts the claim: nationalist historians did not prioritize subaltern narratives; they buried them (lines 21–23).

C contradicts the evidence: the Urdubegis were trained in long- and short-range weapons (lines 35–38), implying permission and practice, not prohibition, within palace precincts.

Passage 3:

13) Correct option: B — (Difficulty: Medium) — Line refs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

B synthesizes the passage's architecture: (i) the fee hike produces "widespread consternation" and threatens both families and U.S. tech employers (line 1); (ii) India's External Affairs Ministry has limited scope to reverse the policy (line 4); and (iii) the author urges a domestic, long-term strategy—bolstering infrastructure, reforms, AI capabilities, and market diversification (lines 5–6), given that the order might be extended (line 7). The finale projects that the U.S. may suffer a talent shortfall by shutting out future innovators (line 8). Why the others are incorrect:

A contradicts line 4, which explicitly says there is limited scope for South Block to apply pressure; the passage argues the opposite of an easy reversal.

C narrows the issue to "humanitarian" effects, ignoring firm-level disruptions (line 1) and the strategic policy pivot the author recommends (lines 5–7).

D downplays risk by calling the policy unquestionably temporary; line 7 clearly states no guarantee against extension, necessitating long-term planning

Q14) Correct option: A — (Difficulty: Easy) — Line ref: 1
"Consternation" in line 1 captures a mix of dismay and anxiety in light of the steep \$100,000 fee and its ripple effects—on families and on firms that rely on H-1B workers. The context (humanitarian consequences; disruption to tech hiring) signals a strong negative emotional response, not neutrality. Why the others are incorrect:

B "careful neutrality" contradicts the emotional tone of alarm.

C "stubborn skepticism" implies a resistant attitude to evidence, not distress.

D "mild curiosity" trivializes the severity conveyed by "widespread consternation" and ensuing disruptions.

Q15) Correct option: D — (Difficulty: Medium) — Line ref: 4

D fixes the dangling/awkward modifier and restores clean parallelism: "apply diplomatic or political pressure" uses coordinate adjectives correctly modifying "pressure," and "to reverse the policy" is idiomatic and concise. It directly reflects the sentence's intended meaning in line 4—there is limited scope for such diplomatic or political pressure. Why the others are incorrect:

A ("for South Block applying...") misuses the gerund and adds verbosity; "in order to" is unnecessary padding.

B is ungrammatical ("politically" modifying "as well as") and awkward ("a pressure").

C improves some structure but remains wordy and slightly off-idiom ("for reversing the policy") while needlessly shifting focus to "South Block's scope" as a noun phrase; D is tighter and clearer.

16) Correct option: C — (Difficulty: Easy) — Line ref: 8

In line 8, "hostility" denotes an unwelcoming stance toward prospective innovators and taxpayers. The best antonym is "receptiveness," which captures an actively welcoming posture. Why the others are incorrect:

A "ambivalence" is neutrality or mixed feelings, not the opposite of hostility.

B "leniency" relates to harshness/punishment, not welcoming/repelling; it's off-axis semantically.

D "assertiveness" concerns communication style/force, not stance toward welcoming or excluding.

17) Correct option: D — (Difficulty: Medium) — Line refs: 2, 7

Option D accurately aggregates three factual statements that the passage makes explicit. First, it

notes that applications “have dropped to a four-year low of nearly 3,59,000” (line 2). Second, it correctly recalls that the H-1B cap has “been capped at 85,000 per year since 2004” (line 2). Third, it reflects the author’s caution that the order “is set to expire within a year” but there is “no guarantee that it would not be extended” (line 7), thereby justifying a long-term policy response. Because D triangulates all three pieces of textual evidence, it is the only choice that is fully consistent with the passage’s data and the author’s risk-aware framing.

Why the others are incorrect:

A reverses the facts: the cap has not been raised above 85,000 (line 2), and applications are down to a four-year low, not at a high (line 2).

B mangles the salary distribution and thereby the economic implication; the passage states “close to 60%... earn less than \$100,000,” not fewer than 10% (line 3).

C contradicts the text’s explicit constraint that there is “limited scope for South Block to apply pressure” to get the policy reversed (line 4); the author in fact counsels domestic capacity-building because decisive reversal is unlikely (lines 5–7).

18) Correct option: A – (Difficulty: Hard) – Line refs: 5–7
Option A mirrors the author’s two-pronged policy logic: build internal capability and hedge external risk. The passage urges India to “bolster infrastructure and undertake necessary reforms” (line 5) and to “develop new capabilities in the Artificial Intelligence space” (line 6), which matches a startup investing in its own R&D. It simultaneously recommends “exploring new markets across Asia ... and in parts of Europe” (line 6), which maps to cultivating alternative suppliers/markets to reduce single-source dependence. The rationale is explicitly risk-management: the order “is set to expire within a year” but “there is no guarantee that it would not be extended” (line 7), so prudent actors don’t wait; they diversify and upgrade. The startup in A hedges price shock exposure and strengthens its fundamentals—exactly the author’s blueprint. This makes A structurally isomorphic to the passage’s capacity-building + diversification strategy. Why the others are incorrect:

B advocates passivity (“hopes policies will change”), the opposite of the passage’s proactive, long-term planning (lines 5–7).

C doubles down on the same partner after tariffs, contradicting the advice to explore new markets beyond a tightening channel (line 6).

D clings to a single client and shuns diversification, which is precisely what the author warns against given the risk of extension and shrinking opportunities (line 7).

Passage 4:

19) Correct option: B – (Difficulty: Medium) – Line refs: 1–3, 6–7, 11–13, 18–21

The passage frames a long-standing pattern: administrators try to “have its cake and eat it too” with Pakistan—chasing material incentive while appeasing domestic political constituencies and optics (lines 1–3). After Pahalgam, the establishment misjudged sentiment (lines 6–7), and the essay later underscores how BCCI–government interests align (lines 18–21). Option B alone fuses profit-seeking, optics management, the misread post-attack public anger, and the institutional alignment.

A is wrong because the text explicitly says appearances have mattered more than principles (lines 2–3); it does not claim principled refusals.

C overstates the author’s stance: the passage does not prescribe boycotting all international cricket; it critiques timing/insensitivity and political optics (lines 12–13, 21).

D misreads the mood: the author notes anger intensified as the fixture neared and “even the usually pliant voices had turned hostile” (lines 15–16), so apathy did not prevail.

20) Correct option: B – (Difficulty: Easy) – Line ref: 16
“Pliant” modifies “voices,” signalling commentators or constituencies who are usually compliant or easily influenced; here, even they “turned hostile” (line 16). Thus, B captures the sense of yielding/amenable as the usual state, making their hostility notable.

·A is the opposite of pliant and would make the author’s contrast pointless.

C invents a skill/affect nuance (“technically proficient”) absent from context.

D suggests initial outspokenness then reversal, which contradicts the sentence’s point that those usually pliant became hostile—i.e., the shift is from compliance to hostility, not vice-versa.

Q21) Correct option: D – (Difficulty: Hard) – Line refs: 1–3, 13–15

The critique is of an ecosystem that keeps scheduling the lucrative India-Pakistan spectacle while betting on the fleeting nature of public outrage (lines 13–15), all under the lure of material incentive and optics (lines 1–3). Option D mirrors this: a broadcaster persists with a lucrative but polarising show after tragedy, assuming anger will fade while profits remain.

A reverses the logic—choosing principles over profit—the passage accuses cricket administrators of doing the opposite (lines 1–3).

B over-emphasises appearances with a permanent ban after one complaint; the passage critiques performative

optics but describes persistence with the profitable fixture, not over-zealous bans.

C again depicts rejecting sensational content on principle; the essay suggests administrators did not put standards above revenues (lines 1–3, 12–13).

22) Correct option: C – (Difficulty: Medium) – Line ref: 17

The line states that blaming the BCCI was no longer a “reliable failsafe” because people are “clearer than ever” about the decision-making hierarchy (line 17). That means the public recognises where power truly lies, so political authority cannot hide behind the board. Option C captures this accountability shift precisely.

A fabricates a formal BCCI refusal and government override—nothing in the text supports that.

B says fans were confused, the opposite of the clause “clearer than ever” (line 17).

D claims judicial compulsion made accountability irrelevant; the passage never mentions courts deciding the matter.

Q23) Correct option: B – (Difficulty: Medium) – Line refs: 8–10

The passage says that within a week of Pahalgam, Sony Sports Network stopped televising/streaming the PSL (line 8) and details the massacre of 26 civilians targeted for religious identity (line 9). It also notes sentiment amplified with Operation Sindoor and cross-border hostilities (line 10), consistent with B.

SECTION B: - CURRENT AFFAIRS (INCLUDING GENERAL KNOWLEDGE)

Passage 1:

25. Correct option: C (Medium) The first sitting of the UNGA took place on 10 January 1946, and there were 51 founding members at the UN’s inception. This pairing captures the institutional start that followed the 1945 Charter’s entry into force, reflecting the immediate post-war multilateral push. Option A mixes UN Day (24 October) with an incorrect member count; 45 understates founding membership. Option B gets the date right but trims the founding members to 50, omitting one state. Option D invents a November start and inflates membership to 57, which is historically inaccurate. The correct pairing aligns with the foundational facts of the UN’s earliest composition and calendar, distinguishing the Charter’s legal effect (1945) from the Assembly’s first formal convening (1946). The membership figure is crucial because it anchors later expansions from decolonisation and state succession. Misstating it confuses the trajectory of UN growth. Hence, C is precise while the distractors embed common confusions.

A is the inverse: it claims de-escalation softened sentiment; the text says sentiment hardened/amplified (line 10).

C misquotes the author; he says it’s unlikely administrators missed the mood (line 11), not that they failed and that this was unsurprising—indeed he calls them unflattering but probably aware.

D asserts Asia Cup was delayed “by years” and drew no criticism; the text says a match “in a few months’ time” felt insensitive and crass (line 12).

24) Correct option: A – (Difficulty: Easy) – Line ref: 11

The original has the non-idiomatic “missed to read.” Option A fixes this with “failed to read” (standard idiom) and tightens diction while preserving meaning; the author still contends it is unlikely they failed to read the mood, i.e., they probably did perceive it (line 11). The revision also streamlines “those running Indian cricket may not inspire confidence,” which maintains the author’s sceptical tone.

B is unidiomatic (“wisdom account,” “were missing to read”), garbling meaning and style.

C drops necessary connectors and articles, creating a comma splice and fractured structure; “highly unlikely they missed reading” is closer but the sentence remains clunky.

D repeats the non-idiomatic “missed to read,” omits an article before “mood,” and is weighed down by awkward tense (“had missed”), degrading clarity without any gain.

26. Correct option: A (Easy) Brazil traditionally speaks first in the General Debate, followed by the United States. This convention dates back decades and persists irrespective of the annual theme or roster complexities. Option B flips the order, a tempting trap given the host-nation prominence, but the tradition is stable. Option C miscasts the Secretary-General’s role; the SG delivers remarks, but the debate’s country sequence is not SG-then-host. Option D suggests alphabetical rotation; in practice, speaking slots are allocated through a separate requests-and-protocol process, not a simple A-to-Z. The Brazil-then-US sequence has become a hallmark of opening day, surviving changes in global politics and membership growth. Understanding this nuance helps decode the choreography of UN week. Deviations are exceptionally rare and would be noted explicitly. Therefore, A captures the standing practice; the others misstate either procedure or roles.

27. Correct option: B (Medium) France and Saudi Arabia co-chairing an effort to build support for Palestinian statehood reflects the session's conflict-focused diplomacy tracks and the breadth of convenors beyond immediate regional parties. Option A substitutes India & Germany, which are not the stated co-chairs for this specific initiative. Option C incorrectly positions President Zelensky as chairing a Security Council session on Gaza; his engagement is prominent but not in that chairing capacity. Option D reframes the U.S. bilateral: the discussion cited is with India's EAM S. Jaishankar, not with Russia's Foreign Minister. The correct match (B) also signals cross-regional coalition-building dynamics—Gulf-European co-sponsorship to broaden buy-in. The distractors rely on plausible-sounding but inaccurate pairings or role inflation. Precision on convenors matters because it indicates where diplomatic gravity and agenda-setting lie during UN week.

28. Correct option: D (Hard) The UNGA is the UN's principal policy-making organ, operating on sovereign equality—one state, one vote—while most of its resolutions carry political and moral authority rather than binding legal force. Option A confuses powers with those of the Security Council under Chapter VII; the Assembly cannot unilaterally impose binding sanctions. Option B misconstrues institutional birth: the UNGA was established by the 1945 Charter; the 1951 HQ opening concerns premises, not existence. Option C imports “veto” into the Assembly; veto is confined to the Security Council's P5, not the UNGA. Appreciating this separation of functions prevents over-attributing coercive authority to the UNGA and clarifies why its outcomes influence norms, framing, and diplomatic momentum rather than compel compliance. The one-state-one-vote design remains central to legitimacy claims, even as effectiveness debates continue. Hence, D captures structure and limits accurately.

29. Correct option: C (Medium) Russia is represented by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and India by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. This aligns with the pattern of senior-level delegations when heads of government or state are absent. Option A assumes personal attendance by Putin and Modi, which is explicitly not the case here. Option B pairs figures who are not the designated leads for these delegations in this context—Medvedev and Sitharaman hold different roles. Option D lists officials (Shoigu, Doval) whose portfolios (defence and national security advisory) do not match the cited diplomatic lead roles at the Assembly. Recognising who fronts a delegation matters for reading corridor diplomacy and bilateral scheduling.

Foreign ministers routinely headline in lieu of principals, maintaining continuity in messaging while preserving flexibility for domestic calendars. Thus, C precisely reflects the represented leadership.

30. Correct option: A (Medium) Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's attendance following Tehran's suspension of cooperation with the IAEA is the correctly stated development, tying participation to a sharpened nuclear-oversight dispute context. Option B is incorrect because Qatar's Emir is noted as attending, not cancelling, which tracks Doha's active regional mediation posture. Option C misnames China's representative as Li Keqiang; the premier is Li Qiang, and that distinction is material in current Chinese leadership. Option D misidentifies the U.S. counterpart in the India bilateral; the referenced interlocutor should be U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio in this scenario, not Antony Blinken. Distinguishing accurate attendee notes is crucial to parsing likely agenda items and reading subtexts in hallway diplomacy. Option A coheres with the session's tension-laden nuclear and regional files, while B–D each inject specific factual errors to trip up superficial recall.

Passage 2:

31. Correct option: A (Medium) The GST Council was established under Article 279A(1) of the Constitution, inserted through the 122nd Amendment Act, 2016. It formalises the Centre–State forum on GST rates, exemptions, and model laws. Option B refers to Article 246A, which grants simultaneous GST legislative power, not the Council's creation. Option C (Article 368) governs constitutional amendments, not the functioning of GST institutions. Option D (Article 323B) relates to tribunals. Thus, only Article 279A specifically establishes the GST Council. The question's difficulty lies in differentiating between the provisions introduced by the 101st/122nd Amendments and related GST articles.

32. Correct option: C (Hard) The Supreme Court in *Union of India v. Mohit Minerals* (2022) clarified that GST Council recommendations are advisory, not binding. Both Parliament and State legislatures retain simultaneous powers under Article 246A. Option A incorrectly grants binding effect, contrary to the ruling. Option B limits bindingness to Union only, but the ruling applied to both levels. Option D invents a two-thirds rejection mechanism absent in the constitutional text. The distinction is important because it shifts the Council from a “command” model to a “cooperative dialogue” model, giving States more flexibility. This marks a structural federalism shift in India's GST regime.

33. Correct option: C (Easy) Items like UHT milk, paneer, chapati, and roti are fully exempt under GST 2.0, with a nil GST rate. Option A (EVs above 350cc) is wrong because EVs are taxed at 5%, not nil. Option B (soaps and hair oil) are reduced to 5%, not nil. Option D (cement) has been cut to 18%, not nil. This reform makes basic foods fully tax-free, reducing household burden. The simplicity of the answer makes this an easy-level question, though the trap lies in recalling whether soaps and cement also moved to nil.

34. Correct option: B (Medium) Cheaper cement reduces construction costs, making housing more affordable and driving up demand. This increases jobs in real estate and allied sectors, creating a multiplier effect. Option A misdirects to airlines, which are impacted by higher GST on non-economy tickets, not cement. Option C links to automobiles, but their GST rates changed separately (e.g., small vehicles at 18%). Option D suggests insurance premium reductions, but GST exemptions for insurance belong to healthcare, not construction. The correct outcome here is the construction-jobs-consumption cycle.

35. Correct option: B (Medium) Auto dealers feared that consumers would delay purchases until the new rates applied on 22 September, leading to short-term disruption in sales. Option A incorrectly anticipates inflation spikes; in fact, reforms were expected to moderate inflation. Option C claims real estate developers would halt launches, but GST cuts on cement and appliances encourage activity. Option D misattributes EU tariffs; the passage mentions U.S. tariffs on Indian exports, not EU duties. Thus, B correctly captures the short-term disruption flagged.

36. Correct option: A (Easy) Luxury cars, tobacco products, and soft drinks are covered by the new 40% "special rate." Option B wrongly includes EVs and soaps, which fall under 5%. Option C mistakenly lists medicines and insurance, which are exempt. Option D wrongly includes cement and appliances, which fall under 18%. The 40% slab was introduced specifically for sin and luxury goods. The difficulty here is easy because the categories are clearly distinguishable as harmful or high-end consumption items.

Passage 3:

37. Correct option: C (Medium) COMCASA allows India to access secure and encrypted communications technology from the US, enabling interoperability during joint operations and exercises. Option A misrepresents it as a manufacturing hub agreement. Option B wrongly suggests it bypasses US sanctions on Russian weapons, which is unrelated. Option D invents a

trilateral pact; COMCASA is bilateral. The correct answer emphasizes how COMCASA deepens military trust and facilitates real-time data sharing during operations, which is vital for modern joint exercises.

38. Correct option: D (Easy) India is an official member of the Quad along with the US, Japan, and Australia, participating in the Malabar naval exercise to strengthen Indo-Pacific security. Option A is wrong as India actively participates, not avoids. Option B is false since India is not merely a dialogue partner but a founding member. Option C is incorrect as the Quad is not centered on Russia but China's influence in the Indo-Pacific. The Malabar exercise showcases Quad synergy, making D the accurate choice.

39. Correct option: B (Medium) The proclamation required a \$100,000 one-time fee for new H-1B visa petitions, a dramatic increase from the earlier \$2,000–\$5,000. Option A incorrectly describes it as an annual renewal fee. Option C suggests cost sharing between employer and employee, but legally the sponsoring company bears the cost. Option D refers to the earlier structure, now obsolete. The \$100,000 figure reshaped visa accessibility, hitting smaller firms hardest while signaling protectionist policy shifts.

40. Correct option: A (Hard) A projected medium-term effect was a potential reverse brain drain, with skilled Indian professionals choosing to remain in India and strengthen domestic innovation ecosystems. Option B exaggerates by predicting collapse of IT exports, which continue via offshore centers. Option C wrongly assumes relocation of companies to the US, but the fee hike incentivizes operations in India. Option D imagines a freeze in worker mobility, though the policy affected new petitions only. The correct answer reflects how cost deterrence can catalyze opportunities for India's tech landscape.

41. Correct option: B (Medium) In 2019, the US revoked India's GSP trade preference, citing inequitable market access, a persistent trade friction point. Option A is unrelated, as India never opposed US-Japan treaties. Option C is false; India continues to cooperate on climate, including the 2030 Agenda partnership. Option D confuses US concerns; BRICS+ is not a central sticking point in India-US trade. The GSP dispute epitomizes recurring tariff and market access disagreements in the bilateral relationship.

42. Correct option: A (Easy) The NASA-ISRO NISAR satellite exemplifies India-US space collaboration, focusing on Earth observation and disaster management. Option B misplaces COMCASA into space

operations, though it is a defense communications pact. Option C is misleading; Chandrayaan-3 was domestically led with limited international support, not US-funded. Option D confuses RETAP, which is linked to clean energy, not space. NISAR, set for launch in 2025, represents the most concrete ongoing joint mission, making A the correct choice.

43. Correct option: B (Medium) The unrest stemmed following a sweeping government ban on major social media platforms. Option A is incorrect; there was no constitutional amendment extending presidential terms. Option C misstates events — Nepal's military has not staged a coup. Option D is inaccurate since municipal elections were not cancelled. The cabinet turmoil and corruption charges, combined with coalition tensions, form the real flashpoint.

44. Correct option: C (Hard) Article 76, which governs the appointment of the Prime Minister and requirements for a vote of confidence, has been central to disputes between the executive and judiciary. Option A (Article 69) concerns electoral quotas, not executive legitimacy. Option B (Article 85) deals with presidential powers, which are ceremonial. Option D (Article 101) concerns dissolution, but the immediate issue has been PM appointment and trust vote mechanics. Thus, Article 76 correctly reflects the legal controversy.

45. Correct option: D (Medium) Nepal promulgated its new Constitution in 2015, marking its formal transition into a secular, federal democratic republic. Option A is misleading—2006 was the year of the Comprehensive Peace Accord, not the Constitution. Option B refers to 2008, when the monarchy was abolished, but the Constitution was not ready until 2015. Option C is inaccurate; 2020 saw disputes with India over maps, not constitutional promulgation. The 2015 Constitution remains the foundational legal document, though its provisions continue to trigger political disputes.

46. Correct option: C (Easy) The India–Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1950) governs bilateral ties, allowing free movement of people and goods, and deepening security cooperation. Option A (Shimla Agreement, 1972) is between India and Pakistan. Option B (Mahakali Treaty, 1996) is a water-sharing treaty between India and Nepal but not the cornerstone of overall relations. Option D relates to Bhutan, not Nepal.

The 1950 Treaty underpins India–Nepal's open border and special relationship, making it the central legal framework for bilateral engagement.

47. Correct option: D (Medium) Nepal's proportional representation system, coupled with frequent party splits, creates unstable coalition governments prone to collapse. Option A is outdated; Nepal does not have a royal-dominated legislature. Option B is wrong since the monarchy was abolished in 2008. Option C mischaracterises Nepal's semi-parliamentary structure. The coalition churn is rooted in proportional representation and fragmented party dynamics, making D correct.

48. Correct option: B (Easy) Railway expansion in Meghalaya (Shillong) faced opposition from Khasi pressure groups who feared an influx of outsiders and cultural dilution. Options A, C, and D are incorrect as the article specifically flagged Shillong, not Nagaland, Mizoram, or Arunachal Pradesh. This shows how sociocultural concerns can stall infrastructure projects.

49. Correct option: C (Easy) India has the 4th largest railway network in the world, after the US, China, and Russia. Option A (2nd) and B (3rd) overstate India's position, while Option D (5th) understates it. The ranking emphasizes India's massive but still developing railway scale.

50. Correct option: B (Medium) Connecting Aizawl advances India's Act East Policy by improving Northeast integration and enhancing links with Southeast Asia. Option A dismisses its significance incorrectly. Option C is wrong because the Siliguri Corridor remains crucial. Option D is irrelevant as Bhutan is not a transit hub for India's Northeast.

51. Correct option: B (Easy) The Bombay–Thane line was the first railway route in India, inaugurated on 16 April 1853. Options A (Delhi–Ambala), C (Howrah–Bardhaman), and D (Chennai–Arakkonam) were later expansions. This is a staple static GK fact.

52. Correct option: C (Easy) The Bairabi–Sairang line connects Mizoram, bringing its capital Aizawl onto the railway map. Options A (Tripura) already has Agartala connectivity, B (Manipur) is still under progress, and D (Nagaland) remains pending. This marks a milestone in Northeast infrastructure.

SECTION C: - LEGAL REASONING

Q53. Correct Answer: A | Difficulty: Moderate

·Why A is correct: Anita has used the path “openly, peacefully and as of right” for 22 years, which exceeds the statutory requirement of 20 years for easements by prescription (line [28]). No formal grant is necessary; continuous use itself perfects the right. Once perfected, it becomes legally enforceable against the servient heritage.

·Why B is incorrect: Easements by necessity arise immediately when land is landlocked and there is no alternative access (line [31]). Anita, however, qualifies under prescription due to prolonged usage. Necessity is not the proper basis since she can prove prescription.

·Why C is incorrect: Prescription arises without permission. In fact, if Bharat had given express consent, it would have been a license, not a prescriptive easement (line [35]). Written consent is not only unnecessary but inconsistent with the doctrine.

·Why D is incorrect: The Act does not exempt agricultural land from being subject to easements. Any land may be servient if all elements are satisfied (line [8]). This objection is baseless.

Q54. Correct Answer: D | Difficulty: Moderate–Hard

·Why D is correct: An easement of necessity arises where a property is landlocked after division from a larger estate (line [31]). Here, Dev bought his land from the vendor, and severance created a dominant heritage (Dev’s land) requiring access over the servient heritage (vendor’s land). Such rights arise automatically by law, even without express mention in the deed.

·Why A is incorrect: Express grant is not required in cases of necessity. The law implies such rights as essential for beneficial enjoyment of the dominant heritage (line [8]).

·Why B is incorrect: A license is a personal and revocable permission (line [35]). Here, Dev’s need is permanent and tied to the land, not personal; hence a license would be inadequate and contrary to the principle of easement of necessity.

·Why C is incorrect: Prescription requires 20 years’ continuous use (line [28]). Dev need not wait that long because his right arises immediately at the moment of severance due to necessity.

Q55. Correct Answer: B | Difficulty: Moderate

Why B is correct: Apparent easements are those with visible signs, like water channels, drains, or paths (line [23]). The channel is also continuous since water flows without human intervention. Courts readily uphold such easements, whether by prescription or grant, because the signs are open and obvious.

Why A is incorrect: An easement need not be expressly granted; it may arise by prescription, custom, or necessity (line [27]). Thus lack of formal grant does not defeat Farhan’s claim.

Why C is incorrect: While long use is relevant, the law distinguishes between apparent and non-apparent easements (line [22]). Apparency strengthens Farhan’s position; it’s not just about time.

Why D is incorrect: A license is personal and revocable (line [35]), but this channel benefits Farhan’s land and is therefore a property right, not a personal permission.

Q56. Correct Answer: B | Difficulty: Easy–Moderate

·Why B is correct: Use with express permission is a license, not an easement (line [35]). A license does not create proprietary rights, is personal to the grantee, and is revocable upon transfer of the property. Thus the new owner was entitled to revoke it.

Why A is incorrect: Prescription requires use “as of right” without permission (line [28]). Since Leela allowed Nitin expressly, the element of adversity is missing.

Why C is incorrect: Easements do survive ownership transfers, but Nitin never had an easement; he only had a license. Hence this logic does not apply.

Why D is incorrect: Easement by necessity arises when land is landlocked (line [31]). Here, Nitin’s land had access; the orchard path was only convenient, not necessary.

Q57. Correct Answer: B | Difficulty: Moderate

·Why B is correct: Easements are extinguished when dominant and servient heritages merge under one ownership (line [40]). This is called unity of ownership. Once extinguished, selling the servient heritage later does not revive the easement.

Why A is incorrect: A deed recording the easement is subject to the doctrine of merger. The moment Kavya became owner of both properties, the easement lost its character and ceased to exist (line [39]).

Why C is incorrect: Easements do not automatically revive after separation; a fresh easement must be created (line [41]).

Why D is incorrect: Prescription cannot be claimed against oneself; you cannot acquire a prescriptive right while owning both lands.

Q58. Correct Answer: A | Difficulty: Hard

Why A is correct: Negative easements prevent the servient owner from doing something, e.g., building structures that obstruct light or air (line [18]). These are recognized in law and protect the beneficial enjoyment of the dominant heritage. Rohit can succeed if he shows

such obstruction would interfere materially with his property.

Why B is incorrect: Indian law does recognize limited categories of negative easements, such as rights to light and air. To deny this entirely is inaccurate.

Why C is incorrect: Although prescription is one method of acquiring easements (line [28]), not all negative easements require 20 years' proof. They can exist by grant or custom as well.

Why D is incorrect: Necessity applies to access or indispensable use, not to light or air (line [31]). Rohit's case falls under negative easements, not necessity.

Q59. Answer: A Explanation (Difficulty: Hard):

Option A is correct because the passage (L6–L8, L13–L15) stresses a multi-factor inquiry, where purpose helps but market substitution weighs heavily against fair dealing. Here, research purpose exists, but subscription harm shows non-transformative replication.

Option B is incorrect: transformative use requires new function (L15–L16), but the model merely reproduces summaries close to originals, undermining transformation.

Option C is incorrect: Section 52 requires case-by-case assessment (L5–L7), not automatic exemption. Market impact remains vital.

Option D is incorrect: broader healthcare interest does not statutorily override copyright (L5–L7). Courts balance, not prioritize, social good over market injury.

Q60. Answer: B Explanation (Difficulty: Very Hard):

Option B is correct because market substitution (L6–L8, L12–L14) weighs against fair dealing, especially when the content mirrors original style and reduces readership. Reporting current events (L4–L5) does not override substitution analysis.

Option A is incorrect: mere paraphrasing doesn't immunize when functionally identical (L12–L13).

Option C is incorrect: "transformative" requires new value or purpose (L15–L16), bullet-points are not sufficiently novel.

Option D is incorrect: unsettled applicability (L17–L18) doesn't suspend adjudication—courts must interpret existing law.

Q61. Answer: A Explanation (Difficulty: Hard):

Option A is correct as the passage emphasizes market effect and substantial copying (L6–L8), outweighing educational purpose. Education is listed, but not absolute.

Option B is incorrect: fair dealing is not automatic (L5–L7). Market harm defeats exemption. Option C is incorrect: true transformative use must repurpose meaning (L15–L16); here, summaries merely simplify.

Option D is incorrect: pirated sources worsen liability, but exemption cannot attach when the ultimate use still reproduces verbatim portions with market loss.

Q62. Answer: B Explanation (Difficulty: Very Hard):

Option B is correct because the passage highlights multi-factor test (L6–L8, L12–L14). Market loss and verbatim reproduction defeat transformation.

Option A is incorrect: occasional verbatim copying is still infringement (L6–L8).

Option C is incorrect: transformation is one factor, not decisive (L12–L15).

Option D is incorrect: unsettledness (L17–L18) doesn't equal immunity. Courts already interpret unsettled doctrines.

Q63. Answer: A Explanation (Difficulty: Hard):

Option A is correct as judgments are public (judicial proceedings—L4–L5), but creative headnotes are original works (L6–L7). Market harm compounds liability.

Option B is incorrect: headnotes are not part of judicial record.

Option C is incorrect: transformative purpose doesn't legalize verbatim headnote copying (L6–L8).

Option D is incorrect: judgments themselves are public domain, so not protectable (L4–L5).

Q64. Answer: C Explanation (Difficulty: Medium–Hard):

Option C is correct because the passage (L6–L8, L12–L14) stresses multi-factor test: purpose, nature, amount, and effect. Transformation matters (L15–L16) but is not exclusive.

Option A is incorrect: transformation is important, not decisive.

Option B is incorrect: market effect is major, not sole.

Option D is incorrect: unsettled status (L17–L18) doesn't freeze judicial interpretation.

Q65. Correct Answer: A (Difficulty: Extreme).

Explanation (≥9 lines):

·Priya's menacing gesture (tripod raised), proximity, and the easy-to-surmount railing together satisfy apparent ability + intention and create immediacy, supporting assault. See L1–3 (ability + intention) and L9–12 (threatening posture/brandishing + capability).

·The barrier is not substantial: waist-high and "easy to step over," leaving minimal intervention time—meeting imminence. See L27–28 (imminence = minimal opportunity for intervention).

·Words accompanied by gestures can convert a threat into assault: "You deserve a hit," plus the raised tripod and forward lean. See L4–8 (words alone insufficient unless reinforced by gestures).

The constable's presence at a distance does not negate immediacy; what matters is the objective immediacy and apparent ability right then. See L27 (objective test of imminence).

Naveen's hands up shows apprehension of immediate contact, which need not equal fear. See L29–30 (apprehension ≠ fear; awareness suffices).

Intent is inferable from conduct (specific or general) when one is substantially certain apprehension will result from a poised strike. See L23–24 (specific/general intent).

Why B is wrong: A minor barrier does not defeat capability or imminence where a single step suffices. L27–28.

Why C is wrong: It ignores the decisive gestures and apparent ability; words weren't alone. L4–8, L9–12.

Why D is wrong: Law requires awareness/apprehension, not subjective fear. L29–30; plus intentional act element is satisfied (L19–22).

Q66. Correct Answer: B (Difficulty: Extreme).

Explanation (≥9 lines):

Assault needs no contact; it protects against immediate apprehension of harmful/offensive contact. L1–3 (no contact needed), L19–22 (apprehension + intentional act).

Arjun repeatedly feints within striking distance, exhibiting apparent ability to strike and intentionally creating apprehension (at least general intent). L1–3; L23–24 (specific/general intent).

Offensive contact includes violations of dignity (an unwanted slap qualifies). L25–26.

The desk edge limits Meera's retreat, increasing immediacy (minimal time to intervene/avoid). L27–28.

Words vs gestures: his denial does not neutralize the immediacy of his poised strikes; here, gestures overpower the words. L4–8 (words alone insufficient), and L16–18 note conditional words can negate imminence; but these are not conditional—they're contradicted by conduct.

Apprehension ≠ fear; awareness suffices. L29–30.

Why A is wrong: Confuses assault with battery; contact is unnecessary. L1–3.

Why C is wrong: Misapplies L16–18; "I'd never hit you" doesn't remove immediacy while repeatedly feinting inches away with ability to strike.

Why D is wrong: The standard is apprehension/awareness, not subjective fear. L29–30.

Q67. Correct Answer: B (Difficulty: Very Hard).

Explanation (≥9 lines):

Immediacy is central: threats conditioned on "if not for CCTV/people" and "one day" negate imminent harm. See L16–18 (conditional words can negate immediacy)

and L27–28 (imminence required).

Distance (10–15 meters), no approach, and putting the stick away reduce apparent ability to execute right then, undermining reasonable apprehension of immediate contact. L1–3; L27–28.

Words alone typically aren't enough; here they explicitly defer action to a future time—again blocking imminence. L4–8; L16–18.

Zara's concern for future safety is not the same as apprehension of immediate contact. L19–22 (element i) and L27–28.

Why A is wrong: It collapses immediacy; the weapon's mere presence without immediate ability + intent is insufficient. L1–3; L27–28.

Why C is wrong: The statement is expressly conditional/deferred, which the passage treats as negating assault. L16–18.

Why D is wrong: The law does not require fear; it requires awareness/apprehension—but crucially of immediate contact, which is missing here. L29–30; L19–22; L27–28.

Q68. Correct Answer: C (Difficulty: Very Hard).

Explanation (≥9 lines):

Mere possession of a closed knife, coupled with words signaling no present action ("would have done it outside"), can negate immediacy, akin to conditional/negating words. See L16–18.

Om's behavior shows no advancing posture, no opening of the knife, and a turn to leave, diminishing apparent ability of immediate harm. L1–3 (apparent ability + intention); L27–28 (immediacy).

Reasonable apprehension must be of immediate harmful/offensive contact; here, objective circumstances undercut that. L19–22; L27–28.

Gestures matter, but these gestures do not reinforce a present attack; they are consistent with withdrawal. L4–8 (words + gestures analysis).

Intent (specific or general) to create apprehension isn't evident where conduct is de-escalatory; the purpose to instill apprehension isn't shown. L23–24.

Why A is wrong: It treats any weapon in hand as per se assault, ignoring closed state, withdrawal, and negating language. L16–18; L27–28.

Why B is wrong: Factually incorrect—Om did pick up the knife; the question is immediacy, not mere touching.

Why D is wrong: Misstates harmful contact; assault protects against apprehension of harmful/offensive contact, not proof the object will disfigure while closed. L19–22; L23–26.

Q69. Correct Answer: A (Difficulty: Extreme).

Explanation (≥9 lines):

Menacing gestures (raised fist, lunge, near-strike inches away) with apparent ability create immediate apprehension. L1-3; L9-12 (threatening posture; unsuccessful attempt).

Imminence is amplified by Saira's limited retreat (noticeboard, semicircle), leaving minimal intervention time. L27-28.

Words cannot neutralize such gestures when they come after an imminent near-strike; conditional or negating words only help when they undercut immediacy, not contradict it post hoc. L16-18.

Intent can be general—substantial certainty that feinting inches from a face will induce apprehension suffices. L23-24.

Assault ≠ battery; contact unnecessary. L1-3.

Apprehension ≠ fear; awareness of impending blow suffices. L29-30.

Why B is wrong: A unilateral denial after demonstrating imminence is not dispositive; conduct speaks louder under the objective test. L27; L16-18 (limited use of words).

Why C is wrong: Crowd presence does not guarantee adequate time; the facts show near-impact. L27-28.

Why D is wrong: Assault protects against harmful or offensive contact; both qualify, and contact need not occur. L19-22; L25-26.

Q70. Correct Answer: B [Difficulty: Hard]. Explanation (≥9 lines):

The passage defines assault via intentional acts causing reasonable apprehension of immediate harmful/offensive contact, with apparent ability. See L1-3 and L19-22.

Immediacy is an objective standard with minimal intervention time. L27-28.

Words can cut both ways—they may reinforce gestures or negate imminence if conditional (“under different circumstances”). L4-8 and L16-18.

Intent may be specific or general, i.e., purpose to instill apprehension or substantial certainty it will occur. L23-24.

Offensive contact includes dignity violations, not just physical injury. L25-26.

Apprehension ≠ fear; awareness suffices. L29-30.

Why A is wrong: It requires fear and pain, contradicting L19-22 and L29-30.

Why C is wrong: It over-privileges verbal disclaimers; gestures + ability can render apprehension reasonable despite words. L4-8; L16-18; L27.

Why D is wrong: It ignores distance, conditions, and ability, collapsing the immediacy requirement. L27-28; L16-18.

Q71. Answer: C [Difficulty: Easy] Explanation:

Section 3 imposes a mandatory licence requirement to drive in a public place.

Section 4 provides age thresholds (16+ for <50cc), but it does not eliminate the licence requirement in S.3.

Section 7(2) allows issuance of a learner's licence to a person under 18 for a motorcycle without gear only with guardian consent—but that is subject to actual issuance by the authority.

Since no licence (learner's or permanent) has been issued, Riya is driving in breach of S.3.

Options A and B wrongly treat consent as a stand-in for a licence.

Option D invents a “temporary licence” rule not in the text.

Q72. Answer: A [Difficulty: Easy] Explanation:

Section 4 expressly bars persons under 20 from driving a public transportation vehicle.

Possessing an LMV licence does not overcome the specific age bar for public transport vehicles.

Option B invents an exception for charitable use not found in the text.

Option C assumes LMV extends to public transport categories despite the age rule; it does not.

Option D misapplies learner supervision; Arun isn't a learner here, and supervision cannot cure a statutory age bar.

Q73. Answer: D [Difficulty: Easy] Explanation:

Section 5 prohibits an owner/person in charge from permitting driving by someone who does not satisfy S.3 (licence) or S.4 (age).

Sid is under 18 and has no licence, breaching both S.3 and S.4 for a standard motor vehicle.

Owner presence (A) does not negate the permission given.

Section 5 applies to any motor vehicle owner, not only commercial (contrary to B).

Liability is not contingent on an accident (C); the offence is permitting the driving itself.

Q74. Answer: B [Difficulty: Moderate] Explanation:

Section 6(1): a person shall not hold another driving licence while a valid one is in force (except a learner's). Rahul's State Y licence duplicates his State X licence for the same class.

Section 6(2): a licence holder shall not allow the licence to be used by another person; handing it over for “ID” still enables use by another.

Section 6(3) concerns the authority's power to expand classes on an existing licence; it does not authorize duplicate licences (so C is off-point).

D is half-true at best, but wrong on S.6(1).

Q75. Answer: C [Difficulty: Moderate] Explanation:
Section 7(1): No learner's licence for a transport vehicle unless the applicant has held an LMV licence for at least one year. Karan has only 10 months → does not qualify. The exception in S.7(1) states the subsection shall not apply to e-carts/e-rickshaws, allowing Leela to proceed without prior LMV holding.
A and D ignore the explicit statutory exception.
B incorrectly treats "substantial compliance" (10 months) as enough—your text requires one full year.

Q76. Answer: A [Difficulty: Easy] Explanation:
Section 3: a person cannot drive in a public place without a valid and authorised driving licence, and is not permitted to operate any transport vehicle unless the licence specifically authorizes them to do so.
The motor-taxi, even if personally owned, is operated as a transport vehicle when used for hire/rental; an endorsement/authorization is therefore required.
B, C, and D create permit/administrative or weight/time workarounds that do not satisfy the licence authorization rule under S.3.

Q77. Answer: D [Difficulty: Medium] Explanation:
Section 6(3) allows the authority to expand classes a licence permits, but it does not override other sections' eligibility pre-conditions.
Section 7(1) sets a distinct requirement: at least one year holding an LMV before granting a learner's licence for a transport vehicle (except e-carts/e-rickshaws).
A and B improperly treat S.6(3) as a waiver power; nothing in your text supports that.
C is incorrect; it collapses the learner's stage and misunderstands the statutory sequence.

Q78 - Correct Answer: B Difficulty Level: Hard
Explanation: The claim is maintainable because NUTA meets multiple criteria from the instrumentality test (line 13). It is fully government-funded, its board members are appointed by the government, and it regulates an important public function—urban transit (lines 14–18). Even though the operational control has been delegated, the ultimate authority and regulatory framework remain with NUTA, making it an instrumentality of the State (lines 9–10).
Option A is incorrect because delegation of operations does not negate the State's control (line 16). The presence of private contractors does not mean NUTA ceases to be a public authority.
Option C is incorrect because the focus is on NUTA's status, not Swift Transit Pvt. Ltd.'s. The petition is against NUTA, which still functions under government supervision (lines 13–14).
Option D is incorrect because direct interference is not

required; a body's overall public function and state control suffice to categorize it under Article 12 (lines 17–18).

Q79 - Correct Answer: C Difficulty Level: Hard
Explanation: For an entity to be classified as "State" under Article 12, government control and financial dependence are key factors (lines 14–15). Here, the government only holds 49% of shares, which is not sufficient to establish deep and pervasive State control (lines 16–17). Although the entity has a government-granted monopoly, that alone does not make it a State instrumentality without financial and administrative control (lines 20–22).
Option A is incorrect because government shareholding alone is not the sole determinant; control and functions must also be examined (lines 14–15).
Option B is incorrect because a government-conferred monopoly alone does not satisfy the instrumentality test; other factors such as financial control and administration also matter (lines 19–20).
Option D is incorrect because active interference is not a mandatory requirement; rather, the Court considers the overall control structure of the entity (lines 20–22).

Q80 - Correct Answer: C Difficulty Level: Medium–Hard
Explanation: Indian Railways is a government-controlled statutory entity performing public functions. Even if it outsources certain services, it remains responsible for its overall operations.
Option A is incorrect because the Railways' responsibility does not vanish due to outsourcing.
Option B is incorrect because catering services are an extension of Railways' public transport service and are essential for passenger welfare.
Option D is incorrect because liability does not depend solely on contract terms; statutory corporations remain accountable for deficiencies in services related to their primary functions.

Q81 - Correct Answer: B Difficulty Level: Medium
Explanation: The passage clarifies that all five factors in *Ramana Dayaram Shetty* (1979) are not mandatory requirements; courts consider the cumulative impact (line 24). Thus, Option A is incorrect. The passage also explicitly states that the judiciary is not considered "State" except when exercising administrative functions (line 30), making Option C correct. The broad interpretation of Article 12 ensures accountability of entities with government-like powers (line 33), making Option D correct. However, Option B is incorrect because while some financially independent bodies may be included, it depends on their functions and control.

The passage does not state that financial independence alone is enough (lines 14–18).

Q82 – Correct Answer: B Difficulty Level: Medium–Hard
Explanation: HCB meets multiple factors from the instrumentality test (line 14). It is predominantly funded by the government (line 16) and exercises public regulatory functions (lines 19–20), which bring it within the scope of Article 12. The Supreme Court has ruled that entities performing public regulatory duties, even with some autonomy, can still be considered State instrumentalities (lines 22–23).

Option A is incorrect because autonomy in decision-making does not override government funding and control over regulatory functions (lines 17–18).

Option C is incorrect because funding is a crucial determinant, especially when combined with regulatory authority (lines 16–18).

Option D is incorrect because direct interference is not a prerequisite; the overall government control and public function aspect are sufficient to establish that HCB falls under Article 12 (lines 22–23).

Q83 – Correct Answer: A Difficulty Level: Hard
Explanation: AirLux is a private entity that, despite receiving government subsidies and exclusive contracts, retains full control over its hiring, pricing, and operations (lines 20–22). The instrumentality test requires more than just government financial support—deep and pervasive control over key decisions is necessary (lines 18–19). Here, the government's role is limited to granting subsidies and contracts, which do not equate to control (lines 21–22).

SECTION D: - CRITICAL REASONING

Passage 1:

85) Correct option: B – (Difficulty: Medium) – Line refs: 1–3, 10, 20–25

B captures the passage's spine: the author opens with the claim that Trump is "bent on deconstructing" the UN and now "more powerful, less constrained," "moving decisively to reduce the UN's salience" (lines 1–3). The shift is framed as a retreat from multilateralism toward unilateralism (line 10) and, crucially, as increasingly ideologised via Project 2025 (lines 21–25). The answer distils both the direction (away from multilateralism) and the capability/instrumentation (playbook + power) of the current approach.

A overshoots: the author never calls for disbanding the UN; that's not the passage's claim.

C downplays the ideological and structural elements; the text describes more than negotiating tactics—withdrawals, threats, and a playbook (lines 16–25).

D contradicts explicit evidence: far from confirming

Option B is incorrect because state-conferred monopoly alone does not automatically make an entity a State—financial and administrative control are also crucial (lines 20–21).

Option C is incorrect because government interference is not a strict requirement—rather, the overall nature of control and public function is considered (lines 22–23).

Option D is incorrect because receiving government financial aid does not automatically classify an entity under Article 12—ownership, control, and public function must also be examined (lines 21–22).

Q84 – Correct Answer: B Difficulty Level: Very Hard
Explanation: Ajay Hasia squarely holds that even a registered society can be an Article 12 instrumentality where funding is substantial, government control is pervasive, and public functions are discharged. Here, the Education Secretary as ex officio Chair, budget approval, appointment/removal powers, and policy vetting/directions exhibit deep State control. The functions—testing centres, merit lists, scholarships with public funds—are public in character, impacting access to education nationwide.

A is wrong: the form (society vs corporation) is not decisive; the cumulative test governs.

C is wrong: Article 12 analysis does not hinge on case-specific meddling; what matters is the structural control/funding/function nexus.

D is overbroad: education per se does not automatically confer Article 12 status; control/funding/function must still be assessed.

stable multilateralism, the text lists exits and funding threats (lines 16–20).

86) Correct option: B – (Difficulty: Easy) – Line ref: 12
"Repudiation" in "a definitive repudiation of globalism" (line 12) most nearly means a formal rejection or disavowal. The sentence recounts Trump's 2017 speech setting a template that rejects post-Cold-War globalism in favour of sovereignty.

A "postponement" misreads the decisive tone of "definitive."

C "partial reinterpretation" suggests nuance; the passage stresses a clear, categorical stance.

D "reluctant endorsement" is the opposite of rejection.

87) Correct option: D – (Difficulty: Hard) – Line refs: 10, 16–20, 21–25

The author argues that Trump's approach reduces the UN's salience, pointing to withdrawals, funding threats,

and a programmatic playbook hostile to internationalism (lines 16–20, 21–25). This critique presupposes that US participation and resources are pivotal to the UN's standing and leverage—that diminishing them will materially lower the UN's relevance. That dependency assumption is what makes the deconstruction claim bite.

A is false on its face: the text says sovereignty rhetoric resonated with many developing countries (line 15), not that they oppose it.

B is too strong: the UNSC can act in limited ways even absent US buy-in; the passage doesn't assert constitutional impossibility.

C contradicts the passage: it treats rhetoric and policy as connected (lines 4–9, 21–25); saying rhetoric never affects policy would undermine the author's own link.

88) Correct option: C — (Difficulty: Medium) — Line refs: 3, 16–20, 21–25

The thesis is that Trump is “moving decisively to reduce the UN's salience” via exits, cuts, and a hostile playbook (lines 3, 16–20, 21–25). If, instead, the US increases assessed contributions and the President personally leads UNSC initiatives lauded for enhancing UN centrality, that would directly contradict the claimed trajectory and thus weaken the author's case.

A is mixed signals but consistent with the author's world: sovereignty talk plus funding pressure; it doesn't undercut the central claim.

B continuing routine staffing is status-quo administrative practice and does not rebut the broader structural push.

D delayed (not cancelled) contributions keep leverage alive and can fit a pressure strategy; they do not negate the thesis.

89) Correct option: B — (Difficulty: Medium) — Line refs: 21–25

The passage says Project 2025 “brims with scepticism” (line 22), seeks to slash contributions to agencies seen as undermining sovereignty or advancing “radical social policies” (line 23), aims to transform multilateral bodies into instruments of American policy, and even floats leaving the UN if it won't align (line 24). It also frames UN sustainable development/climate policies as a “no-go” (line 25). That is exactly what B summarises.

A inverts the stance: the project does not urge embracing SDG/climate agendas (line 25).

C misattributes authorship and purpose; nothing in the passage ties it to Biden or UNESCO restoration (lines 21–25 describe a conservative manifesto).

D is too narrow: the text shows both cultural and structural proposals impacting UN architecture (lines 23–24).

90) Correct option: A — (Difficulty: Medium) — Line refs: 16–20, 20, 21–25

The author claims the second term has “doubled down — turning disruption into comprehensive policy” (line 20), now backed by an ideological playbook (lines 21–25). Evidence of sustained US funding decline across agencies plus formal conditionality tying cooperation to alignment would corroborate that disruption is systematic rather than episodic, directly strengthening the thesis.

B only shows political resonance of rhetoric (lines 5–8) but doesn't prove comprehensive policy change.

C and D are optics/atmospherics unrelated to the structural claims about budgets, withdrawals, and conditionality. They don't strengthen the core argument.

91) Correct option: A — (Difficulty: Medium) — Line refs: 1–2, 5, 9–10

A synthesises the passage's two main threads: (i) Redford's secure, generous star persona that embraces ensemble work and causes bigger than himself (lines 1–2), and (ii) the film's rigorous, accurate portrayal of journalism as a civic instrument that can hold rulers accountable and inspire audiences (lines 5, 9–10). The author explicitly praises the movie as a tribute to journalism's value and allure (line 5) and claims it inspired generations toward media careers (line 10), while also emphasising Redford's willingness to share the screen (lines 1–2).

B misreads the tone: nothing suggests generosity “undermines” presence; instead, it is celebrated.

C contradicts the text: the passage says “nothing flashy or heroic” yet “rigorous but thrilling,” with clear civic stakes—hardly “irrelevant.”

D attacks “paranoia” as overstated; the author accepts the trilogy's premise and focuses praise on journalism's depiction.

92) Correct option: C — (Difficulty: Easy) — Line ref: 5

“Dogged reporting” (line 5) plainly connotes tenacity—stubborn persistence in pursuit of truth despite obstacles. The sentence pairs the phrase with “holding rulers accountable,” reinforcing a sense of sustained, unglamorous, persistent effort rather than opportunism or flash.

A describes headline-chasing, at odds with “dogged.”

B implies emotional indifference; the passage highlights moral purpose and civic stakes.

D contradicts “nothing flashy” elsewhere and mischaracterises the work.

93) Correct option: B – (Difficulty: Medium) – Line ref: 10

The claim that the movie “arguably inspired generations... to consider a career in the media” (line 10) rests on the assumption that cinema can materially influence career aspirations. Without this, the inference from audience engagement to career choice lacks a bridge.

A (prior knowledge) is irrelevant: inspiration need not depend on pre-watch familiarity.

C (post-1976 films copying Pakula) concerns later filmmakers, not viewers’ choices.

D overstates a preference the author never claims; the passage allows for allure plus accuracy, but does not require viewers to always choose accuracy.

94) Correct option: D – (Difficulty: Hard) – Line refs: 9, 10

The author asserts All the President’s Men is among very few films that accurately portray how journalism works (line 9) and praises its procedural rigor (line 10). Evidence that core practices—sourcing protocols, verification thresholds—were dramatized contrary to contemporaneous standards would directly undermine the claim of accuracy where it matters most: method.

A concerns set logistics, not process accuracy.

B is about critics’ emphasis; aesthetic praise doesn’t bear on truthfulness of newsroom practice.

C admits to timeline compression—common and not decisive against procedural accuracy; the key claim concerns how work is done, not exact chronology.

95) Correct option: D – (Difficulty: Medium) – Line refs: 1–2

The passage highlights Redford’s security as a leading man and his generosity in sharing space (line 1), with All the President’s Men giving him top billing yet equal screen time with Hoffman (line 2). Concrete production notes showing he ceded lines, ensured equal billing, and kept near-equal screen time would directly corroborate the textual claim.

A asserts overshadowing, which would weaken the generosity thesis.

B poster choices reflect marketing, not on-set generosity or structural equity.

C salary differentials are industry-standard and don’t speak to screen sharing or collaborative ethos.

96) Correct option: C – (Difficulty: Medium) – Line refs: 9–10

The passage says there’s “nothing flashy or heroic” in meetings and calls (line 9) yet the reporting is “rigorous but thrilling” with an “alluring” hunt-like intensity (line 10). C resolves this by noting that procedural rigor can

create suspense via high stakes, careful verification, and incremental revelations—thus accuracy and excitement can coexist without stylistic flash.

A invents stylisation the passage denies.

B reduces thrill to star charisma, ignoring the text’s emphasis on process-driven excitement.

D falsely claims contradiction; the passage invites a both/and reading, not either/or.

Passage 3:

97) Correct option: B – (Difficulty: Medium) – Line refs: 1, 5, 7–9

B captures the passage’s core: the Supreme Court reaffirmed secularism as basic structure (line 1) and dismissed the petition because the Dasara festival is a State event, not a private rite (line 7), where the State cannot discriminate by religion (line 8). The Karnataka High Court had already upheld cross-faith participation (line 9), aligning with the inclusive character of a State-sponsored cultural event (line 5). The author endorses this reasoning and labels the petition misguided, aimed at divisive communalisation rather than constitutional fidelity.

A is incorrect because the passage rejects the claim that Arts. 25–26 bar cross-faith participation at a public, State event; the Court says the opposite (lines 7–9).

C contradicts the passage’s pluralist ethos and the Court’s stance; it proposes exclusion when the text defends inclusion (lines 5, 8–9).

D is wrong on facts: the Karnataka High Court supported inclusion and the State’s decision (line 9); it did not contradict the Supreme Court.

98) Correct option: D – (Difficulty: Easy) – Line ref: 3

“Communalise” in context means injecting sectarian division into a common civic moment. The petition tried to turn an inclusive State celebration into a sectarian dispute (line 3). This aligns with D’s sense of converting an issue into a communal fault line contrary to the passage’s pluralist framing.

A reverses the meaning; the text laments a push away from togetherness, not toward it.

B “nationalise” (state takeover) is irrelevant; the event is already State-sponsored (line 5) and the worry is sectarianisation, not ownership.

C “depoliticise” is the opposite of what the petition attempted; the passage criticises making it politically/sectarianly charged.

99) Correct option: D – (Difficulty: Hard) – Line refs: 5, 7–8

The Court’s reasoning, as relayed here, turns on the classification of the inauguration as a State event (line 7) and the rule that the State cannot discriminate by

religion at public events (line 8). If official records show the inauguration is actually a private religious rite under an autonomous temple trust (with the State only funding logistics), then the public-event premise collapses. Distinct rules often govern private religious ceremonies, thereby weakening the conclusion that constitutional non-discrimination norms for State functions apply.

A is mere public discomfort; it does not alter constitutional analysis anchored in event classification.

B shows historical practice but not legal status; past choices of dignitaries do not convert a public event into a private rite.

C concerns imagery, not legal character; more temple visuals don't change whether the event is legally State-sponsored.

100) Correct option: C – (Difficulty: Medium) – Line refs: 5, 7–9

The linchpin assumption is that the inauguration is a State-sponsored public cultural function (lines 5, 7), hence equality/secularism norms constrain the State (line 8) and cross-faith participation is not a rights violation (line 9). Without this forum classification, the argument that the petition fails would lack its legal footing.

A overstates matters; Articles 25–26 can protect denominational practices in appropriate contexts, but that is not what the passage claims.

B is false; location near a place of worship does not automatically make an event public.

D asserts a blanket result (“necessarily promotes secularism”) that ignores the passage’s careful legal focus on classification and non-discrimination.

101) Correct option: A – (Difficulty: Medium) – Line refs: 5, 8–9

A directly strengthens the passage: a pre-existing Government Order designating Dasara as a State cultural programme open to all and forbidding religious discrimination at State events substantiates the legal classification (line 5) and the non-discrimination duty (line 8), while aligning with the High Court’s view on cross-faith participation (line 9). It provides formal documentary backing to the argument.

B is sentiment without legal force; it doesn’t shore up the classification or duty.

C is populist data that cuts against the Preamble/equality analysis and does not rebut the legal reasoning.

D is historically interesting but doesn’t speak to the current legal status as a State event.

102) Correct option: B – (Difficulty: Easy) – Line refs: 8–11

The passage holds that the State cannot discriminate by religion in public events (line 8) and that a person of one faith participating in another’s events does not violate anyone’s rights (line 9). It clarifies that the right to practise/profess religion is not a right to restrict others (lines 10–11). This fits B precisely, and the Preamble’s equality/secularism bolster the reading (line 8).

A asserts a veto power the passage rejects (lines 9–11).

C confuses the existence of some contested access rules (line 12) with wholesale constitutional immunity, which the passage never grants.

D over-generalises location-based immunity; the Court’s analysis depends on classification (line 7), not mere venue.

Passage 4:

103) Correct option: A – (Difficulty: Medium) – Line refs: 1–3, 9–11, 12–15, 16–19, 20–22, 24–25

Option A synthesises the passage’s entire arc: a female-led superhero that breaks records (lines 2–3), frames the win as a cultural intervention (lines 9–11), is authentically built with women’s creative authority (lines 12–15), aided by male allyship from the producer (lines 16–19), and subverts supernatural-woman tropes (lines 20–22), while audience response at home and abroad confirms appetite for change (lines 24–25). This is the author’s central conclusion.

B falsely generalises that Malayalam cinema “avoids male stars”; the text credits female-centred craft + allyship, not an assumed absence of male stars.

C contradicts lines 24–25: Indian audiences, not only international ones, rewarded the film.

D misreads the “goddess worship vs violence” paradox (lines 4–8); the passage argues cinema must reimagine power precisely because worship hasn’t prevented harm, not that worship “guarantees” safety.

104) Correct option: C – (Difficulty: Easy) – Line ref: 15

“This wasn’t tokenism; it was a strategic collaboration that ensured authentic female perspectives permeated every aspect...” (line 15). Tokenism denotes mere symbolic inclusion—checking a box without power or impact. The author explicitly contrasts tokenism with substantive collaboration that shapes “dialogue... costume... body language.”

A “ceremonial seniority” is off-point; tokenism is about hollow inclusion, not ceremonial rank.

B “spontaneous teamwork” ignores the text’s stress on strategic planning.

D “mandatory quotas” may or may not be tokenistic; the passage neither mentions quotas nor claims they “always improve quality.”

105) Correct option: D — (Difficulty: Hard) — Line ref: 24
The claim at issue: “The movie’s success... proves that the audience is craving change” (line 24). Option D undercuts the causal link between content-led gender inversion and box-office success by supplying an alternative explanation: deep discounts, bulk buys, and spectacle-driven motivations in exit polls. If turnout was predominantly price/novelty-driven, success does not primarily reflect a hunger for gender-subversive storytelling, weakening the inference.

• A holidays can help, but alone they don’t target the causal claim as sharply as D.

• B a rival delay helps margins but doesn’t explain why audiences came; it’s a weaker alternative cause.

• C a small price dip is too minor; D offers a systematic pricing + motivation account.

106) Correct option: D — (Difficulty: Medium) — Line refs: 12–15

The passage stakes a strong claim: “This wasn’t tokenism... authentic female perspectives permeated every aspect” (line 15), backed by named women in creative roles (lines 12–14). For that to hold, those women must wield real influence—across writing, look, sound, etc.—rather than being symbolic or easily overruled. Option D states that indispensable assumption.

A is overbroad; women’s mere presence doesn’t ensure authenticity.

B is absolute and contradicted by the passage’s respect for collaboration with a male director.

C makes crew composition the sole driver of reception, which the text never claims.

SECTION E: - QUANTITATIVE TECHNIQUES

Q110. Answer: D (None of the above) — Difficulty: HARD

Why D is correct (step-by-step):

1. Town B pop = 25,000 (from [L2]); literacy rate of B = 70% $\Rightarrow$ literates in B = 17,500 (from [L3]).

2. Males in B = 12,500 (from [L6]); 60% of these are literate $\Rightarrow$ 7,500 literate males.

3. Literate females in B = 17,500 – 7,500 = 10,000.

4. Female population in B = 12,500 (from [L6]).

5. Female literacy in B = $10,000/12,500 = 80\% \Rightarrow$ Female illiteracy = 20%.

6. The question asks illiterate females %; 20% is not among A–C.

7. Hence the correct choice is “None of the above.”

8. This uses both overall literacy ([L3]) and the sex-split ([L6])—missing either leads to a wrong result.

Why others are incorrect:

A (60%): Confuses male literacy (60%) with female illiteracy; wrong quantity and wrong group.

B (70%): Mistakes overall literacy for female illiteracy;

107) Correct option: A — (Difficulty: Medium) — Line refs: 16–19

The text argues Salmaan’s allyship “can fundamentally alter industry dynamics” (line 19). Option A gives concrete levers—budget reallocation, extra screens, premium showtimes—precisely the structural interventions that change outcomes for a woman-led film, thereby strengthening the claim.

B is praise without operational change; it doesn’t show altered dynamics.

C is irrelevant to Lokah’s release mechanics.

D is cosmetic and unrelated to budgets, access, or reach.

108) Correct option: B — (Difficulty: Medium) — Line refs: 20–22

Lines 20–22 describe reframing the yakshi myth: traditionally malevolent women needing male intervention (line 21) are flipped as protector-hero (line 22). Option B captures this subversion exactly: the film counters the trope by making the woman the protector, not the threat.

A overgeneralises; the film doesn’t claim all supernatural women are benign.

C asserts inherent feminism of folklore; the passage says the film performs the subversion.

D mistakes a supported inference (subversion) for a claim about the only viable route; the text makes no such exclusivity claim.

misreads [L3].

C (80%): That is female literacy, not illiteracy; flips the target percentage.

Q111. Answer: C (208.33%) — Difficulty: HARD

Why C is correct (step-by-step):

1. Females in B = 12,500 (from [L6]).

2. Males in A = 60% of 10,000 = 6,000 (from [L5]).

3. Required % = $(12,500 / 6,000) \times 100 = 208.333...\% \approx 208.33\%$.

4. The ratio exceeds 100% because Town B has as many females as Town A has total males times ~2.08.

5. This is a direct ratio question; no literacy rates needed—only [L5] and [L6].

6. Precision hinges on using males in A (not B) and females in B (not A).

7. Minor rounding differences (e.g., 208.3% vs 208.33%) do not alter the correct option.

8. Checks with mental math: $12,000/6,000 = 200\%$; plus $500/6,000 \approx 8.33\% \Rightarrow 208.33\%$.

Why others are incorrect:

- A (66.67%): Inverts the ratio or uses males of A over females of B.
- B (123.22%): Comes from a spurious denominator (e.g., 10,150) not supported by [L5].
- D (42.5%): Far too small; would mean females in B are < half of males in A, contradicting [L5], [L6].

Q112. Answer: D (11,500) — Difficulty: HARD

Why D is correct (step-by-step):

1. Town D population = 65,000 (from [L2]).
2. Overall literacy in D = 50% $\Rightarrow$ 32,500 literates in D (from [L3]).
3. Females in D = 35,000 (from [L8]); 60% of females are literate $\Rightarrow$ 21,000 literate females.
4. Literate males in D = total literates – literate females = $32,500 - 21,000 = 11,500$.
5. This uses all three strands: total pop [L2], literacy rate [L3], female count [L8].
6. Any mistaken use of 80% for D (not in [L3]) will yield the wrong number—stick to [L3].
7. Watch that 60% applies only to females (condition in the question).
8. Cross-check: males in D = 30,000 (from [L8]); 11,500 is a plausible subset.

Why others are incorrect:

- A (10,000): Implies only 28,000 literates (with 21,000 females), contradicting [L3].
- B (11,000): Off by 500—likely a rounding slip in female literates or total literates.
- C (12,000): Overstates male literates; would push total literates beyond 32,500.

Q113. Answer: C (53.7%) — Difficulty: HARD

Why C is correct (step-by-step):

1. Literates by town using [L2], [L3]:
 - A: $10,000 \times 55\% = 5,500$; • B: $25,000 \times 70\% = 17,500$;
 - C: $49,000 \times 50\% = 24,500$; • D: $65,000 \times 50\% = 32,500$.
2. Total literates = $5,500 + 17,500 + 24,500 + 32,500 = 80,000$.
3. Total population = 149,000 (from [L2]).
4. Overall literacy rate = $80,000 / 149,000 \times 100 = 53.69\ldots\% \approx 53.7\%$.
5. Correct rounding to one decimal place yields 53.7%.
6. Weighted average is required; a simple mean of town percentages would be wrong.
7. Any mis-key of D's rate (must be 50% from [L3]) breaks the total.
8. Sanity check: with two towns at 50%, the average near mid-50s is reasonable.

Why others are incorrect:

A (51.5%) / B (52.6%): Underestimate; ignore B's high 70% weight from [L3].

D (54.8%): Slight overestimate; would require >81,700 literates, inconsistent with [L3].

Q114. Answer: B (66.8%) — Difficulty: HARD

Why B is correct (step-by-step):

1. "What-if" change: Only Town D's literacy becomes 80% (population stays 65,000) — keep [L2] but replace D's rate in [L3].
2. New literates in D = $65,000 \times 80\% = 52,000$ (replacing prior 32,500 from [L3]).
3. Literates in A, B, C remain: 5,500, 17,500, 24,500 (from [L2]–[L3]).
4. New total literates = $5,500 + 17,500 + 24,500 + 52,000 = 99,500$.
5. Total population unchanged = 149,000 (from [L2]).
6. New overall literacy = $99,500 / 149,000 \times 100 = 66.78\ldots\% \approx 66.8\%$.
7. Precision depends on replacing only D's rate; altering any other town breaks the answer.
8. A quick check: D's literates rose by 19,500 (from 32,500 to 52,000), lifting the average by ≈ 13.1 points—consistent with the new figure.

Why others are incorrect:

A (65.9%): Too low; treats D's uplift as $\sim 18,000$, not 19,500.

C (64.1%) / D (62.4%): Far too low; would imply only +15k or +12k literates in D, contradicting 80% on [L2].

Q115. Answer: B. ₹17,500 | Difficulty: Medium

Using SI: $I = PRT/100 \Rightarrow P = 100 \times I / R \times T$

From [L4], interest $I = ₹9,800$; rate $R = 14\%$; time $T = 4$ years (tenure from [L4]).

$P = 100 \times 9,800 / 14 \times 4 = 980,000 / 56 = ₹17,500$

Correct option: ₹17,500.

Why others are incorrect:

₹17,000 / ₹18,000 / ₹18,500 arise from plugging wrong R or T or rounding the fraction; each contradicts the clean division $980,000 / 56 = 17,500$.

Line refs: principal sought from [L4]; tenure 4y from [L4]; rate 14% given in the question.

Q116. Answer: B. ₹24,300 | Difficulty: Medium

Scheme 1 (MSME) from [L2]: $P = ₹45,000$; $R = 9\%$; $T = 6$ years.

Simple interest $I = PRT/100 = 45,000 \times 9 \times 6 / 100 = ₹24,300$

Why others are incorrect:

₹23,500 / ₹26,200 / ₹27,000 result from mis-multiplying (e.g., using 5 or 7 years), or wrong rate.

"None" is wrong because ₹24,300 matches the formula exactly.

Line refs: P and R from [L2]; time given in the question.

Q117. Answer: D. 10% | Difficulty: Hard

Rationale: $A = P \left[1 + \frac{R}{100} \right]^n$

$$33275 = 25,000 \left[1 + \frac{R}{100} \right]^3$$

$$\Rightarrow \sqrt[3]{\left(\frac{33275}{25,000} \right)} = 1 + \frac{r}{100}$$

$$\Rightarrow \sqrt[3]{\left(\frac{1331}{1000} \right)} = 1 + \frac{r}{100}$$

$$\Rightarrow 11/10 = 1 + \frac{r}{100} \Rightarrow 1/10 = R/100$$

$$\Rightarrow r = 10\%$$

Q118. Answer: Option (b). Rs. 3,000 | Difficulty: Hard

Rationale: Principal amount = Rs. 20,000

Rate = 7.5%, Time = 2 years

$$I = \frac{P \times R \times T}{100}$$

$$(20,000 \times 7.5 \times 2)/100 = \text{Rs. } 3,000$$

Q119. Answer: Rs. 62.72 (Option A) | Difficulty: Hard

Rationale: Principal = Rs. 9,800

Difference between compound and simple interest = $(P \times R^2)/100^2$

$$(9,800 \times 64)/10000 = \text{Rs. } 62.72$$

Q120. Answer: B. ₹69,300 | Difficulty: Easy

Total payable (MSME) after 6 years SI @9%.

From Q116, interest I = ₹24,300

$$I = ₹24,300.$$

$$\text{Amount } A = P + I = ₹45,000 + ₹24,300 = ₹69,300$$

$$A = P + I = ₹45,000 + ₹24,300 = ₹69,300.$$

Why others are incorrect:

o ₹68,500/₹70,200/₹71,800 are off by ±₹800–₹2,500, typically from miscomputing SI or adding interest twice.

Line refs: P, RP, R from [L2]; time from Q116.



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