



UPSC & STATE PCS CURRENT AFFAIRS · UJIYARI.COM

MONTHLY PRELIMS — 120 MCQS

January 2026 — Monthly Prelims Practice

31 January 2026

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator •

linkedin.com/in/epicbharat

Free UPSC & State PCS Resources

ujiyari.com

MONTHLY PRELIMS PRACTICE

January 2026

Question Bank with Full Solutions & Explanations

121
QUESTIONS

11
SUBJECTS

~35%
STATEMENT-BASED

[Polity & Governance](#)[Economy](#)[Environment](#)[Science & Tech](#)[International Relations](#)[Geography](#)[History & Culture](#)[Social Issues](#)[Security & Defence](#)[Reports & Schemes](#)[Persons & Awards](#)[🎯 Prelims Practice](#)[✅ All Answers](#)[📌 Explanations](#)[💡 Concept Notes](#)

Ujyari Contents

January 2026 · Monthly Prelims Practice · 121 Questions

SUBJECT	QUESTIONS	COUNT
● Polity & Governance	Q1 – Q19	19
● Economy & Development	Q20 – Q33	14
● Environment & Ecology	Q34 – Q35	2
● Geography	Q36	1
● Environment & Ecology	Q37 – Q39	3
● Economy & Development	Q40 – Q42	3
● Environment & Ecology	Q43 – Q47	5
● Geography	Q48 – Q52	5
● Reports, Indices & Schemes	Q53 – Q55	3
● Geography	Q56	1
● Economy & Development	Q57 – Q58	2
● Environment & Ecology	Q59 – Q60	2
● Science & Technology	Q61 – Q72	12
● Security & Defence	Q73 – Q81	9
● Social Issues	Q82	1
● Science & Technology	Q83 – Q84	2
● Reports, Indices & Schemes	Q85	1
● Social Issues	Q86	1
● Reports, Indices & Schemes	Q87	1
● Social Issues	Q88	1
● Security & Defence	Q89	1
● Reports, Indices & Schemes	Q90	1
● Social Issues	Q91	1
● International Relations	Q92 – Q104	13

HOW TO USE THIS PDF

- 1 Attempt first.** Cover the answer section and try each question before revealing — simulates exam conditions.
- 2 Statement questions** (marked Statement-Based) test logical elimination — read all statements before choosing.
- 3 Concept notes** (✦) after each explanation give the broader UPSC context — read them even for correct answers.
- 4 Revise by subject.** Use the table above to focus on weak areas before the exam.
- 5 Online version** has Quiz Mode + instant scoring at ujyari.com/monthly/

All questions are based on March 2026 current affairs — grounded in editorials from The Hindu, Indian Express, Hindustan Times, Mint, Business Standard, Economic Times and Down to Earth.

January 2026 — Monthly Prelims Practice

January 2026

121 Questions

35–40% Statement-Based

Polity & Governance

Q1

Under the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, which of the following is the correct composition of the selection committee for appointing the Chief Election Commissioner?

- A** Prime Minister, Chief Justice of India, and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha
- B** Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, and a Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister
- C** President, Prime Minister, and Speaker of Lok Sabha
- D** Prime Minister, Home Minister, and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha

✓ B

Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, and a Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister

The CEC Appointment Act, 2023 created a three-member selection committee comprising the Prime Minister (Chair), the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha (or leader of the largest opposition party), and a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister. Since the PM and his nominee form a 2–1 majority over the Leader of Opposition, the Act has been widely criticised for undermining the independence of the Election Commission. The Supreme Court in *Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India* (2023) had directed that the Chief Justice of India be part of such a committee, but the 2023 Act deliberately excluded the CJI.

✦ The 2023 Act replaced the earlier purely executive appointment process (by President on PM's advice) with a statutory panel, but stopped short of the Supreme Court's recommended three-pillar structure. Contrast with the Lokpal selection committee (five members including the CJI or a nominated SC judge) and the CVC appointment committee (PM + Home Minister + Leader of Opposition). The structural 2–1 government majority in the CEC panel is the core criticism — it differs from the UPSC, where the chairperson and members are appointed by the President acting on PM's advice with no statutory panel at all.

[Read Source →](#)

Q2
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding the removal of a Supreme Court judge in India: 1. A removal motion requires signatures of at least 100 Lok Sabha members or 50 Rajya Sabha members. 2. The three-member Inquiry Committee constituted under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968 comprises a Supreme Court judge, a High Court Chief Justice, and an eminent jurist. 3. The removal motion requires a special majority in only the Lok Sabha. 4. The final step is a Presidential address for removal. Which of the statements given above are correct?

A 1, 2 and 4 only

B 1 and 3 only

C 2, 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ A 1, 2 and 4 only

Statements 1, 2, and 4 are correct. A removal notice requires signatures of at least 100 Lok Sabha members or at least 50 Rajya Sabha members. The Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968 specifies that the inquiry committee consists of a Supreme Court judge, a Chief Justice of a High Court, and a distinguished jurist. Statement 3 is wrong — a special majority (majority of total membership AND two-thirds of members present and voting) is required in BOTH Houses of Parliament, not just the Lok Sabha. Once both Houses pass the motion, the address is presented to the President, who then issues the removal order.

✦ Articles 124(4) and 124(5) govern Supreme Court judge removal; Articles 217 and 218 extend the same procedure to High Courts. 'Misbehaviour' in Article 124(4) is not defined in either the Constitution or the Judges (Inquiry) Act. No judge has ever been successfully removed since Independence — Justice V. Ramaswami (1993) is the only SC judge whose case reached a full Lok Sabha vote, but the motion failed as the ruling Congress party abstained, denying the required two-thirds majority. Justice Soumitra Sen (Calcutta HC) had the Rajya Sabha pass the motion in August 2011 but resigned before the Lok Sabha could vote.

[Read Source →](#)

Q3

The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, provides that the Lokpal selection committee shall include an eminent jurist as one of its members. Which of the following is the correct full composition of the Lokpal selection committee as specified in the Act?

- A** Prime Minister, Home Minister, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, and Chief Justice of India
- B** Prime Minister, Speaker of Lok Sabha, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Chief Justice of India or nominated SC judge, and an eminent jurist
- C** Prime Minister, Home Minister, Speaker of Lok Sabha, and an eminent jurist
- D** President, Prime Minister, Speaker of Lok Sabha, Leader of Opposition, and Chief Justice of India

✓ B

Prime Minister, Speaker of Lok Sabha, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Chief Justice of India or nominated SC judge, and an eminent jurist

The Lokpal selection committee has five members: the Prime Minister (Chair), the Speaker of Lok Sabha, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, the Chief Justice of India or a sitting Supreme Court judge nominated by the CJI, and an eminent jurist nominated by the President on the recommendation of the first four members by consensus. The eminent jurist is thus the only member not holding a specific constitutional office. This five-member structure is more elaborate and judiciary-inclusive than the CVC appointment committee (PM + Home Minister + Leader of Opposition).

✦ The Lokpal is a statutory body (not a constitutional body) under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, which came into force on January 16, 2014. Despite the Act's passage, the first Lokpal — Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose (retired SC judge) — was appointed only in March 2019, five years after the Act came into force, largely because the absence of a formally recognised Leader of Opposition in the 16th Lok Sabha (2014–19) deadlocked the selection committee. Justice A.M. Khanwilkar became the second Lokpal in 2022.

[Read Source →](#)

Q4
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding the delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies in India: 1. Article 82 of the Constitution provides for delimitation after each Census. 2. The 42nd Amendment (1976) froze the number of seats based on the 1971 Census until 2001. 3. The 84th Amendment (2001) extended the freeze until after the first Census following 2026. 4. The total number of Lok Sabha seats (543) was fixed by the 91st Constitution Amendment (2003). Which of the statements given above are correct?

A 1 and 2 only

B 1, 2 and 3 only

C 2, 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ B 1, 2 and 3 only

Statements 1, 2, and 3 are correct. Article 82 mandates Parliament to enact a Delimitation Act after each Census. The 42nd Amendment (1976) froze the Lok Sabha seat allocation based on the 1971 Census until 2001. The 84th Amendment (2001) extended that freeze until the first Census after 2026. Statement 4 is WRONG — the 91st Constitutional Amendment (2003) dealt with anti-defection law and capping the Council of Ministers at 15% of Lok Sabha strength; it had nothing to do with fixing the number of Lok Sabha seats at 543. The 543-seat count flows from the 84th Amendment's freeze of the 1971-Census-based allocation.

✦ The Delimitation Commission is a statutory body under the Delimitation Act, headed by a retired Supreme Court judge. The composition of the Lok Sabha is governed by Article 81; state assemblies by Article 170. The 87th Amendment (2003) updated the population basis for intra-state constituency delimitation to 2001 Census data, even while the 84th Amendment kept inter-state seat allocation frozen at 1971 Census figures. The 15th Finance Commission used 2011 Census data and introduced a demographic performance indicator to reward states with lower fertility rates.

[Read Source →](#)

Q5

Which article of the Indian Constitution provides for the composition of the Lok Sabha, and which article provides for delimitation of constituencies after each Census?

A Article 80 (composition) and Article 81 (delimitation)

B Article 81 (composition) and Article 82 (delimitation)

C Article 82 (composition) and Article 83 (delimitation)

D Article 83 (composition) and Article 84 (delimitation)

✓ B Article 81 (composition) and Article 82 (delimitation)

Article 81 governs the composition of the Lok Sabha — it caps elected seats at 530 from States and 20 from Union Territories, and requires each State's seats to be allocated so that the ratio of seats to population is, as far as practicable, the same for all States. Article 82 mandates that Parliament enact a Delimitation Act after every Census to readjust both the inter-state seat allocation and the division of States into territorial constituencies; changes take effect only upon dissolution of the then-sitting Lok Sabha.

✦ The Rajya Sabha's composition is governed by Article 80; it allocates seats to States not strictly by population, giving smaller States proportionally greater representation. Uttar Pradesh holds the most Rajya Sabha seats (31), and the total authorised Rajya Sabha strength is 245 (238 elected from States and UTs + 12 nominated by the President under Article 80(1) (a) for literature, science, art, and social service). Article 170 applies the same delimitation principles to State Legislative Assemblies.

[Read Source →](#)

Q6
STATEMENT-BASED

With reference to the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) ecosystem in India, which of the following statements is/are correct? 1. EVMs are manufactured by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL). 2. VVPAT (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail) was introduced in all constituencies for the first time in the 2019 General Elections. 3. A voter can see the VVPAT paper slip for 10 seconds before it drops into a sealed box. Select the correct answer using the code given below:

A 1 and 2 only

B 2 and 3 only

C 1 only

D 1, 2 and 3

✓ A 1 and 2 only

Statements 1 and 2 are correct. EVMs are manufactured exclusively by BEL (a Ministry of Defence PSU) and ECIL (a Department of Atomic Energy PSU) — no private vendor is involved. The 2019 General Elections were the first to deploy VVPATs in all 543 Lok Sabha constituencies, with approximately 17.4 lakh VVPAT units used. Statement 3 is wrong — a voter sees the VVPAT slip for exactly 7 seconds (not 10) through a transparent window before it falls into a sealed drop box.

✦ The Association for Democratic Reforms v. ECI (Supreme Court, April 2024) upheld EVMs and VVPATs but declined to order 100% VVPAT slip counting; the current rule allows verification of only 5 randomly selected booths per constituency. EVMs are standalone, non-networked units with one-time-programmable microcontrollers, making remote tampering technically impossible. The electoral bond scheme (introduced via Finance Act 2017, with SBI as sole seller) was unanimously struck down by a 5-judge Constitution Bench on February 15, 2024 in ADR v. Union of India.

[Read Source →](#)

Q7

In the context of judicial accountability in India, which of the following correctly matches the impeachment attempt with its outcome?

- A** Justice Soumitra Sen — Motion failed as ruling party abstained; judge remained in office
- B** Justice V. Ramaswami — Rajya Sabha passed the motion; judge resigned before Lok Sabha vote
- C** Justice P.D. Dinakaran — Resigned before inquiry committee completed investigation
- D** CJI Dipak Misra — Three-member committee found him guilty but motion lapsed



Justice P.D. Dinakaran — Resigned before inquiry committee completed investigation

Only option C (Justice P.D. Dinakaran) is correctly matched — he resigned as Chief Justice of Sikkim High Court on July 29, 2011, just before the inquiry committee's hearing, effectively scuttling the probe. Option A describes Justice V. Ramaswami's case (1993), not Justice Soumitra Sen's — Congress abstained, causing the Lok Sabha motion to fail. Option B describes Justice Soumitra Sen's case (2011) in reverse — it was the Rajya Sabha that passed the motion (189–17 on August 19, 2011), and Sen resigned before the Lok Sabha could vote, not Ramaswami. Option D is wrong — CJI Dipak Misra (2018) had the impeachment notice rejected at the admission stage by Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu; no committee was ever constituted.

✦ The NJAC judgment (Supreme Court, October 2015) struck down the 99th Constitutional Amendment and the NJAC Act, restoring the collegium system by a 4:1 majority. The collegium for SC appointments comprises the CJI plus the four most senior SC judges (Third Judges Case, 1998). The Second Judges Case (1993) first established collegium primacy over the executive. India has approximately 5,000 sitting judges across the Supreme Court, 25 High Courts, and subordinate courts, giving it one of the lowest judge-to-population ratios globally.

[Read Source →](#)

Q8

The National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) was struck down by the Supreme Court in 2015. Which constitutional amendment had established the NJAC?

A 97th Constitutional Amendment

B 98th Constitutional Amendment

C 99th Constitutional Amendment

D 100th Constitutional Amendment

✓ C 99th Constitutional Amendment

The NJAC was established by the 99th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2014, which was passed by the Lok Sabha on August 13, 2014 and by the Rajya Sabha on August 14, 2014. It was struck down on October 16, 2015 by a 5-judge Constitution Bench (4:1 majority) in Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India, which held that the 99th Amendment violated the basic structure of the Constitution by compromising judicial independence and primacy.

✦ The 100th Constitutional Amendment (2015) gave effect to the India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement (LBA), transferring small enclaves to Bangladesh and receiving others. The 97th Amendment (2011) added Part IX-B to the Constitution, giving constitutional status to cooperative societies. The 98th Amendment (2012) established the National Commission for Backward Classes. The collegium system was first articulated in the Second Judges Case (1993) and refined in the Third Judges Case (1998) — the latter expanded the collegium for SC appointments to the CJI plus four senior-most SC judges.

[Read Source →](#)

Q9
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements about the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013: 1. The Lokpal is a constitutional body established under Part XIV of the Indian Constitution. 2. The Chairperson of the Lokpal must be a former Chief Justice of India or a former Supreme Court judge. 3. At least 50 percent of Lokpal members must be from the judicial category. 4. The Lokpal cannot exercise jurisdiction over the Prime Minister for matters related to international relations, external and internal security, public order, atomic energy, and space. Which of the statements given above are correct?

A 2 and 3 only

B 1 and 4 only

C 1, 2 and 3 only

D 2, 3 and 4 only

✓ D 2, 3 and 4 only

Statements 2, 3, and 4 are correct. Statement 1 is wrong — the Lokpal is a statutory body under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, not a constitutional body. Statement 2 is correct — the Chairperson must be a former CJI or a former SC judge. Statement 3 is correct — at least 50% of the up to 8 members must come from the judicial category. Statement 4 is correct — Section 14 of the Act explicitly bars the Lokpal from exercising jurisdiction over the Prime Minister for allegations relating to international relations, external and internal security, public order, atomic energy, and space.

✦ The Lokpal consists of a Chairperson plus up to 8 Members, with at least 50% from judicial backgrounds and at least 50% from SC/ST/OBC/minorities/women combined. Tenure is 5 years or age 70, whichever is earlier. While the PM falls under Lokpal jurisdiction in principle, complaints against the PM require approval of a full bench of the Lokpal and proceedings must be held in camera. The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC Act, 2003) covers civil servants and PSU executives but has no jurisdiction over elected officials — the key contrast with the Lokpal.

[Read Source →](#)

Q10

Which of the following is the correct assertion-reason pairing about India's Republic Day? Assertion (A): January 26 was chosen as Republic Day in 1950. Reason (R): The Indian National Congress had declared complete independence (Purna Swaraj) as its goal on January 26, 1930, following the Lahore Session of December 1929.

- A** Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A
- B** Both A and R are true, but R is NOT the correct explanation of A
- C** A is true but R is false
- D** A is false but R is true

✓ A Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A

Both A and R are true, and R correctly explains A. On January 26, 1930 — subsequently observed as Purna Swaraj Diwas — the Indian National Congress, with Jawaharlal Nehru as Congress President, declared Purna Swaraj (complete independence) as its goal, pursuant to the resolution passed at the Lahore Session of December 1929. The Constitution framers deliberately chose January 26, 1950 as the date for the Constitution to come into force in order to honour this historic declaration, even though the Constitution was actually adopted by the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949.

✦ November 26, 1949 is observed as Constitution Day (Samvidhan Diwas) since 2015, when the Modi government notified it on the 125th birth anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. The Government of India Act, 1935, which had served as a quasi-constitutional framework, was superseded when the Constitution came into force on January 26, 1950. Padma Awards were instituted in 1954; the Supreme Court has held they are not 'titles' within the meaning of Article 18, which abolishes hereditary titles of honour (not recognitions of merit).

[Read Source →](#)

Q11
STATEMENT-BASED

With reference to Vande Mataram, consider the following statements: 1. It was composed by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in 1876. 2. It was first published in the novel Anandmath in 1882. 3. It was first sung at a session of the Indian National Congress in 1905 at Varanasi. 4. The fundamental duty to abide by the Constitution and respect national symbols including the National Song is covered under Article 51A(a). Which of the statements given above are correct?

A 1 and 2 only

B 1, 2 and 4 only

C 2, 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ A 1 and 2 only

Only statements 1 and 2 are correct. Vande Mataram was composed by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in 1876 and first published in his Bengali novel Anandmath in 1882. Statement 3 is wrong — Vande Mataram was first sung at an INC session in 1896 at the Calcutta Congress session (it was sung by Rabindranath Tagore), not in 1905 at Varanasi. Statement 4 is wrong — Article 51A(a) mandates respect for the National Flag and National Anthem (Jana Gana Mana), but does NOT mention the National Song (Vande Mataram); the Supreme Court has explicitly noted this omission.

✦ Only the first two stanzas of Vande Mataram carry official National Song status — the later stanzas reference goddess imagery and were kept outside official status as a deliberate constitutional choice for inclusive governance. Article 51A (Fundamental Duties) was inserted by the 42nd Constitutional Amendment (1976) on the recommendation of the Swaran Singh Committee; the original 10 duties were expanded to 11 by the 86th Amendment (2002), which added the duty relating to education for children. Article 51A(f) — to value and preserve the rich heritage of India's composite culture — is the closest Fundamental Duty provision to protecting cultural symbols.

[Read Source →](#)

Q12

Which of the following correctly describes the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)?

- A** A constitutional body under Article 315, with jurisdiction over elected officials and civil servants
- B** A statutory body under the CVC Act, 2003, with jurisdiction over civil servants and PSU executives but not elected officials
- C** A constitutional body established by the 44th Constitutional Amendment, covering the Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers
- D** A statutory body under the Lokpal Act, 2013, serving as the investigation arm of the Lokpal



A statutory body under the CVC Act, 2003, with jurisdiction over civil servants and PSU executives but not elected officials

The CVC is a statutory body under the CVC Act, 2003. It was originally set up in 1964 by an executive resolution based on the K. Santhanam Committee on Prevention of Corruption (1962–64) and was given statutory status by the CVC Act, 2003. Its jurisdiction covers central government civil servants (all Group A and B officials), All India Services officers, PSU executives, and officials of financial sector regulators (RBI, SEBI, NABARD, NHB) and public sector banks — but explicitly excludes elected officials. This is the key distinction from the Lokpal.

✦ CVC composition: one Chief Vigilance Commissioner plus up to two Vigilance Commissioners, appointed by the President on the recommendation of a committee comprising the Prime Minister, the Home Minister, and the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha. Tenure: 4 years or age 65, whichever is earlier. The CVC also supervises the Delhi Special Police Establishment (the CBI's anti-corruption wing) and can direct the CBI to investigate corruption cases. However, unlike the Lokpal, the CVC has no jurisdiction to investigate the PM, Cabinet Ministers, or Members of Parliament.

[Read Source →](#)

Q13

Which of the following correctly describes the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)?

- A** A constitutional body under Article 315, with jurisdiction over elected officials and civil servants
- B** A statutory body under the CVC Act, 2003, with jurisdiction over civil servants and PSU executives but not elected officials
- C** A constitutional body established by the 44th Constitutional Amendment, covering the Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers
- D** A statutory body under the Lokpal Act, 2013, serving as the investigation arm of the Lokpal



A statutory body under the CVC Act, 2003, with jurisdiction over civil servants and PSU executives but not elected officials

The CVC is a statutory body created by the CVC Act, 2003. It was originally set up on 11 February 1964 by executive resolution of the Government of India following the recommendations of the Santhanam Committee on Prevention of Corruption. Its jurisdiction covers civil servants, All India Services officers, PSU executives, and financial sector officials (RBI, SEBI, public sector banks), but explicitly excludes elected officials — whose oversight falls under the Lokpal.

✦ CVC composition: 1 Chief Vigilance Commissioner and up to 2 Vigilance Commissioners. The appointment committee comprises the Prime Minister, the Home Minister, and the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha. Tenure is 4 years or age 65, whichever is earlier. The Whistleblowers Protection Act, 2014 designates the CVC and the Lokpal as authorities to receive disclosures of corruption. The CVC is distinct from the Lokpal — it has no jurisdiction over elected public functionaries, which is a frequently tested UPSC distinction.

[Read Source →](#)

Q14
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements about the Indrajit Gupta Committee (1998): 1. It was constituted to examine the working of the Election Commission of India. 2. It recommended state funding of elections. 3. Its recommendations have been fully implemented through legislation. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C 1 and 2 only

D 1, 2 and 3

✓ B 2 only

Only Statement 2 is correct. The Indrajit Gupta Committee was constituted in June 1998 by an all-party conference specifically to examine the issue of state funding of elections — not the general working of the ECI (making Statement 1 incorrect). It submitted its report in January 1999, recommending partial state funding in kind to recognised national and state parties. Statement 3 is wrong — its recommendations have never been implemented; the Law Commission's 170th Report (1999) and the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission also backed state funding, but no legislation has followed.

✦ The electoral bond scheme (introduced via the Finance Act, 2017) was struck down on 15 February 2024 by a five-judge Constitution Bench as violating the right to information under Article 19(1)(a). The official candidate expenditure limit for a Lok Sabha constituency is approximately Rs 95 lakh, but actual spending routinely runs to several crore. T.N. Seshan (CEC 1990-96) introduced the Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC) and was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1996. State funding of elections remains a live reform issue for UPSC Mains GS-2.

[Read Source →](#)

Q15

The Supreme Court of India has ruled on the constitutional status of Padma Awards with reference to Article 18. Which of the following correctly states the Court's position?

- A** Padma Awards are unconstitutional titles abolished by Article 18(1)
- B** Padma Awards are titles under Article 18 but are exempt as they are conferred by the State for meritorious service
- C** Padma Awards are NOT titles within Article 18 as they are civilian honours recognising achievement without conferring hereditary privilege
- D** Padma Awards may be accepted by Indian citizens but cannot be accepted from foreign states under Article 18(2)



Padma Awards are NOT titles within Article 18 as they are civilian honours recognising achievement without conferring hereditary privilege

In *Balaji Raghavan v. Union of India* (decided 15 December 1995; reported (1996) 1 SCC 361), a five-judge Constitution Bench held that Bharat Ratna and Padma Awards are NOT titles within the meaning of Article 18(1). The Court distinguished between 'titles of nobility' (which the Article prohibits, as they confer hereditary rank and social stratification) and 'honours for excellence' (which recognise individual merit without bestowing heritable privilege). The Court also ruled that award names must not be used as prefixes or suffixes — defaulters risk forfeiture.

✦ Article 18(1) abolishes titles of honour (other than military and academic distinctions conferred by the State); Article 18(2) prohibits Indian citizens from accepting titles from foreign states without the President's consent. The Padma Awards were instituted in 1954 and are announced on Republic Day (January 26) each year. The Padma Awards Committee is constituted by the Prime Minister annually and is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary; it includes the Home Secretary, Secretary to the President, and 4-6 eminent persons. The Param Vir Chakra is India's highest wartime gallantry award; the Ashoka Chakra is the highest peacetime gallantry award.

[Read Source →](#)

Q16

Match List-I (Constitutional provisions related to elections) with List-II (their subject matter): List-I: A. Article 324 B. Article 325 C. Article 326 D. Article 329 List-II: 1. Prohibition on exclusion from electoral roll on grounds of religion, race, caste, or sex 2. Adult suffrage as the basis for elections to Lok Sabha and State Assemblies 3. Courts shall not interfere in electoral matters during elections 4. Superintendence, direction, and control of elections vested in the Election Commission Select the correct answer using the code given below:

A A-4, B-1, C-2, D-3

B A-1, B-4, C-3, D-2

C A-4, B-2, C-1, D-3

D A-3, B-1, C-4, D-2

✓ A A-4, B-1, C-2, D-3

The correct matching is A-4, B-1, C-2, D-3. Article 324 vests superintendence, direction, and control of all elections in the Election Commission of India. Article 325 prohibits exclusion from electoral rolls on grounds of religion, race, caste, or sex. Article 326 provides for universal adult suffrage — every citizen who is not less than 18 years of age has the right to vote for Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections. Article 329 bars courts from questioning elections mid-process; disputes may only be raised by election petition after the conclusion of the election.

✦ Article 324(5) provides that the Chief Election Commissioner can be removed only by the same process as a Supreme Court judge (address by both Houses of Parliament). The 61st Constitutional Amendment (1988) lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 years. National Voters Day (NVD) is observed on January 25 each year, marking the founding of the ECI on January 25, 1950. Part XV (Articles 324-329A) of the Constitution contains all election-related provisions — a high-frequency topic in UPSC Prelims.

[Read Source →](#)

Q17
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements about the first Lokayukta established in India: 1. The first Lokayukta in India was established in Maharashtra in 1971. 2. Karnataka has had one of the most active Lokayuktas, functioning since 1984. 3. The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, mandated all states to establish Lokayuktas within two years of the Act coming into force. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 and 2 only

B 2 and 3 only

C 1 only

D 1, 2 and 3

✓ A 1 and 2 only

Statements 1 and 2 are correct; Statement 3 is wrong. Maharashtra enacted the Maharashtra Lokayukta and Upa-Lokayuktas Act, 1971, making it the first state to establish this institution — the institution became operational from 25 October 1972. Karnataka's Lokayukta was established under the Karnataka Lokayukta Act, 1984. Statement 3 is incorrect because Section 63 of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 mandates states to set up a Lokayukta within ONE year (not two years) of the Act's commencement (i.e., by January 2015) — a mandate that most states have still not fully complied with.

✦ The concept of a parliamentary ombudsman for India was first recommended by the First Administrative Reforms Commission (1966, chaired by Morarji Desai). Nine Lokpal Bills (introduced in 1968, 1971, 1977, 1985, 1989, 1996, 1998, 2001, and 2011) lapsed before the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 was passed, largely driven by the India Against Corruption movement led by Anna Hazare. The Santhanam Committee (1962-64) had separately recommended the CVC as an anti-corruption watchdog. The Lokpal took office only in March 2019 — six years after the Act's passage.

[Read Source →](#)

Q18
STATEMENT-BASED

With reference to the 15th Finance Commission of India, consider the following statements: 1. It used 2011 Census data (instead of 2021 Census data) for horizontal tax devolution among states. 2. It introduced a demographic performance indicator that rewards states with lower fertility rates. 3. It recommended 42 percent vertical devolution of central taxes to states. 4. It covers the award period 2021-26. Which of the statements given above are correct?

A 1, 2 and 3 only

B 1 and 4 only

C 1, 2 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ C 1, 2 and 4 only

Statements 1, 2, and 4 are correct; Statement 3 is wrong. The 15th Finance Commission (chaired by N.K. Singh) recommended 41% vertical devolution — not 42% — for the 2021-26 period. The reduction from the 14th FC's 42% reflected the reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories (Ladakh and J&K UT), which were carved out of the states' devolution pool and assigned a separate 1% from central resources. The 15th FC did use 2011 Census data, introduced a demographic performance indicator, and covers 2021-26.

✦ The 14th Finance Commission (2015-20, chaired by Y.V. Reddy) had increased devolution from the 13th FC's 32% to 42% — the single largest jump in India's fiscal federalism history. The Finance Commission is constituted under Article 280 of the Constitution every five years by the President. The 16th Finance Commission, chaired by Arvind Panagariya, covers 2026-31. Southern states argue they receive a smaller share of devolution relative to their GST contribution — a key dimension of the delimitation and fiscal federalism debate.

[Read Source →](#)

Q19

Which of the following is NOT a restriction on the Lokpal's jurisdiction over the Prime Minister under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013?

- A Matters relating to international relations
- B Matters relating to atomic energy and space
- C Matters relating to domestic economic policy
- D Matters relating to external and internal security

✓ C Matters relating to domestic economic policy

Under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, the Prime Minister is within the Lokpal's jurisdiction except for allegations relating to: (i) international relations, (ii) external and internal security, (iii) public order, and (iv) atomic energy and space. Domestic economic policy is NOT listed as a restricted category — so a corruption complaint against the PM in this domain can, in principle, be investigated by the Lokpal, subject to the additional procedural safeguard that the full Lokpal bench and at least two-thirds of its members must approve the inquiry.

✦ Beyond the subject-matter restrictions, complaints against the PM also carry procedural safeguards: only a full bench of the Lokpal can authorize an inquiry, at least two-thirds of members must approve, and the inquiry must be held in camera. If the Lokpal dismisses the complaint, the inquiry records are not made public. The Lokpal's investigative powers depend significantly on the CBI, over which it has superintendence in corruption cases, though the CBI remains administratively under the Department of Personnel and Training for all other purposes. The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (amended 2018) is the primary substantive law governing bribery.

[Read Source →](#)

Economy & Development

Q20
STATEMENT-BASED

With reference to SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 2026, which of the following statements are correct? 1. The 2026 Regulations replaced the SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 1996. 2. The Base Expense Ratio (BER) discloses the AMC management fee separately from transaction costs. 3. The new regulations increased fund categories from 36 to 40. 4. The regulations are effective from January 16, 2026. Select the correct answer using the code given below:

A 1, 2 and 3 only

B 2 and 4 only

C 1, 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ A 1, 2 and 3 only

Statements 1, 2, and 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong. The SEBI Board approved the SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 2026 on 17 December 2025, replacing the 30-year-old 1996 framework. The regulations are effective from 1 April 2026 — not from 16 January 2026. The Base Expense Ratio (BER) disaggregates the AMC management fee from statutory levies (STT, GST, stamp duty, SEBI/exchange fees). Fund categories were expanded from 36 to 40 by introducing Life-Cycle Funds (target-date funds) and Sectoral Debt Funds as two new categories.

✦ SEBI's 2017 categorisation circular had first standardised mutual fund categories, mandating each AMC to have only one fund per category and triggering the merger of over 300 schemes. The 2026 BER framework mirrors the EU's MiFID II and the US SEC's separate fee disclosure requirements, making India's cost transparency norms globally comparable. Life-Cycle Funds automatically shift from high-equity to high-debt allocation as an investor approaches a target retirement date — similar to Vanguard Target Retirement Funds in the USA. EPFO and NPS already follow lifecycle allocation principles.

[Read Source →](#)

Q21

Which of the following best describes 'style drift' in the context of mutual funds, and what SEBI provision in 2026 addresses it?

- A** The tendency of fund NAVs to fluctuate sharply; addressed by mandatory hedging requirements
- B** A fund investing outside its stated mandate (e.g., a large-cap fund buying mid-cap stocks); addressed by the True-to-Label rule
- C** The practice of changing fund managers without investor consent; addressed by mandatory disclosure requirements
- D** A fund switching from growth to dividend option; addressed by investor consent requirements


B

A fund investing outside its stated mandate (e.g., a large-cap fund buying mid-cap stocks); addressed by the True-to-Label rule

Style drift refers to a mutual fund investing outside its stated investment mandate — for example, a large-cap fund purchasing mid-cap or small-cap stocks to chase higher returns, thereby exposing investors to greater risk than they agreed to. The SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 2026 address this through the True-to-Label rule, which requires fund portfolios to strictly align with their stated investment objectives. SEBI is empowered to conduct portfolio composition audits to enforce compliance, making style drift a regulatory offence rather than merely a disclosure lapse.

✦ SEBI's 2017 categorisation circular attempted to reduce style drift by defining fund categories and capping overlaps, but left some flexibility at the margins. The 2026 regulations tighten this further by requiring no more than 50% portfolio overlap between sectoral and thematic equity categories and other equity schemes. Life-Cycle Funds (a new 2026 category) follow a rules-based glide path, eliminating style drift by design. India's EPFO and NPS already use lifecycle allocation principles. For UPSC, style drift connects to investor protection, market integrity, and SEBI's regulatory mandate under the SEBI Act, 1992.

[Read Source →](#)

Q22

As of January 2026, what is the approximate monthly SIP (Systematic Investment Plan) inflow into Indian mutual funds?

A Rs 15,000 crore

B Rs 20,000 crore

C Rs 25,000 crore

D Rs 31,000 crore

✓ D Rs 31,000 crore

Monthly SIP inflows into Indian mutual funds reached approximately Rs 31,002 crore in January 2026, according to AMFI (Association of Mutual Funds in India) data — a 17% year-on-year increase from Rs 26,400 crore in January 2025. The total number of SIP accounts stood at approximately 10.29 crore in January 2026. February 2026 SIP inflows were Rs 29,845 crore, confirming the Rs 30,000 crore band as the new monthly baseline.

✦ Despite over 10 crore SIP accounts and total mutual fund AUM crossing Rs 65 lakh crore, India's equity mutual fund penetration at approximately 6% of GDP remains far below developed economies (USA ~80%, UK ~50%, Brazil ~35%). The SIP stoppage rate during market corrections remains high — illustrating the behavioural risk that disclosure regulation alone cannot address. The SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 2026 and the True-to-Label rule are partly motivated by the need to build durable retail investor confidence to sustain long-term SIP participation.

[Read Source →](#)

Q23

Which regulatory body in India is responsible for regulating each of the following financial products? Match List-I with List-II: List-I: A. Mutual Funds B. Unit Linked Insurance Plans (ULIPs) C. National Pension System (NPS) D. Fixed Deposits in banks List-II: 1. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) 2. Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) 3. Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) 4. Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)

A A-3, B-2, C-4, D-1

B A-2, B-3, C-1, D-4

C A-3, B-4, C-2, D-1

D A-4, B-2, C-3, D-1

✓ A A-3, B-2, C-4, D-1

The correct matching is A-3, B-2, C-4, D-1. Mutual Funds are regulated by SEBI under the SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations. Unit Linked Insurance Plans (ULIPs) are insurance products regulated by IRDAI under the Insurance Act, 1938, despite having an investment component. The National Pension System (NPS) is regulated by PFRDA, established under the PFRDA Act, 2013. Fixed Deposits in scheduled commercial banks are regulated by the RBI under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

✦ The regulatory gap between SEBI and IRDAI is a source of investor confusion because ULIPs and mutual funds serve overlapping investment purposes but face different cost, disclosure, and exit-load standards. SEBI's SCORES (Securities and Exchange Board of India Complaints Redress System) is the online portal for securities-market investor grievances. The Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF) under the Companies Act, 2013 handles unclaimed dividends and shares. PFRDA was given statutory status only in 2013, having operated since 2003 under executive order — an important distinction for UPSC Prelims.

[Read Source →](#)

Q24
STATEMENT-BASED

With reference to the Code on Social Security, 2020, consider the following statements:

1. It is the first Indian legislation to define 'gig worker' and 'platform worker.' 2. It provides for a welfare fund financed by platform companies at 1 to 2 percent of annual turnover. 3. It consolidates 29 pre-existing labour laws into a single code. 4. It has been notified by the Centre but most states are yet to frame rules, making it largely non-operational. Which of the statements given above are correct?

A 1, 2 and 4 only

B 1 and 3 only

C 2, 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ A 1, 2 and 4 only

Statements 1, 2, and 4 are correct; Statement 3 is wrong. The Code on Social Security, 2020 is the first Indian statute to define 'gig worker' and 'platform worker,' and requires aggregators to contribute 1-2% of annual turnover (capped at 5% of total payments to gig/platform workers) to a Social Security Fund. Statement 3 is factually incorrect: the Code on Social Security consolidates 9 pre-existing social security laws — not 29. The figure of 29 laws refers to the total number consolidated across all four Labour Codes together (implemented with effect from 21 November 2025).

✦ The four Labour Codes and their consolidation count: Code on Wages, 2019 (4 laws); Industrial Relations Code, 2020 (3 laws); Code on Social Security, 2020 (9 laws); Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 (13 laws) — totalling 29. Gig workers in India grew from 7.7 million in FY21 to approximately 12 million in FY25, with a projected 6.7% workforce share by 2029-30. The Rajasthan Platform-Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Act, 2023 was India's first state-level legislation specifically for gig workers; Karnataka proposed but withdrew a similar bill in 2024 under industry pressure.

[Read Source →](#)

Q25

Which regulatory body in India is responsible for regulating each of the following financial products? Match List-I with List-II: List-I: A. Mutual Funds B. Unit Linked Insurance Plans (ULIPs) C. National Pension System (NPS) D. Fixed Deposits in banks List-II: 1. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) 2. Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) 3. Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) 4. Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)

A A-3, B-2, C-4, D-1

B A-2, B-3, C-1, D-4

C A-3, B-4, C-2, D-1

D A-4, B-2, C-3, D-1

✓ A A-3, B-2, C-4, D-1

The correct matching is A-3 (Mutual Funds — SEBI), B-2 (ULIPs — IRDAI), C-4 (NPS — PFRDA), D-1 (Fixed Deposits — RBI). ULIPs, despite having an investment component, are classified as insurance products and fall under IRDAI's jurisdiction. The NPS and Atal Pension Yojana (APY) are both regulated exclusively by PFRDA under the PFRDA Act, 2013. Fixed deposits in scheduled commercial banks are regulated by the RBI under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

✦ The cross-regulatory gap between SEBI and IRDAI is a major governance concern — ULIPs and mutual funds serve similar investment purposes but are regulated under entirely different standards and disclosure norms. SEBI's SCORES (Securities Complaint Redress System) is the online complaint platform for securities investors. The Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC), chaired by the Finance Minister, is the apex inter-regulatory coordination body. IEPF (Investor Education and Protection Fund) under the Companies Act, 2013 funds investor education initiatives across all regulators.

[Read Source →](#)

Q26
STATEMENT-BASED

With reference to the Code on Social Security, 2020, consider the following statements:

1. It is the first Indian legislation to define 'gig worker' and 'platform worker.' 2. It provides for a welfare fund financed by platform companies at 1 to 2 percent of annual turnover. 3. It alone consolidates 29 pre-existing labour laws into a single code. 4. It has been notified by the Centre but most states are yet to frame rules, making it largely non-operational. Which of the statements given above are correct?

A 1, 2 and 4 only

B 1 and 3 only

C 2, 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ A 1, 2 and 4 only

Statements 1, 2, and 4 are correct. Statement 3 is wrong — it is all four Labour Codes together that consolidate 29 pre-existing labour laws; the Code on Social Security, 2020 alone consolidates 9 existing laws (including the Employees Compensation Act 1923, ESI Act 1948, EPF Act 1952, and others). The welfare fund contribution is capped at 1-2% of annual turnover (not exceeding 5% of payments made to gig/platform workers), as confirmed by the PIB and Code text. All four Labour Codes became effective on 21 November 2025.

✦ The four Labour Codes and their consolidation count: Code on Wages, 2019 (4 laws); Industrial Relations Code, 2020 (3 laws); Code on Social Security, 2020 (9 laws); Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 (13 laws) — totalling 29 laws. The Code on Social Security, 2020 is particularly significant for introducing portable UAN (Universal Account Number) allowing workers to carry social security entitlements across jobs and platforms — crucial for the gig economy. Gig workers in India grew from 7.7 million (FY21) to 12 million (FY25), projected to reach 6.7% of workforce by 2029-30.

[Read Source →](#)

Q27

The UK Supreme Court in 2021 (*Uber BV vs. Aslam*) created a new legal category for platform workers. What was the significance of this ruling for gig economy regulation globally?

- A** It classified all gig workers as full employees entitled to all statutory protections
- B** It ruled that Uber drivers are 'workers' — an intermediate category between employees and independent contractors — entitled to minimum wage, paid holidays, and pension contributions
- C** It held that gig platforms are exempt from labour laws as technology companies
- D** It required all countries to adopt the EU Platform Work Directive

✓ B It ruled that Uber drivers are 'workers' — an intermediate category between employees and independent contractors — entitled to minimum wage, paid holidays, and pension contributions

In *Uber BV v Aslam* [2021] UKSC 5, the UK Supreme Court unanimously held that Uber drivers fall into the intermediate 'worker' category (distinct from both 'employee' and 'independent contractor') and are entitled to national living wage, a minimum of 28 days paid holidays per year, and protection against unlawful discrimination. Critically, working time was counted from when drivers logged onto the Uber app and were ready to accept rides — not just when a passenger was in the car. The drivers were not held to be 'employees,' leaving open questions of unfair dismissal and employer National Insurance contributions.

✦ The UK Employment Rights Act 1996 recognises three categories: 'employee' (full rights), 'worker' (intermediate rights), and 'independent contractor' (no statutory employment rights). This three-tier framework influenced global debate. The EU Platform Work Directive (2024) takes a different approach, establishing a rebuttable presumption of employment status — the platform must prove workers are genuinely self-employed. California Proposition 22 (2020) retained independent contractor status but mandated minimum earnings guarantees (120% of minimum wage for active hours) and health stipends. India's Economic Survey 2025-26 drew on these global models in recommending a 'minimum earnings guarantee' for Indian gig workers.

[Read Source →](#)

Q28
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements about the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008: 1. It was the first legislation in India to provide social security to workers in the unorganised sector. 2. It provides for a National Social Security Board for unorganised workers, which includes representatives of unorganised workers. 3. It defined 'gig workers' and 'platform workers' for the first time in Indian law. 4. It established compulsory social security schemes such as Provident Fund and ESI for unorganised workers. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 and 2 only

B 2 only

C 1, 2 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ A 1 and 2 only

Statements 1 and 2 are correct. The National Social Security Board under the 2008 Act comprises 34 nominated members including 7 representatives each of unorganised workers, employers of the unorganised sector, and eminent civil society persons, chaired by the Union Minister for Labour and Employment. Statement 3 is wrong — the Code on Social Security, 2020 was the first Indian law to define 'gig worker' and 'platform worker.' Statement 4 is wrong — the 2008 Act provides only voluntary, welfare-scheme-based coverage (life insurance, health, maternity, old age protection) and does not impose compulsory EPF or ESI contributions on unorganised sector employers.

✦ The Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008 (replaced by the Code on Social Security, 2020) represented India's first statutory acknowledgement of the social security deficit in the unorganised sector, which accounts for over 90% of India's workforce. The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) by MoSPI tracks employment indicators for both organised and unorganised sectors. The Janani Suraksha Yojana, Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana, and Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme were among the central government schemes covered under the 2008 Act's Schedule I.

[Read Source →](#)

Q29
STATEMENT-BASED

India's total mutual fund AUM as a percentage of GDP (approximately 18-20% in 2024-25, of which equity schemes form roughly 45%) remains far below that of the USA (approximately 100-150% of GDP). Which of the following are structural reasons for this low penetration, as identified by SEBI and the Economic Survey? 1. Financial literacy deficit — over 50% of Indian adults cannot compute compound interest. 2. Trust deficit due to events like the IL&FS crisis (2018-19) and Franklin Templeton debt fund wind-up (2020). 3. The absence of a regulatory framework for mutual funds prior to 2026. 4. Distribution gap — most retail investments are concentrated through large metro-city distributors. Select the correct answer using the code given below:

A 1, 2 and 4 only

B 1 and 3 only

C 2, 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ A 1, 2 and 4 only

Statements 1, 2, and 4 are correctly identified structural barriers. Statement 3 is wrong — India has had a regulatory framework for mutual funds since the SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 1996, which was updated by the new SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 2024 (effective 2026); the absence of regulation is not the binding constraint. India's total MF AUM-to-GDP ratio rose from under 6% in 2014 to approximately 18-20% by 2025, yet equity MF penetration remains heavily skewed towards top-30 cities (T-30), with Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities massively underserved.

✦ SEBI's Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF) conducts financial literacy drives but faces budget and outreach constraints. Key structural reforms needed include cross-regulatory coordination between SEBI, IRDAI, and PFRDA (to reduce regulatory arbitrage), deeper corporate bond markets beyond G-Secs and AAA bonds, and mechanisms to curb ULIP mis-selling. India's SIP (Systematic Investment Plan) inflows crossed Rs 25,000 crore/month in 2024, but SIP discontinuation rates remain high — approximately 40 lakh SIP cancellations per month during market corrections, indicating FOMO-driven rather than goal-based investing behaviour.

[Read Source →](#)

Q30

With reference to the four Labour Codes enacted in India, which of the following is correctly matched?

- A** Code on Wages, 2019 — consolidates laws related to industrial disputes and trade unions
- B** Code on Industrial Relations, 2020 — consolidates laws related to wages and bonus
- C** Code on Social Security, 2020 — first to recognise gig and platform workers in Indian law
- D** Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions, 2020 — consolidates the Provident Fund and ESI Acts



Code on Social Security, 2020 — first to recognise gig and platform workers in Indian law

Only option C is correctly matched. The Code on Social Security, 2020 is the first Indian legislation to recognise, define, and provide social security provisions for gig workers and platform workers. Option A is wrong — the Code on Wages, 2019 consolidates four wage-related laws (Payment of Wages Act 1936, Minimum Wages Act 1948, Payment of Bonus Act 1965, Equal Remuneration Act 1976). Option B is wrong — the Industrial Relations Code, 2020 consolidates three laws on trade unions and industrial disputes. Option D is wrong — the OSH Code consolidates 13 safety and factory laws including the Factories Act 1948 and Mines Act 1952; EPF and ESI Acts are consolidated under the Code on Social Security, 2020.

✦ All four Labour Codes became effective on 21 November 2025. Together they consolidate 29 pre-existing labour laws. The Code on Wages, 2019 introduced the concept of a Universal Floor Minimum Wage applicable to all establishments regardless of size. The portable UAN (Universal Account Number) under the Labour Codes will allow gig and platform workers to carry EPF and social security entitlements across platforms and employers — a key portability reform. States must frame their own rules under each Code before implementation at ground level.

[Read Source →](#)

Q31

The Economic Survey 2025-26 recommended a 'minimum earnings guarantee' for gig workers rather than a traditional minimum wage. What is the key difference between these two concepts?

- A** A minimum earnings guarantee applies only to full-time workers whereas a minimum wage applies to all workers
- B** A traditional minimum wage is time-based (per hour/day), whereas a minimum earnings guarantee sets a floor per task or per delivery, adjusted for region and task type
- C** A minimum earnings guarantee is set by state governments whereas a minimum wage is a central government mandate
- D** There is no substantive difference; both guarantee the same floor income to workers

A traditional minimum wage is time-based (per hour/day), whereas a

✓ B **minimum earnings guarantee sets a floor per task or per delivery, adjusted for region and task type**

A traditional minimum wage is time-based (hourly or daily rate), which cannot meaningfully apply to gig work where payment is per task, per delivery, or per ride. A minimum earnings guarantee, as recommended by the Economic Survey 2025-26, sets a floor per task or per delivery adjusted for region and task complexity — fitting the piece-rate structure of platform work without requiring the legal fiction of treating gig workers as time-employed workers. This approach preserves the flexibility of gig work while protecting workers from below-subsistence earnings.

✦ California Proposition 22 (2020) adopted a comparable hybrid model — retaining independent contractor status but mandating a minimum earnings floor of 120% of the local minimum wage for active working hours, a health stipend, and accident insurance. The EU Platform Work Directive (2024) introduced the concept of rebuttable presumption of employment, creating a different policy pathway. Approximately 40% of Indian gig workers earn below Rs 15,000 per month. India projects gig workers will constitute 6.7% of the total workforce by 2029-30 (NITI Aayog estimate).

[Read Source →](#)

Q32

The Rajasthan Platform-Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Act, 2023 is significant for which of the following reasons?

- A** It was the first central legislation to define gig workers and impose welfare levies on platform companies
- B** It was the first state-level legislation in India specifically for gig workers, establishing a welfare board funded by a welfare cess of 1-2% of the transaction value of each platform transaction
- C** It made registration of gig workers with the EPFO mandatory for social security benefits
- D** It classified gig workers as organised sector employees entitled to minimum wages under the Minimum Wages Act

✓ B It was the first state-level legislation in India specifically for gig workers, establishing a welfare board funded by a welfare cess of 1-2% of the transaction value of each platform transaction

The Rajasthan Platform-Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Act, 2023 was the first state-level legislation in India specifically for gig and platform workers. It mandates registration of all aggregators operating in Rajasthan, establishes a Welfare Board modelled on the Construction Workers Welfare Board, and requires aggregators to deposit a welfare cess at 1-2% of the value of each platform transaction (paid by the 5th of every calendar month). Benefits include accident insurance, health and maternity benefits, and educational scholarships for workers' children. It is NOT a central law — the Code on Social Security, 2020 is the relevant central legislation.

✦ Karnataka drafted a similar Platform-Based Gig Workers Social Security and Welfare Bill in 2024 but withdrew it under industry pressure — illustrating the political economy challenges of gig regulation at state level. The Code on Social Security, 2020 (central) provides for a welfare fund at 1-2% of annual platform turnover (different metric from Rajasthan's per-transaction cess), but most states have not framed implementing rules, making the central framework largely non-operational. India's gig workforce grew from 7.7 million (FY21) to 12 million (FY25) — Zomato, Swiggy, Ola, and Uber collectively employ the largest share.

[Read Source →](#)

Q33
STATEMENT-BASED

With reference to India's demographic divergence between northern and southern states, consider the following data: 1. Tamil Nadu has a Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of approximately 1.6-1.8, which is below replacement level. 2. The replacement-level TFR is 2.1. 3. Bihar has a TFR of approximately 2.9-3.0, the highest among major Indian states. 4. Kerala is ageing at rates comparable to East Asian economies. Which of the statements given above are correct?

A 1, 2 and 3 only

B 2 and 3 only

C 1, 2, 3 and 4 only

D 1 and 2 only

✓ A 1, 2 and 3 only

Statements 1, 2, and 3 are correct. As per NFHS-5 (2019-21), Tamil Nadu's TFR is approximately 1.6-1.8 and Bihar's TFR is approximately 2.98 — the highest among major states. The replacement-level TFR of 2.1 is a standard demographic benchmark. Statement 4 is factually imprecise — Kerala's ageing trajectory is compared to Western European countries (not East Asian economies) in the cited source material, as Kerala's fertility decline was driven by female education and healthcare (the 'Kerala model') rather than rapid industrialisation as in East Asia.

✦ The demographic divide has direct implications for the upcoming delimitation exercise (first Census post-2026). If Lok Sabha seats are allocated purely on population share, northern states (UP, Bihar, Rajasthan, MP) would gain 40-60 additional seats while southern states would lose proportional representation — a major constitutional and political challenge. Kerala's 60+ population is projected to reach 23-25% by 2036. India's national TFR fell to 2.0 as per NFHS-5, with only Bihar, UP, Rajasthan, Meghalaya, and Manipur above replacement level.

[Read Source →](#)

Environment & Ecology

Q34

The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is chaired by which of the following?

- A The Chief Justice of India
- B The Prime Minister of India
- C The Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- D The Cabinet Secretary

✓ B **The Prime Minister of India**

The NBWL is chaired by the Prime Minister of India (ex-officio), with the Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change as Vice-Chairperson. The NBWL was established under the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2002, which inserted Chapter IVB into the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and came into existence via Gazette Notification dated 22 September 2003. The Standing Committee of NBWL (SCNBWL), which handles most routine project clearances in and around Protected Areas, is chaired by the Union Environment Minister.

✦ NBWL is India's highest statutory wildlife governance body with 47 members, including wildlife experts, NGO representatives, and elected members from Parliament. Projects within the eco-sensitive zone or within 10 km of a Protected Area buffer zone require SCNBWL clearance, while projects in core critical tiger habitats require full NBWL Board clearance. NBWL replaced the Indian Board for Wildlife (IBWL), which was a non-statutory advisory body. The NBWL's clearance is mandatory under Section 35(6) and 26A(3) of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 for any alteration of boundaries of national parks and sanctuaries.

[Read Source →](#)

Q35
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements about the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) Notification, 2006: 1. It replaced the EIA Notification of 1994. 2. Projects are divided into three categories: A, B1, and B2. 3. Category A projects are appraised at the state level by State Expert Appraisal Committees. 4. The process mandates a mandatory Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA) for all linear infrastructure projects. Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 and 2 only

B 1, 2 and 3 only

C 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ A 1 and 2 only

Statements 1 and 2 are correct. The EIA Notification 2006 replaced the 1994 notification and introduced a three-tier categorisation: Category A (high impact — central appraisal), Category B1 (moderate impact — state appraisal with EIA report required), and Category B2 (low impact — state appraisal without EIA report). Statement 3 is incorrect: Category A projects are appraised at the central level by Expert Appraisal Committees (EACs) constituted by the MoEFCC — not at the state level. Category B1 and B2 projects are appraised by State-level EIA Authorities (SEIAA) and State Expert Appraisal Committees (SEACs). Statement 4 is incorrect: Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA) is not mandated by India's EIA framework and its absence is widely acknowledged as a major structural gap.

✦ The absence of mandatory CIA is a critical flaw in India's environmental governance architecture. Individual project clearances fail to capture landscape-level cumulative ecological impacts — as seen in the Kaziranga landscape where highway, railway, township, and tourism pressures are evaluated in isolation rather than holistically. The draft EIA Notification 2020 (proposed to replace the 2006 notification) was widely criticised for diluting public consultation requirements and expanding the list of projects exempted from prior environmental clearance. India's National Green Tribunal (NGT), established under the NGT Act, 2010, hears appeals against EIA clearance decisions.

[Read Source →](#)

Geography

Q36

NHIDCL (National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd.) is primarily responsible for highway construction in which of the following regions?

- A** All national highways across India
- B** Border states and the North-Eastern region of India, including J&K, Ladakh, Uttarakhand, and Andaman & Nicobar Islands
- C** Only highways in Union Territories
- D** Only highways connecting major ports

✓ B

Border states and the North-Eastern region of India, including J&K, Ladakh, Uttarakhand, and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

NHIDCL was incorporated on 18 July 2014 as a Public Sector Undertaking under the Companies Act, 2013 (not a statutory authority like NHAI), under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH). Its mandate covers the development, maintenance, and management of national highways in strategically sensitive areas sharing international boundaries — specifically the entire North-Eastern Region (NER), Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal (hills), and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Both NHAI and NHIDCL report to MoRTH.

✦ NHAI (National Highways Authority of India), established under the NHAI Act, 1988, is a statutory body managing the mainstream national highway network. NHIDCL handles strategically sensitive border-area infrastructure, including the Kaziranga Elevated Wildlife Corridor on NH-715 in Assam. The distinction between NHAI (statutory body) and NHIDCL (Companies Act company) is significant for UPSC — NHAI can levy tolls as a statutory right, whereas NHIDCL operates as a government company with equity capital. NHIDCL's work in the NE is critical for India's Act East Policy and border connectivity objectives.

[Read Source →](#)

Q37
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements about Project Tiger: 1. Project Tiger was launched on April 1, 1973 with Jim Corbett National Park as the first tiger reserve. 2. The legal basis for tiger reserves is provided by Chapter IVB of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, inserted by the 2006 amendment. 3. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) is funded through a 50:50 cost-sharing arrangement between the Centre and states for all expenditure. 4. The Critical Tiger Habitat (CTH) is declared under Section 38V of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1, 2 and 4 only

B 2 and 4 only

C 1 and 3 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ A 1, 2 and 4 only

Statements 1, 2, and 4 are correct. Project Tiger was indeed launched on April 1, 1973 at Jim Corbett National Park; Chapter IVB (Sections 38K to 38XA) was inserted by the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2006; and CTH is declared under Section 38V. Statement 3 is incorrect because the 50:50 sharing applies only to recurring costs — non-recurring costs are funded 100% by the Centre. The blanket "50:50 for all expenditure" description misrepresents the actual two-tier funding structure.

✦ The CSS-Project Tiger funding structure has two tiers: 100% central assistance for non-recurring items (infrastructure, equipment) and 50:50 sharing for recurring costs (staff, operations), with North-Eastern states getting 90:10 (centre:state) for recurring items. The CTH (core zone) under Section 38V is kept inviolate and no human activity is permitted, while the buffer zone allows regulated eco-tourism and traditional forest rights. India had 53 notified tiger reserves as of 2023, covering approximately 75,796 sq km total area.

[Read Source →](#)

Q38

According to the All India Tiger Estimation (AITE) 2022, which of the following is correct about India's tiger population?

- A** India has 2,461 tigers, representing 50% of world tigers
- B** India has 3,167 tigers, representing approximately 75% of world tigers
- C** India has 3,167 tigers, representing approximately 50% of world tigers
- D** India has 2,800 tigers, representing approximately 60% of world tigers

✓ B India has 3,167 tigers, representing approximately 75% of world tigers

AITE 2022 recorded a minimum of 3,167 tigers in India (camera-trap area estimate), with the average across all methods estimated at 3,682. This represents approximately 75% of the world's remaining wild tigers. The 2018 estimate was 2,461 tigers; the increase reflects a 6.1% annual growth rate — one of the fastest recoveries of any large carnivore globally.

✦ The Tx2 target (St. Petersburg Declaration, 2010) aimed to double wild tiger numbers from approximately 3,200 in 2010 to 6,000 by 2022. India more than doubled its count from 1,411 (2010) to 3,167+ (2022), achieving its individual country target. Tigers are listed on CITES Appendix I (strictest trade ban). There are 13 tiger range countries globally; India, Russia, and Indonesia hold the largest populations. The NTCA uses a four-phase methodology combining camera traps, sign surveys, and prey density estimation.

[Read Source →](#)

Q39
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements about India's Kaziranga National Park: 1. Kaziranga was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985. 2. The 2022 census recorded 2,613 one-horned rhinos in Kaziranga. 3. Kaziranga hosts approximately 50% of the world's one-horned rhinoceros population. 4. Kaziranga National Park is located in the Golaghat and Nagaon districts of Assam. Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 2 and 4 only

B 1 and 3 only

C 1, 2 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ C 1, 2 and 4 only

Statements 1, 2, and 4 are correct. Kaziranga was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in December 1985; the 2022 rhino census recorded 2,613 one-horned rhinos in Kaziranga (up from 2,413 in 2018); and the park spans Golaghat and Nagaon districts of Assam. Statement 3 is incorrect: Kaziranga hosts approximately 70% (not 50%) of the world's greater one-horned rhinoceros population. The entire state of Assam accounts for about 80% of the global population.

✦ Conservation timeline of Kaziranga: the population fell to fewer than 100 individuals by the early 1900s due to hunting; it was designated a Reserved Forest in 1908 and a Game Sanctuary in 1916 under Lord Curzon's initiative; National Park status came in 1974. The park became a Tiger Reserve in 2006 and now ranks third globally in tiger density. Rhinos have been successfully translocated from Kaziranga to Manas National Park (also a UNESCO WHS) to establish a second viable population. Annual flooding by the Brahmaputra, while disruptive, plays a crucial ecological role in maintaining the grassland habitat.

[Read Source →](#)

Q40
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following about India's coal sector and energy transition: 1. Coal still accounts for roughly 70% of India's electricity generation despite a 3% decline in 2025. 2. The PLI scheme for solar modules is worth Rs 24,000 crore and aims to reduce dependence on Chinese solar cells (currently ~80% of supply). 3. India's Energy Storage Policy (2023) targets 60 GW of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) by 2030. 4. The ISTS waiver applies to all forms of power generation, including coal-based thermal plants. Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1, 2 and 3 only

B 2 and 3 only

C 1 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ A 1, 2 and 3 only

Statements 1, 2, and 3 are correct. Coal contributed approximately 69-70% of India's electricity in 2025, even as coal-fired generation fell 3% — only the second annual decline in at least half a century, driven by record renewable additions of 41 GW in 2025. Statement 4 is incorrect: the ISTS (Inter-State Transmission System) waiver of transmission charges applies specifically to solar and wind power projects commissioned before June 30, 2025 (with a phased reduction for later projects up to June 2028), not to coal or other thermal generation.

✦ The ISTS waiver makes remote solar and wind capacity in Rajasthan and Gujarat economically viable for load centres in other states, addressing a key structural barrier to renewable scale-up. Pump Storage Hydro (PSP) and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) are India's twin pillars for managing grid stability as variable renewables grow. India's 500 GW non-fossil fuel target by 2030 requires adding roughly 50 GW of renewable capacity annually — a significant acceleration from historical rates.

[Read Source →](#)

Q41
STATEMENT-BASED

With reference to India's National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM), consider the following statements: 1. NGHM was launched on January 4, 2023, under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE). 2. The production target is 5 Million Metric Tonnes Per Annum (MMTPA) of green hydrogen by 2030. 3. The SIGHT programme provides incentives for both domestic electrolyser manufacturing and green hydrogen production. 4. India requires approximately 250 GW of dedicated renewable energy capacity to power electrolysers at 5 MMTPA scale. Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1, 2 and 3 only

B 2 and 4 only

C 1, 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ A 1, 2 and 3 only

Statements 1, 2, and 3 are correct. The Union Cabinet approved NGHM on January 4, 2023; the 5 MMTPA production target by 2030 is confirmed in the mission document; and the SIGHT (Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition) programme has two components — Component A for domestic electrolyser manufacturing incentives and Component B for green hydrogen production incentives. Statement 4 is incorrect: the mission targets approximately 125 GW of dedicated renewable capacity (not 250 GW) to support 5 MMTPA production by 2030.

✦ NGHM has a total government outlay of Rs 19,744 crore with expected private investment exceeding Rs 8 lakh crore. The SIGHT programme outlay is Rs 17,490 crore. Green hydrogen requires electrolysis of water using renewable electricity; at current electrolyser efficiencies, roughly 50-55 kWh of electricity produces 1 kg of hydrogen. India aims to export green ammonia (produced via Haber-Bosch process using green hydrogen) as the primary hydrogen derivative, with Kakinada (Andhra Pradesh) being the flagship export hub. The mission also targets 30 MMT annual CO₂ emission reduction.

[Read Source →](#)

Q42

India's green hydrogen cost vision refers to which of the following targets for making green hydrogen production competitive?

- A** 1 GW capacity, 1 lakh crore investment, 1 million jobs by 2030
- B** USD 1 per kg production cost, achieved within 1 decade (by 2030)
- C** 1 MMTPA production, 1 lakh crore exports, 1 GW electrolyser manufacturing
- D** 1% blending mandate, 1 crore households covered, within 1 year

✓ B USD 1 per kg production cost, achieved within 1 decade (by 2030)

India's green hydrogen cost vision targets achieving a production cost of USD 1 per kilogram by 2030, down from the current USD 4-5 per kg. Achieving this would make India the world's cheapest green hydrogen producer and transform the economics of steel, fertiliser, and heavy transport sectors. This target rests on three factors converging: the National Green Hydrogen Mission's SIGHT incentives, rapidly falling solar tariffs (already below Rs 2/unit), and declining electrolyser costs.

✦ Grey hydrogen (from steam methane reforming of natural gas) costs USD 1-2 per kg, making it currently cheaper than green hydrogen (USD 4-5/kg). Reaching USD 1/kg green hydrogen requires electrolyser costs to fall from around USD 800/kW today to USD 300-400/kW. The EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), fully effective from January 2026, creates a powerful market-based incentive: Indian exporters of steel and fertilisers using grey hydrogen will face EU border levies, directly rewarding early adoption of green hydrogen in export-oriented industries.

[Read Source →](#)

Q43

The EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is relevant to India primarily because:

- A It bans imports from countries without a carbon price
- B It imposes carbon levies on imports from carbon-intensive sectors, affecting Indian steel, fertiliser, and cement exporters
- C It provides concessional green bonds to countries meeting renewable energy targets
- D It requires exporting countries to adopt a domestic Emissions Trading System

✓ B

It imposes carbon levies on imports from carbon-intensive sectors, affecting Indian steel, fertiliser, and cement exporters

CBAM imposes a carbon price on EU imports of goods from six carbon-intensive sectors: cement, iron and steel, aluminium, fertilisers, electricity, and hydrogen. A transitional reporting phase ran from October 2023 to end-2025; financial carbon payments became mandatory from January 1, 2026. Indian exporters in these sectors must either pay CBAM certificates equivalent to the EU ETS carbon price or demonstrate equivalent carbon pricing at home to avoid the levy.

✦ CBAM does not ban imports — it equalises the carbon cost between EU domestic producers (subject to EU ETS prices of EUR 50-100 per tonne CO₂) and foreign exporters who face no equivalent domestic carbon cost. By 2030, CBAM will expand to cover all EU ETS sectors. For India, the most exposed exports are steel (India is the world's second-largest steel producer) and fertilisers. This creates a direct economic incentive for India's hard-to-abate sectors to decarbonise independently of any multilateral climate agreement.

[Read Source →](#)

Q44
STATEMENT-BASED

With reference to India's e-waste sector, consider the following statements: 1. India is the third largest generator of e-waste in the world, after China and the USA. 2. E-waste circuit boards contain approximately 250-300 grams of gold per tonne, which is roughly 60 times richer than typical gold ore. 3. The E-Waste Management Rules 2022 are enacted under the Environment Protection Act, 1986. 4. India currently recovers approximately 50% of the economic value of its e-waste annually. Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1, 2 and 3 only

B 2 and 4 only

C 1 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ A 1, 2 and 3 only

Statements 1, 2, and 3 are correct. India generated approximately 3.8 million metric tonnes of e-waste in FY2024, ranking third after China and the USA. Circuit boards contain roughly 250-300 grams of gold per tonne — far more concentrated than typical gold ore (around 5 grams per tonne), making e-waste a genuinely valuable urban mine. The E-Waste (Management) Rules 2022, operative from April 1, 2023, are issued under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. Statement 4 is incorrect: India recovers only approximately 18% of its e-waste economic value annually, not 50%.

✦ The informal sector handles approximately 80% of India's e-waste through acid baths and open burning, which extract metals while releasing toxic heavy metals, dioxins, and carcinogens. The EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility) certificate trading system under the 2022 Rules creates a risk of paper compliance — certificates traded without actual recycling occurring. The total annual economic value of India's e-waste is estimated at Rs 51,000 crore, of which approximately 60% is technically extractable. India has only 178 authorised recyclers as of 2023, far below the capacity needed to handle 3.8 MMT annually.

[Read Source →](#)

Q45
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following about India's Vehicle Scrappage Policy (2021): 1. Private vehicles older than 20 years are mandatorily scrapped after failing fitness tests. 2. Commercial vehicles must pass fitness tests after 15 years. 3. Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities (RVSFs) are authorised to issue Certificates of Deposit to vehicle owners. 4. India had over 500 operational RVSFs by early 2026. Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 and 2 only

B 1, 2 and 3 only

C 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ B 1, 2 and 3 only

Statements 1, 2, and 3 are correct. Under the policy, personal vehicles over 20 years and commercial vehicles over 15 years must undergo automated fitness tests; those failing are declared End-of-Life Vehicles (ELVs) and scrapped at RVSFs, which issue Certificates of Deposit redeemable for discounts on new vehicle purchases. Statement 4 is incorrect: India had approximately 60-plus operational RVSFs across 17 states and UTs as of early 2026 — not 500. A massive scale-up is needed to handle the projected 50 million ELVs by 2030.

✦ The steel circular economy connection: every scrapped vehicle yields 60-70% of its weight as steel scrap, which Electric Arc Furnaces (EAFs) prefer over virgin iron ore due to lower energy use and fewer emissions. ELV scrap steel is therefore a strategic input to India's steelmaking decarbonisation. The Motor Vehicles (Registration and Functions of Vehicle Scrapping Facility) Rules, 2021 (GSR 653(E)) govern RVSF establishment. Incentives for voluntary scrapping include state-level road tax rebates (up to 25%) and registration fee waivers on replacement vehicles.

[Read Source →](#)

Q46

The National Critical Mineral Mission (2025) identifies domestic recycling as a strategic pillar primarily because India imports which of the following critical minerals at near-total dependence?

- A Iron ore and bauxite
- B Cobalt (>90%) and lithium (~100%)
- C Copper and zinc
- D Nickel and manganese

✓ B Cobalt (>90%) and lithium (~100%)

India imports cobalt at over 90% dependence (primarily from the Democratic Republic of Congo, which holds nearly 50% of global cobalt reserves, with processing dominated by Chinese supply chains) and lithium at approximately 100% dependence (from Chile, Australia, and Argentina). Both are essential for lithium-ion batteries powering India's EV and energy storage ambitions. The National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM), launched in 2025 with a seven-year outlay of Rs 16,300 crore, treats urban mining from e-waste and ELV batteries as a domestic supply security pillar.

✦ The NCMM covers 30 critical minerals and spans 2024-25 to 2030-31. India also imports Rare Earth Elements (REEs) at over 60% dependence on China. China controls approximately 75% of global lithium-ion battery recycling capacity. The mission tasks the Geological Survey of India (GSI) with 1,200 exploration projects over seven years. India has initiated government-level talks with the DRC for cobalt and copper access. The circular economy is therefore inseparable from national mineral security: every tonne of battery recycled domestically reduces geopolitical vulnerability.

[Read Source →](#)

Q47

The SWaCH cooperative in Pune, recognised internationally as a best practice model, is primarily associated with which of the following?

- A** A women-led self-employed waste-pickers cooperative integrated into the formal solid waste management system
- B** A government-run urban composting programme for wet municipal waste
- C** A corporate extended producer responsibility scheme for plastic waste
- D** A NITI Aayog pilot for digitalising e-waste collection chains



A women-led self-employed waste-pickers cooperative integrated into the formal solid waste management system

SWaCH (Solid Waste Collection and Handling) is the world's largest waste-picker-led cooperative, formally established in Pune in 2005 as a workers' cooperative by the Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP) trade union. Over 3,900 members — approximately 80% women from marginalised Dalit communities — provide door-to-door waste collection to over 900,000 households, handling roughly 1,000 tonnes of waste per day and recycling over 70,000 metric tonnes of material per year.

✦ India has approximately 1.5-2 million informal ragpickers and recyclers, predominantly from marginalised communities (Dalits, tribal communities, migrants). The NAAWP (National Alliance of Waste Pickers) advocates for their rights. The SWaCH model demonstrates formalisation without displacement — waste pickers are recognised as self-employed municipal workers receiving user fees directly from households, without being absorbed into the bureaucracy. UNEP and WRI have highlighted the model as a global lighthouse for integrating the informal recycling sector while advancing social equity alongside environmental goals.

[Read Source →](#)

Q48

India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extends over approximately how large an area, and what is its correct global rank by size?

A 1.5 million sq km; 25th largest globally

B 2.37 million sq km; 18th largest globally

C 3.1 million sq km; 5th largest globally

D 2.01 million sq km; 12th largest globally

✓ B 2.37 million sq km; 18th largest globally

India's EEZ extends approximately 2.37 million square kilometres, encompassing waters around the mainland coastline, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and the Lakshadweep archipelago. This makes India the 18th largest EEZ in the world — not 7th as sometimes incorrectly cited in UPSC coaching material. India's 8,118 km coastline spans 9 coastal states and 4 Union Territories, generating this substantial maritime claim under UNCLOS Articles 55-75.

✦ Under UNCLOS (1982): Territorial Sea = 12 nautical miles from baseline; Contiguous Zone = 24 nautical miles; EEZ = 200 nautical miles (sovereign rights for resource exploitation); Continental Shelf = up to 350 nautical miles (Article 76, seabed resources). India ratified UNCLOS on June 29, 1995. The top five EEZ holders are France, USA, Australia, Russia, and New Zealand — all with large island territories. India's Deep Ocean Mission (2021; Rs 4,077 crore) targets exploring polymetallic nodules, hydrothermal vents, and gas hydrates within India's EEZ and the International Seabed Authority (ISA) allocated zones.

[Read Source →](#)

Q49

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands UT Administration recently renamed the capital from Port Blair to which of the following names?

A Sri Vikram Puram

B Sri Vijaya Puram

C Sri Dhanush Puram

D Sri Arjun Puram

✓ B Sri Vijaya Puram

Port Blair was officially renamed Sri Vijaya Puram on 14 September 2024 following a gazette notification, announced by Home Minister Amit Shah. The new name symbolises the victory (Vijaya) of India's freedom fighters; the islands were the site of the first unfurling of the Tricolour by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and home to the Cellular Jail where Veer Savarkar was imprisoned. India's first open-sea mariculture cage project was launched in the Andaman Sea near this city.

✦ The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are home to five major tribal communities protected under the Andaman and Nicobar Protection of Aboriginal Tribes Regulations — Jarawa, Sentinelese, Onge, Great Andamanese, and Shompen. The Sentinelese are among the last remaining uncontacted peoples on Earth. Strategically, the islands sit astride international shipping lanes connecting the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea, making them critical to India's Act East Policy and maritime security posture.

[Read Source →](#)

Q50

Match the following seaweed species with their primary commercial uses: A. *Kappaphycus alvarezii* 1. Source of agar (laboratory and food industry) B. *Gracilaria* 2. Source of carrageenan (food stabiliser) C. *Sargassum* 3. Biostimulant for agriculture and biofuel feedstock D. *Spirulina* 4. High-protein nutritional supplement Choose the correct match:

A A-2, B-1, C-3, D-4

B A-1, B-2, C-4, D-3

C A-3, B-4, C-1, D-2

D A-2, B-3, C-1, D-4

✓ A A-2, B-1, C-3, D-4

Kappaphycus alvarezii (A) is the world's most commercially important kappa-carrageenan source, accounting for over 90% of global carrageenan supply; carrageenan is used as a food stabiliser in dairy, beverages, and processed foods. *Gracilaria* (B) is the primary industrial source of agar, used in bacteriological culture media and the food industry. *Sargassum* (C) serves as an agricultural biostimulant and biofuel feedstock due to its high biomass yield. *Spirulina* (D) is a cyanobacterium valued as a high-protein nutritional supplement (55-70% protein by dry weight).

✦ India's seaweed cultivation zones — Gulf of Mannar, Palk Bay, and Andaman Islands — have large untapped potential. Seaweed farming requires no freshwater, fertiliser, or land, absorbs CO₂ (blue carbon sequestration), and provides raw material for food, pharmaceutical, and biofuel industries. Under PMMSY, the government has allocated funds for seaweed cultivation clusters along India's 8,118 km coastline to boost both livelihoods and marine biodiversity.

[Read Source →](#)

Q51

Under UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982), the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of a coastal state extends up to how many nautical miles from the baseline?

A 12 nautical miles

B 24 nautical miles

C 200 nautical miles

D 350 nautical miles

✓ C 200 nautical miles

Under UNCLOS (1982), the EEZ extends up to 200 nautical miles from the baseline. The territorial sea extends 12 nautical miles (full sovereign territory); the contiguous zone extends 24 nautical miles (limited enforcement jurisdiction); and the continental shelf can extend up to 350 nautical miles under Article 76 conditions where the continental margin geologically extends that far. Within the EEZ, coastal states have exclusive sovereign rights to exploit living and non-living resources but must allow other states freedom of navigation and overflight.

✦ India ratified UNCLOS in 1995. India's EEZ covers approximately 2.02 million sq km (the Department of Fisheries official figure) spanning the Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, and Andaman Sea — placing India among the world's top 10 EEZ holders. The EEZ is the legal basis for India's open-sea mariculture expansion, offshore wind energy, deep-sea mining, and exclusive fisheries rights. India has also submitted claims to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) for an Extended Continental Shelf beyond 200 NM.

[Read Source →](#)

Q52
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following about India's Blue Economy policy architecture: 1. The Deep Ocean Mission was launched in 2021 with an outlay of approximately Rs 4,077 crore over five years.

2. The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) has an outlay of Rs 20,050 crore.

3. India's coastline of 8,118 km extends across 9 coastal states and

4 Union Territories.

4. Norway produces over 1.4 million tonnes of Atlantic salmon annually through offshore cage farming.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 and 2 only

B 2, 3 and 4 only

C 1, 2 and 3 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ D 1, 2, 3 and 4

All four statements are correct. Deep Ocean Mission: approved by Cabinet in June 2021, outlay Rs 4,077 crore over 5 years (2021-2026), implemented by Ministry of Earth Sciences. PMMSY: Rs 20,050 crore outlay (2020-25), the largest ever investment in India's fisheries sector. India's coastline of 8,118 km (official Dept. of Fisheries figure, inclusive of island territories) spans 9 coastal states and 4 UTs. Norway's total Atlantic salmon harvest was approximately 1.479 million tonnes in 2023, confirming the ">1.4 million tonnes" claim.

✦ China is the world's largest aquaculture producer at approximately 80 million tonnes per year. India's aquaculture output was approximately 9.64 million metric tonnes in 2023-24, dominated by inland freshwater fish and coastal shrimp. India's seafood exports totalled approximately USD 7.38 billion in 2023-24. Norway's success in open-sea cage farming of Atlantic salmon — with strict Marine Spatial Planning, licensed cage sites, and specialist insurance products — is the international model India aims to replicate in its EEZ under the Deep Ocean Mission framework.

[Read Source →](#)

Reports, Indices & Schemes

Q53

The PM-PRANAM scheme, launched in 2023, aims to promote which of the following through a fiscal incentive to state governments?

- A** Promotion of natural farming and reduction of chemical fertilizer use, with states receiving 50% of subsidy savings as grants
- B** Providing direct cash transfers to organic farmers who certify their land under Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana
- C** Constructing PM-PRANAM soil testing laboratories in every block
- D** Mandating crop diversification away from paddy and wheat in water-stressed states



Promotion of natural farming and reduction of chemical fertilizer use, with states receiving 50% of subsidy savings as grants

PM-PRANAM (PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth) was approved by CCEA on 28 June 2023 and is operational for FY 2023-24 to FY 2025-26. States that reduce chemical fertilizer consumption below their 3-year average receive 50% of the resulting subsidy savings as a grant — 70% of which must fund infrastructure for alternative fertilizer production, and 30% rewards stakeholders who reduce fertilizer use. The scheme promotes biofertilizers, nano-urea, and organic alternatives.

✦ India's ideal N:P:K application ratio is 4:2:1, but actual application is heavily nitrogen-skewed due to urea subsidy distortion — urea is kept at Rs 266.50 per 45 kg bag regardless of international prices. The Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) applies to phosphate and potash fertilizers but not to urea; extending NBS to urea would correct price signals but carries political risk due to higher farm input costs. Nano-urea (IFFCO; Rs 240 per 500 ml bottle; equivalent to one bag of conventional urea) is a partial technological solution to reduce both subsidy outgo and soil nitrogen loading.

[Read Source →](#)

Q54
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following about the National Food Security Act, 2013 and PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY): 1. PMGKAY provides 5 kg of free grains per month per person to

approximately 813 million beneficiaries.

2. PMGKAY was launched as a COVID-19 relief measure in 2020 and made permanent from 2023.

3. The National Food Security Act, 2013 provides a statutory entitlement to subsidised food grains covering 67% of India's population.

4. PMGKAY beneficiaries can receive food grains from any ration shop in India under the One Nation One Ration Card system.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 and 2 only

B 1, 2 and 3 only

C 2, 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ D 1, 2, 3 and 4

All four statements are correct. PMGKAY was launched in March 2020 as a COVID-19 relief measure providing an additional 5 kg free over the NFSA entitlement; from 1 January 2023 the government merged PMGKAY with NFSA provisions, making the full 5 kg entitlement free of cost for ~81.35 crore (813 million) NFSA beneficiaries — effectively "permanentising" the free grain scheme, later extended by 5 more years from January 2024. NFSA 2013 covers 67% of population (75% rural, 50% urban). One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) enables portability of PDS benefits across all states.

✦ The combined food and fertilizer subsidy bill for FY 2025-26 is approximately Rs 3.71 lakh crore (about 8.5% of total Union budget expenditure). Food subsidy alone is approximately Rs 2.03 lakh crore. Despite Aadhaar-seeded e-POS machines at ration shops reducing PDS leakages from approximately 40% to 10-15%, residual annual losses from diversion, spoilage, and ghost beneficiaries are estimated at Rs 20,000-30,000 crore. ONORC has been implemented across all 36 states and UTs.

[Read Source →](#)
Q55

The PAHAL scheme, referenced as a model for fertilizer DBT reform, was associated with which sector and how many consumers were migrated to Direct Benefit Transfer?

- A** Kerosene distribution; 8 crore consumers migrated
- B** LPG distribution; approximately 15 crore consumers migrated at launch
- C** PDS food distribution; 30 crore beneficiaries seeded with Aadhaar
- D** Power sector; 12 crore rural households given metered connections

✓ B **LPG distribution; approximately 15 crore consumers migrated at launch**

PAHAL (Pratyaksh Hanstantrit Labh) is India's LPG Direct Benefit Transfer scheme, launched nationally on 1 January 2015. At the time of its Guinness World Records recognition as the world's largest cash transfer programme, it had enrolled 12.57 crore households; by its national rollout target it covered approximately 15.3 crore consumers. Under PAHAL, consumers pay the full market price for LPG cylinders and receive the subsidy amount directly in their bank account, eliminating leakage through ghost and duplicate connections. Current enrollment exceeds 30 crore consumers.

✦ Fertilizer DBT faces implementation challenges LPG DBT did not encounter: every farmer needs Kisan Aadhaar linkage (partially achieved via PM-Kisan which reaches approximately 11 crore farmers); the transition period when market prices spike before DBT arrives is politically combustible; and state governments have resisted pilot testing. Nano-urea (Rs 240 per 500 ml; IFFCO) is a partial solution — it reduces total subsidy per hectare while maintaining nitrogen efficacy. PAHAL saved the government approximately Rs 10,000 crore annually by eliminating ~3 crore bogus connections.

[Read Source →](#)

Q56

Assertion (A): India's open-sea mariculture potential remains largely untapped despite having one of the largest EEZs in the world. **Reason (R):** India lacks a dedicated offshore mariculture regulatory system with Marine Spatial Planning, clear licensing authority, and insurance products for open-ocean operations. Choose the correct option:

- A** Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A
- B** Both A and R are true, but R is not the correct explanation of A
- C** A is true, but R is false
- D** A is false, but R is true

✓ A Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A

Both A and R are true, and R correctly explains A. India's Department of Fisheries uses the figure of a 2.02 million sq km EEZ, making it among the world's largest; yet commercial open-sea mariculture output remains negligible compared to peers like Norway, China, and Chile. The primary governance constraint is the absence of Marine Spatial Planning, overlapping jurisdictional mandates across Ministry of Earth Sciences, Ministry of Fisheries, and the Coast Guard, lack of specialist insurance products for offshore cage operations, and insufficient technology transfer from NIOT pilots to commercial operators.

✦ The ecological lesson from India's coastal aquaculture experience is instructive: intensive unregulated coastal shrimp farming in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Odisha destroyed mangroves, caused saline groundwater intrusion, and generated antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Open-sea mariculture in oligotrophic (nutrient-poor) deep ocean zones disperses nutrient loading over far larger water volumes, avoiding these concentrated coastal harms while yielding higher biomass per unit area. Norway's successful Marine Spatial Planning framework is the regulatory template recommended for India.

[Read Source →](#)

Q57

Assertion (A): Despite the Shyamala Gopinath Committee framework linking small savings rates to G-Sec yields, the government kept rates unchanged for eight consecutive quarters as of Q4 FY26. **Reason (R):** PPF and senior citizen savings scheme depositors are politically influential constituencies, and rate cuts risk disintermediation to equities and gold in a positive-inflation environment. Choose the correct option:

- A** Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A
- B** Both A and R are true, but R is not the correct explanation of A
- C** A is true, but R is false
- D** A is false, but R is true

✓ A Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A

Both A and R are true, and R correctly explains A. The Shyamala Gopinath Committee (constituted July 2010) recommended quarterly resetting of small savings rates 25-100 basis points above comparable G-Sec yields; this framework was notified in February 2016 and has applied from April 2016 onwards. However, the government's quarterly reset is discretionary, not automatic — it has repeatedly kept rates unchanged even when G-Sec yields fell, citing the political sensitivity of PPF and SCSS savers (middle class, senior citizens, girl-child SSY) and the inflation environment that makes real returns on small savings schemes meaningful.

✦ The NSSF (National Small Savings Fund, created 1999, Ministry of Finance) pools all small savings deposits and on-lends to approximately 14 state governments at 7.5-7.6% per annum. States that borrow from NSSF include UP, Rajasthan, West Bengal, and MP. The total outstanding balance in small savings schemes exceeds Rs 25 lakh crore. PPF has EEE (Exempt-Exempt-Exempt) tax status — contributions eligible under Section 80C, interest tax-free, and maturity proceeds tax-free — making it uniquely attractive for risk-averse, tax-paying savers.

[Read Source →](#)

Q58
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following about small savings schemes in India (Q4 FY26 rates: January-March 2026):

1. PPF (Public Provident Fund) offers 7.1% per annum with EEE (Exempt-Exempt-Exempt) tax status.
2. Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (SSY) was launched on January 22, 2015 under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao programme.
3. Senior Citizens Savings Scheme (SCSS) has a maximum deposit limit of Rs 30 lakh.
4. Kisan Vikas Patra (KVP) at 7.5% doubles the investment in approximately 115 months.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 and 2 only

B 1, 2 and 4 only

C 2 and 3 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ D 1, 2, 3 and 4

All four statements are correct and verified. PPF rate is 7.1% p.a. with 15-year tenure (extendable in 5-year blocks) and full EEE tax exemption under Section 80C. SSY was launched by PM Modi on 22 January 2015 under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao; current rate is 8.2% p.a. SCSS maximum deposit limit was raised from Rs 15 lakh to Rs 30 lakh in Budget 2023; current rate 8.2% p.a. with 5-year tenure (extendable by 3 years). KVP at 7.5% p.a. doubles in exactly 115 months (9 years 7 months).

✦ India Post's network of approximately 1.56 lakh post offices (89% rural) is the country's largest financial services distribution network, making small savings schemes accessible to rural and semi-urban populations without bank branches. India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) further extends doorstep banking through postmen. Total outstanding balance in small savings schemes exceeds Rs 25 lakh crore — rivalling the banking system's term deposit base — underscoring their systemic importance to both household finance and state government fiscal management via NSSF lending.

[Read Source →](#)

Q59

Match the following wildlife corridors with the key reserves or landscapes they connect:
 A. Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong 1. Rajasthan tiger habitat connectivity B. Corbett-Rajaji 2. Assam NE corridor with highland forests C. Pench-Kanha 3. Uttarakhand Terai landscape D. Ranthambhore area 4. Central Indian tiger metapopulation, MP Choose the correct match:

A A-2, B-3, C-4, D-1

B A-1, B-3, C-2, D-4

C A-3, B-2, C-4, D-1

D A-2, B-4, C-3, D-1

✓ A A-2, B-3, C-4, D-1

Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong (A-2) connects Kaziranga National Park in the Assam floodplains with the Karbi Anglong hill forests — wildlife migrates to these highlands during annual monsoon flooding; NH-715 bisects this corridor and an elevated animal passage is under construction. Corbett-Rajaji (B-3) links Jim Corbett NP and Rajaji Tiger Reserve in Uttarakhand's Terai Arc Landscape. Pench-Kanha (C-4) sustains the Central Indian tiger metapopulation across Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, with approximately 120 tigers using this corridor. Ranthambhore area (D-1) supports Rajasthan's primary tiger habitat connectivity.

✦ India's wildlife corridors policy identified 32 critical corridors requiring active conservation. Key bottlenecks include national highways, railways, irrigation canals, and urban encroachment. Corridors allow dispersing sub-adult tigers to establish new territories, maintaining genetic diversity across the metapopulation — critical because isolated small populations are vulnerable to inbreeding depression and local extinction. Other priority corridors include Bandipur-Nagarhole (Western Ghats), Satpura-Melghat (Central India), and the Terai Arc (Nepal border).

[Read Source →](#)

Q60

The Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) is deployed in tiger reserves primarily for which of the following purposes?

- A Managing human-tiger conflict compensation claims and insurance
- B Dedicated anti-poaching operations, with better training, equipment, and pay than general forest guards
- C Conducting the annual All India Tiger Estimation camera trap surveys
- D Enforcing the Eco-Sensitive Zone regulations around tiger reserve buffers

✓ B

Dedicated anti-poaching operations, with better training, equipment, and pay than general forest guards

The STPF is a dedicated armed anti-poaching unit proposed by NTCA and approved by the Government of India in 2008 (Finance Minister announced it on 29 February 2008). It is operationally distinct from regular forest guards: STPF personnel receive specialised counter-poaching training, better firearms, night-vision equipment, and higher pay. STPF has been made operational in Karnataka (Bandipur), Maharashtra (Pench, Tadoba, Melghat), Rajasthan (Ranthambhore), Odisha (Similipal), and Assam (Kaziranga), with 60% central funding under Project Tiger (CSS-PT).

✦ CITES Appendix I listing prohibits international commercial trade in tigers. Tiger parts — bones, skins, claws — are trafficked primarily to China and Southeast Asian markets. The WCCB (Wildlife Crime Control Bureau), established under MoEFCC, coordinates intelligence across state boundaries and links with INTERPOL's Project Predator to combat international wildlife trafficking networks. India recorded 3,167 tigers in the 2022 census (up 6% from 2018), accounting for over 75% of the world's wild tiger population. Tiger reserves that have completed core zone village relocation (Kanha, Panna, Corbett) show higher tiger densities than those that have not.

[Read Source →](#)

Science & Technology

Q61

Which of the following correctly describes the SpaDeX mission launched by ISRO in December 2024? 1. It was launched aboard the LVM3 rocket from Sriharikota 2. The mission demonstrated autonomous space docking capability 3. India became the 4th country to achieve space docking 4. The two spacecraft were built for approximately Rs 124 crore Select the correct answer using the code below:

A 1 and 2 only

B 2, 3 and 4 only

C 1, 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ B 2, 3 and 4 only

SpaDeX (Space Docking Experiment) was launched on PSLV-C60 on 30 December 2024, not LVM3, so statement 1 is wrong. Statements 2, 3 and 4 are all correct: the mission demonstrated autonomous rendezvous and docking (completed 16 January 2025); India became the 4th country to achieve space docking after the USA, USSR/Russia, and China; and the two spacecraft (SDX01 Chaser + SDX02 Target) were officially sanctioned at Rs 124.47 crore. The total mission cost including PSLV-C60 was approximately Rs 375 crore.

✦ Space docking is the foundational enabling technology for space stations, lunar sample return missions, and in-orbit satellite servicing. ISRO's SpaDeX validated Guidance, Navigation and Control (GNC) software for autonomous rendezvous -- the most challenging element in orbital mechanics. The docking was completed in stages over January 2025 and is a direct prerequisite for Chandrayaan-4 (lunar sample return) and the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS). PSLV-C60 also carried the POEM-4 (PSLV Orbital Experimental Module) with 24 additional payloads.

[Read Source →](#)

Q62

Consider the following statements about the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS): 1. Its target mass is approximately 52 tonnes 2. It will be placed in a 400-450 km Low Earth Orbit with 51.6 degree inclination 3. The first module (BAS-1) is planned to be launched by 2028 4. It will be jointly operated with JAXA and ESA from the outset Which of the above statements are correct?

A 1, 2 and 3 only

B 2 and 3 only

C 1, 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ A 1, 2 and 3 only

Statements 1, 2 and 3 are all correct. BAS targets a mass of approximately 52 tonnes (a 1:1 scale model of the first 10-tonne module was unveiled by ISRO), will orbit at 400-450 km altitude at 51.6 degrees inclination, and the first module (BAS-1) is planned for launch by 2028 with full station operations by 2035. Statement 4 is incorrect: BAS is India's independent national space station; joint operation with JAXA or ESA is not planned from the outset, though India signed the Artemis Accords (June 2023) enabling bilateral civil space cooperation frameworks.

✦ BAS represents India's most ambitious space undertaking -- qualitatively different from satellites or lunar probes because it requires life support systems, radiation shielding, continuous resupply logistics, and emergency evacuation capability. The station will comprise 5 modules with a nominal crew of 3-4 astronauts. India's space budget is approximately Rs 12,000 crore per year (~0.04% of GDP) compared to NASA's ~\$24 billion (~0.3% of US GDP). The Artemis Accords signed during PM Modi's June 2023 US visit provide a framework for peaceful civil space cooperation but do not mandate joint operation of national stations.

[Read Source →](#)

Q63

IN-SPACe, the body that promotes and authorises India's private space sector, was established under which department or ministry?

- A** Ministry of Science and Technology
- B** Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
- C** Department of Space
- D** Ministry of Defence

✓ C Department of Space

IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre) was established on 24 June 2020 under the Department of Space, which functions under the Prime Minister's Office. It is an autonomous single-window agency responsible for promoting, enabling, authorising, and supervising non-governmental entities (NGEs) across all space activities including launch vehicles, satellites, and ground systems. It is structurally distinct from ISRO (government R&D missions) and NSIL or NewSpace India Limited (ISRO's commercial launch arm).

✦ India's space sector operates under a tripartite structure: ISRO (government R&D and national missions), NSIL -- NewSpace India Limited (commercial launches and co-passenger satellites), and IN-SPACe (regulatory and promotional body for private players). Notable private space companies: Skyroot Aerospace (Vikram-S, first private Indian rocket to reach space, November 2022), Agnikul Cosmos (Agnibaan, first semi-cryogenic engine, 2024), Pixxel, Dhruva Space, and Bellatrix Aerospace. The number of Indian space startups grew from 1 in 2014 to over 189 by 2023 (DPIIT data).

[Read Source →](#)

Q64

PSLV-C62 failed in January 2026 due to an anomaly in which stage of the rocket, and what was the significance of this failure?

- A Stage 1 (solid); it was PSLV's first ever failure
- B Stage 3 (solid); it was the second consecutive PSLV failure involving the same stage
- C Stage 2 (liquid); it was the first PSLV failure since 2017
- D Stage 4 (liquid); it resulted in loss of a crewed spacecraft



Stage 3 (solid); it was the second consecutive PSLV failure involving the same stage

PSLV-C62, launched on 12 January 2026 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, failed due to a roll-rate disturbance anomaly in Stage 3 (PS3 -- the second solid stage of the four-stage rocket). This was the second consecutive PSLV failure involving Stage 3, after PSLV-C61 which failed in May 2025. The mission carried 16 satellites including Earth observation payloads, all of which were lost. PS3 is a solid rocket motor (HTPB propellant) that cannot be throttled or shut down once ignited, making in-flight correction impossible once asymmetric thrust develops.

✦ PSLV is a four-stage rocket alternating solid and liquid propellant: Stage 1 (solid) -- Stage 2 (liquid) -- Stage 3 (solid) -- Stage 4 (liquid). Before 2025, PSLV had achieved approximately 58 successes out of 60 flights, making it one of the world's most reliable launch vehicles. The back-to-back Stage 3 failures indicate a systemic issue -- either in solid motor manufacturing quality control or in the Failure Analysis Committee (FAC) root-cause investigation process after C61. ISRO constitutes a FAC after each failure; the key question is whether the C61 FAC correctly identified and resolved the root cause before clearing C62 for flight.

[Read Source →](#)

Q65

India's space economy is projected to reach approximately how much by 2033 according to the FICCI-EY report widely cited by Department of Space officials?

- A US\$ 8 billion
- B US\$ 20 billion
- C US\$ 44 billion
- D US\$ 100 billion

✓ C US\$ 44 billion

India's space economy is projected to reach US\$ 44 billion by 2033, according to the FICCI-EY report titled "Unlocking India's Space Economy" and widely cited by government officials including the IN-SPACe Chairman. India's current space economy stood at approximately US\$ 8.4 billion in 2022, representing around 2-3% of the global space economy. The target is to capture 8% of the global market by 2033. The Indian Space Policy 2023 governs the roles of ISRO, NSIL, and IN-SPACe in achieving this goal.

✦ PSLV's commercial competitiveness rests on three pillars: reliability (damaged by consecutive Stage 3 failures in 2025-26), cost-effectiveness (US\$ 15-25 million per launch versus SpaceX Falcon 9 at US\$ 60-70 million), and flexibility for Sun-Synchronous Orbit missions. NSIL manages commercial co-passenger launches. Within the US\$ 44 billion projection, satellite communication (SATCOM) is expected to contribute US\$ 14.8 billion and Earth Observation US\$ 8 billion. The consecutive PSLV failures directly affect India's ability to compete for the commercial launch market.

[Read Source →](#)

Q66

The National Quantum Mission (NQM) was approved by the Union Cabinet in which year, and which ministry or department is the nodal authority for it?

- A** 2021; Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)
- B** 2022; Ministry of Science and Technology
- C** 2023; Department of Science and Technology (DST)
- D** 2024; Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to Government of India

✓ C 2023; Department of Science and Technology (DST)

The National Quantum Mission (NQM) was approved by the Union Cabinet on 19 April 2023 with a total budget of Rs 6,003.65 crore over 8 years (2023-24 to 2030-31). The nodal department is the Department of Science and Technology (DST) under the Ministry of Science and Technology. The Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Government of India hosts the NQM portal and provides oversight, but DST is the implementing department. The mission targets a 50-qubit quantum computer prototype by 2028 and a 1,000-qubit system by 2031.

✦ The NQM established four Thematic Hubs (T-Hubs) announced on 30 September 2024: Quantum Computing at IISc Bengaluru, Quantum Communication at IIT Madras (in association with C-DOT), Quantum Sensing and Metrology at IIT Bombay, and Quantum Materials and Devices at IIT Delhi. The four hubs comprise 14 Technical Groups with 152 researchers from 43 institutions across 17 states and 2 Union Territories. For comparison, IBM Condor reached 1,121 qubits in December 2023 and China has invested an estimated \$15 billion in quantum technology nationally.

[Read Source →](#)

Q67

Match the following Thematic Hubs under India's National Quantum Mission (NQM) with their lead host institutions: A. Quantum Computing Hub 1. IIT Bombay B. Quantum Communication Hub 2. IISc Bengaluru C. Quantum Sensing and Metrology Hub 3. IIT Madras (with C-DOT) D. Quantum Materials and Devices Hub 4. IIT Delhi

A A-2, B-3, C-1, D-4

B A-1, B-2, C-4, D-3

C A-3, B-1, C-2, D-4

D A-2, B-1, C-3, D-4

✓ A A-2, B-3, C-1, D-4

The correct matching is A-2, B-3, C-1, D-4: Quantum Computing Hub at IISc Bengaluru; Quantum Communication Hub at IIT Madras in formal association with C-DOT (Centre for Development of Telematics); Quantum Sensing and Metrology Hub at IIT Bombay; Quantum Materials and Devices Hub at IIT Delhi. All four T-Hubs were formally announced by Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh on 30 September 2024. Note that the earlier provisional descriptions in some sources used names like "QSim" and "QComp" -- the official T-Hub names use the full quantum technology domain as the title.

✦ Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) uses quantum properties of photons to create cryptographic keys. The quantum no-cloning theorem ensures any eavesdropping disturbs the quantum state and is immediately detectable. China's Micius satellite demonstrated intercontinental QKD (Beijing to Vienna) in 2017. India's NQM targets satellite-based QKD by 2028 and a 2,000 km ground QKD network by 2031. The Quantum Communication Hub at IIT Madras leads this effort in association with C-DOT, which is India's premier telecom R&D organisation under the Department of Telecommunications.

[Read Source →](#)

Q68

Consider the following statements about the "harvest now, decrypt later" threat posed by quantum computing: 1. It refers to adversaries archiving currently encrypted data for future decryption when quantum computers mature 2. It renders only future encrypted communications vulnerable, not data already collected 3. India's diplomatic and defence communications could already be at risk from this threat 4. NIST published three finalised post-quantum cryptographic standards in August 2024 to counter this threat

Which of the above statements are correct?

A 1 and 3 only

B 2 and 4 only

C 1, 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2 and 4 only

✓ C 1, 3 and 4 only

Statements 1, 3 and 4 are correct. "Harvest now, decrypt later" means adversaries are already archiving today's encrypted data -- Indian diplomatic cables, defence procurement files, UIDAI records -- to decrypt when quantum computers mature, meaning already-stored data is at risk. Statement 2 is therefore wrong. On 13 August 2024, NIST published three finalised post-quantum cryptography standards: FIPS 203 (CRYSTALS-Kyber, renamed ML-KEM), FIPS 204 (CRYSTALS-Dilithium), and FIPS 205 (SPHINCS+). A fourth standard based on FALCON (FIPS 206) was selected but was still in development and not finalised in August 2024.

✦ Current global encryption (RSA-2048, Elliptic Curve Cryptography) relies on the mathematical difficulty of factoring large primes -- a classical computer would take longer than the age of the universe. Peter Shor's 1994 algorithm shows a sufficiently powerful quantum computer can factor RSA-2048 in hours. India needs a national Post-Quantum Cryptography (PQC) transition plan -- CERT-In and DST are the relevant nodal bodies -- to mandate migration timelines for banks, UIDAI, defence, and RBI systems before quantum-capable adversaries emerge. NIST released exactly three finalised PQC standards in August 2024; the FALCON-based fourth standard (FIPS 206) followed later.

[Read Source →](#)
Q69

The Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme for semiconductor chip design in India is administered by which body, and what is its primary financial support level under the Product Design Linked Incentive component?

- A NITI Aayog; 25% of eligible expenditure
- B MeitY; 50% of eligible expenditure up to Rs 15 crore per application
- C DST; 100% capital grant for EDA tools
- D India Semiconductor Mission; 75% of eligible expenditure

✓ B MeitY; 50% of eligible expenditure up to Rs 15 crore per application

The DLI Scheme is administered by MeitY (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology), with C-DAC as the nodal implementing agency. Under the Product Design Linked Incentive component it provides reimbursement of up to 50% of eligible expenditure, subject to a ceiling of Rs 15 crore per application, over 5 years. The scheme targets 100 domestic companies, startups, and MSMEs in semiconductor chip design including ICs, SoCs, Chipsets, and IP Cores. A Deployment Linked Incentive of 6-4% on net sales of semiconductors designed in India is also available.

✦ India's India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), launched December 2021, has three pillars: fabrication (fabs) with 50% fiscal support, ATMP/OSAT (Assembly Testing Marking Packaging) with 50% fiscal support, and Design (DLI Scheme). The first approved fab is Tata Electronics + PSMC (Taiwan) at Dholera, Gujarat -- covering 28nm to 110nm node range, Rs 91,000 crore total investment, chip production targeted from 2026-28. Micron Technology (USA) received approval for an ATMP facility at Sanand, Gujarat. C-DAC hosts the India Chip Centre providing EDA tools and Multi Project Wafer access to DLI beneficiary companies.

[Read Source →](#)

Q70

ASML, which holds a near-monopoly on EUV lithography machines required for leading-edge semiconductor fabrication, is headquartered in which country?

A United States

B Japan

C Netherlands

D South Korea

✓ C Netherlands

ASML is a Dutch company headquartered in Veldhoven, near Eindhoven, in the Netherlands. It is the exclusive global supplier of EUV (Extreme Ultraviolet) lithography machines required for leading-edge semiconductor fabrication at sub-7nm nodes. Standard EUV (Low-NA) machines cost approximately EUR 150-170 million; the newer High-NA EUV machines cost EUR 300-400 million each. TSMC (Taiwan) and Samsung (South Korea) manufacture approximately 90% of the world's most advanced chips using ASML's equipment.

✦ The global semiconductor supply chain has strategic chokepoints: TSMC and Samsung for fabrication, ASML for EUV lithography machines (sole supplier worldwide), and US companies Synopsys and Cadence for Electronic Design Automation (EDA) software. US export controls restrict advanced chip exports and EUV machine sales to China, effectively capping China at approximately 7nm fabrication. India's DLI-supported chip design companies remain dependent on US-controlled EDA tools -- a strategic vulnerability even at the design stage. The CHIPS and Science Act 2022 allocated \$52 billion to boost US domestic semiconductor manufacturing.

[Read Source →](#)

Q71

Assertion (A): India's chip design companies participating in the DLI Scheme still depend on Taiwan or South Korea for manufacturing even after designing chips in India. **Reason (R):** India currently has no operational leading-edge semiconductor fabrication facility and the Tata Electronics- PSMC fab at Dholera targets 28nm to 110nm mature-node technology.

- A** Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A
- B** Both A and R are true, but R is not the correct explanation of A
- C** A is true but R is false
- D** A is false but R is true

✓ A Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A

Both statements are true and R correctly explains A. The DLI Scheme encourages chip design but India has no domestic operational fabrication at leading-edge nodes (below 7nm). The Tata Electronics-PSMC fab at Dholera targets 28nm to 110nm mature-node technology with a total investment of Rs 91,000 crore (~US\$11 billion), with chip production targeted from 2026-28. This means Indian-designed chips requiring advanced nodes for AI or mobile processors must still be sent to TSMC (Taiwan) or Samsung (South Korea) -- the "fabless paradox" of India's semiconductor strategy.

✦ India's realistic 10-year semiconductor goal: 3-4 ATMP/OSAT facilities, 1-2 mature-node fabs (28nm-110nm), and 50-100 DLI design companies generating significant design revenue. Leading-edge capability below 7nm remains a 20-30 year goal given the capital, technology, and talent barriers. ATMP (Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging) is less capital-intensive than fab construction, making it India's near-term achievable step. CG Power with Renesas (Japan) and Stars Microelectronics both received ATMP approval at Sanand, Gujarat alongside Micron Technology's ATMP facility.

[Read Source →](#)

Q72

Consider the following regarding the iCET framework in the context of India-US technology cooperation: 1. iCET stands for Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies 2. It was formally launched by the National Security Advisers of both countries in January 2023 3. It covers quantum technology, AI, semiconductors, and space 4. It was first announced by PM Modi and President Biden at the Quad Summit in Tokyo in May 2022 Which of the above are correct?

A 1 and 3 only

B 1, 2 and 3 only

C 2, 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ D 1, 2, 3 and 4

All four statements are correct. iCET (Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies) was first announced by PM Modi and President Biden at the Quad Summit in Tokyo in May 2022, and was formally launched by India's NSA Ajit Doval and US NSA Jake Sullivan on 31 January 2023 in Washington DC. It covers quantum technology, AI, semiconductors, space, advanced telecommunications, and biotechnology. The initiative is administered by the National Security Councils of both countries at NSA level.

✦ Technology sovereignty means assured access and the ability to absorb, adapt, and ultimately produce indigenously -- not technological autarky. iCET operationalised this for India: accessing US quantum hardware, semiconductor EDA tools, and space technology while building domestic capacity. Related India-US defence foundational agreements: GSOMIA (General Security of Military Information Agreement), BECA (geospatial intelligence sharing), LEMOA (logistics exchange), and COMCASA (communications interoperability). In February 2025, iCET evolved into TRUST (Transforming the Relationship Utilizing Strategic Technology) under the Modi-Trump administration, retaining the core technology focus and expanding to critical minerals and energy cooperation.

[Read Source →](#)

Security & Defence

Q73

The Bhairav drone corps unveiled by the Indian Army at Army Day 2026 in Jaipur comprised what initial strength and structure?

- A 50,000 operatives across 10 battalions with plans to expand to 20 battalions
- B 1,00,000 operatives across 15 battalions with plans to expand to 25 battalions
- C 75,000 operatives across 12 battalions with plans to expand to 30 battalions
- D 2,00,000 operatives across 20 battalions with no expansion plans

✓ B 1,00,000 operatives across 15 battalions with plans to expand to 25 battalions

The Bhairav battalions made their public debut at the Army Day Parade in Jaipur on January 15, 2026. As of that date, approximately 15 battalions had been raised (5 fully operational, others forming), supported by a pool of over 1 lakh (1,00,000) drone operatives. The verified expansion target is 25 battalions total, not 40 as sometimes misreported. Each battalion has roughly 250 personnel drawn from air defence, artillery, and signals branches and is commanded by a colonel. Battalions are being placed under corps and division formations in Rajasthan, J&K, Ladakh, and the Northeast.

✦ The Bhairav force emerged from lessons of modern drone wars in Nagorno-Karabakh 2020 (Azerbaijan Bayraktar TB2 and Israeli Harop destroyed Armenian armored vehicles and air defence systems in 44 days) and Ukraine 2022+ (FPV kamikaze drones replaced precision munitions at squad level). India faces adversary drone contexts on both fronts: China integrated drones into PLA Joint Operations Doctrine since 2016; Pakistan operates Bayraktar TB2 and Wing Loong; LoC commercial drone infiltration averages 400+ quadcopters per year carrying drugs and weapons. Each battalion contains Ashni platoons of roughly 20 personnel equipped with ISR drones and loitering munitions.

[Read Source →](#)

Q74

The Suryastra precision rocket system procured by India through Emergency Procurement involves technology from which country, and what is its approximate range?

- A** USA; 100-200 km
- B** France; 200-400 km
- C** Israel; 150-300 km
- D** Russia; 300-500 km

✓ C Israel; 150-300 km

Suryastra was procured through Emergency Procurement under DAP 2020 for Rs 292.69 crore (approx. USD 35 million). The Indian contractor is NIBE Limited (Pune), with technology based on Israeli Elbit Systems PULS (Precise and Universal Launching System) under a Technology Collaboration Agreement signed July 2025. Strike ranges are 150 km (EXTRA-class rounds, CEP approx. 10 m) and 300 km (Predator Hawk rounds, sub-10 m CEP). The system is mounted on a Tatra T815 6x6 truck produced under licence in India by BEML, making it the first Made-in-India multi-calibre long-range rocket launcher system.

✦ India imports approximately 80% of its military-grade precision munitions and drones from Israel and the USA. The Emergency Procurement vs indigenisation tension is central to UPSC: operational urgency demands the best available technology immediately, but imported systems build strategic dependency rather than domestic capability. The PLI Scheme for drones (Rs 120 crore, 2021) and the Technology Collaboration Agreement model for Suryastra represent the hybrid path. PULS is also operated by Israel, Germany, Cyprus, and several NATO partners, signalling India is aligning precision-fires doctrine with Western interoperability standards.

[Read Source →](#)

Q75

Consider the following statements about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict of 2020 and its implications for Indian military doctrine: 1. Azerbaijan used Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones and Israeli Harop loitering munitions 2. The conflict lasted approximately 44 days 3. More than 200 Armenian armored vehicles were destroyed in drone strikes 4. The conflict demonstrated that drone asymmetry cannot overcome strong air defence Which of the above statements are correct?

A 1, 2 and 4 only

B 2 and 3 only

C 1, 2 and 3 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ C 1, 2 and 3 only

Statements 1, 2 and 3 are correct. The conflict ran from September 27 to November 9-10, 2020 -- exactly 44 days -- ending in Azerbaijan victory. Azerbaijan used Bayraktar TB2 (Turkish MALE drone) and Israeli Harop loitering munitions extensively. Open-source estimates confirm over 200 Armenian armored vehicles (tanks, APCs, artillery) were destroyed across the conflict. Statement 4 is the opposite of what happened: Azerbaijan drones decisively defeated Armenian Buk-M2 and S-300 air defence systems, demonstrating that drone asymmetry CAN overcome sophisticated layered air defence -- the core lesson driving India's Bhairav force creation.

✦ Loitering munitions (kamikaze or one-way attack drones) loiter over an area before diving on targets; examples include Israeli Harop, Indian DRDO ALFA-S, and US Switchblade. MALE (Medium-Altitude Long-Endurance) drones operate at 2,000-15,000 ft with 24+ hour endurance for ISR and strike; examples include Bayraktar TB2, Israel Heron, US Predator. HALE (High-Altitude Long-Endurance) drones fly at 40,000+ ft for strategic ISR; examples include WZ-7 (China) and Predator B (USA). The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the first instance of a major land war won predominantly through drone strikes rather than ground manoeuvre.

[Read Source →](#)

Q76

Match the following drone-related terms with their correct descriptions: A. FPV drone 1. Loiters over target area then dives on it; one-way attack B. Loitering munition 2. First-Person View; commercial-type; modified for kamikaze strikes at squad level C. MALE drone 3. Medium-Altitude Long-Endurance; 24+ hours endurance; recon and strike D. C-UAS 4. System to detect, deter or destroy hostile drones

A A-1, B-2, C-3, D-4

B A-2, B-1, C-3, D-4

C A-2, B-3, C-1, D-4

D A-1, B-3, C-2, D-4

✓ B A-2, B-1, C-3, D-4

Correct matching: A-2 (FPV = First-Person View drones, cheap commercial quadcopters modified for one-way kamikaze strikes at squad level, widely used in Ukraine war at a cost of USD 400-600 per unit), B-1 (loitering munition = one-way attack drone that circles the target area before diving; examples: Israeli Harop, Indian DRDO ALFA-S, US Switchblade), C-3 (MALE = Medium-Altitude Long-Endurance, operates at 2,000-15,000 ft, 24+ hour endurance; examples: Bayraktar TB2, Heron, Predator), D-4 (C-UAS = Counter-UAS, systems that detect, deter and destroy hostile drones; India DRDO D-4 system uses radar plus RF jamming plus hard-kill options).

✦ India faces an economic asymmetry problem at the LoC: a Rs 50,000 commercial drone carrying drugs or weapons can be intercepted only by a Rs 1 crore-plus interceptor missile. This makes soft-kill C-UAS (RF jamming, GPS spoofing) more economically viable than hard-kill for routine infiltration. DRDO D-4 integrates radar detection, RF jamming, and kinetic options. The Year of Networking 2026 aims to integrate Bhairav drone operations into the Army data network so drone feeds from Ashni platoons flow directly to brigade and division command posts in near-real-time.

[Read Source →](#)

Q77

The Indian Army declared 2026 as the "Year of Networking and Data Centricity." Which of the following correctly describes the three core Army networking systems at different operational levels?

- A** BMS (tactical last-mile), TCS (situational awareness layer), ATIN (wide-area command spine)
- B** TCS (tactical last-mile), BMS (situational awareness layer), ATIN (wide-area command spine)
- C** ATIN (tactical last-mile), TCS (situational awareness layer), BMS (wide-area command spine)
- D** BMS (wide-area command spine), ATIN (situational awareness layer), TCS (tactical last-mile)



TCS (tactical last-mile), BMS (situational awareness layer), ATIN (wide-area command spine)

The correct assignment: TCS (Tactical Communication System) provides the tactical last-mile secure voice, data, and video backbone among mobile and static formations; it uses secure radios, satellite terminals, and fibre-optic links with anti-jamming protection. BMS (Battlefield Management System) is the situational awareness software layer that integrates inputs from radars, cameras, laser range-finders, and ground sensors to provide a Common Operating Picture (COP) from Corps to Section level. ATIN (Army Tactical Indra Network) functions as the wide-area command-and-control spine linking Corps, Division, Brigade, and Battalion headquarters. TCS and BMS together form the Tac C3I (Tactical Command, Control, Communications and Information) architecture.

✦ Network-Centric Warfare (NCW) derives combat power from linking sensors, decision-makers, and weapon systems into an integrated information network. The OODA loop (Observe-Orient-Decide-Act, developed by USAF Colonel John Boyd) is the conceptual framework; NCW compresses every step of this loop. The USA demonstrated NCW impact in Desert Storm 1991 and Iraqi Freedom 2003. The PLA reorganised into five Theatre Commands in 2016 -- an integrated structure India is building toward through proposed Integrated Theatre Commands (ITCs). A key challenge: the Indian Army, Navy and IAF developed their digital systems independently with different encryption standards, creating interoperability barriers that the Year of Networking 2026 is designed to reduce.

[Read Source →](#)

Q78

Consider the following statements about India's proposed Integrated Theatre Commands (ITCs): 1. India's first Chief of Defence Staff was appointed in 2019 2. The proposed structure includes a Western, Northern, Maritime, and Air Defence Command 3. ITCs are fully operational as of early 2026 4. ITCs require multi-service data networks that the Army's 2026 networking push aims to build Which of the above statements are correct?

A 1, 2 and 4 only

B 1 and 3 only

C 2, 3 and 4 only

D 1 and 4 only

✓ D 1 and 4 only

Only Statements 1 and 4 are correct. Statement 1: Gen Bipin Rawat was announced as India's first CDS on December 30, 2019, and took charge effective January 1, 2020 -- the appointment is credited to 2019. Statement 4 is correct: multi-service data network standardisation is a prerequisite for ITCs and is exactly what the 2026 networking push addresses. Statement 2 is incorrect: the current (2025-2026) finalised ITC proposal is THREE commands -- Western Theatre Command (Pakistan front, HQ Jaipur), Northern Theatre Command (China front, HQ Lucknow), and Maritime Theatre Command (Indian Ocean, HQ Thiruvananthapuram). A separate Air Defence Command was in earlier proposals but has been dropped from the current structure. Statement 3 is incorrect: ITCs were still under deliberation in early 2026, with the target of establishment before CDS Anil Chauhan demits office in May 2026.

✦ ITCs represent a fundamental shift from 17 single-service commands to 3 joint theatre commands combining Army-Navy-IAF assets under a single Theatre Commander (a four-star officer, rotated between Army and IAF on 18-month terms). Key obstacles: inter-service data protocol standardisation, resources and asset allocation disputes between services, and operational doctrine harmonisation. The Agnipath scheme (launched June 2022) creates a younger, tech-native force suited to NCW but raises questions about experience depth. China reorganised into five Theatre Commands in 2016; Pakistan has Joint Service HQ but not full theatre integration.

[Read Source →](#)

Q79

Assertion (A): The Chinese PLA's 2016 military reorganisation serves as a relevant model for India's Integrated Theatre Commands. **Reason (R):** China completed the transition to Theatre Commands -- integrating Army, Navy and Air Force under joint Theatre Commanders -- which India is still in the process of implementing.

- A** Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A
- B** Both A and R are true, but R is not the correct explanation of A
- C** A is true but R is false
- D** A is false but R is true

✓ A Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A

Both A and R are true, and R correctly explains why the PLA 2016 reorganisation is a relevant reference point for India. In February 2016, China reorganised its seven Military Region Commands into five Theatre Commands -- Eastern (HQ Nanjing), Southern (HQ Guangzhou), Western (HQ Chengdu, covers India border), Northern (HQ Shenyang), and Central (HQ Beijing, national strategic reserve). This was part of Xi Jinping's broader CMC-centralised reform to enable true joint operations across services. India is precisely trying to achieve the same integration through its three proposed ITCs, making China's completed model a directly relevant comparator.

✦ Pakistan also presents a networked warfare challenge: ZDK-03 AEW and C aircraft, data-linked air defence networks, and the Taimoor subsonic cruise missile (600 km range, air-launched, stealth features) require India to track and intercept targets in real time across a networked architecture. India defence budget 2025-26: approx Rs 6.22 lakh crore total; capital procurement approx Rs 1.72 lakh crore (approx 2% of GDP). The NCW gap versus China is described by analysts as wider than India's equipment gap -- Indian weapons often outperform Chinese equivalents but the integrated data architecture does not yet exist.

[Read Source →](#)

Q80

Operation Megaburu, which neutralised CPI(Maoist) cadres including commander Patiram Manjhi, took place in which location and what was Patiram Manjhi's organisational role?

- A** Bastar, Chhattisgarh; Regional commander
- B** Saranda forest, West Singhbhum, Jharkhand; Central Committee Member and Secretary of Bihar-Jharkhand Special Area Committee
- C** Gadchiroli, Maharashtra; Divisional committee secretary
- D** Dantewada, Chhattisgarh; State committee member


B

Saranda forest, West Singhbhum, Jharkhand; Central Committee Member and Secretary of Bihar-Jharkhand Special Area Committee

Operation Megaburu was launched on January 22, 2026, by 209 CoBRA battalion, Chaibasa District Police, and Jharkhand Jaguar in the Saranda Forest, West Singhbhum district, Jharkhand -- the largest sal forest in Asia. Patiram Manjhi (alias Anal Da, Tufan, Ramesh) was a Central Committee Member (CCM) and Secretary of the Bihar-Jharkhand Special Area Committee (BJSAC), carrying a bounty of Rs 1 crore with 149 criminal cases registered against him. The operation eliminated 15-17 CPI(Maoist) cadres. Following the encounter, active Maoists in Jharkhand are estimated to have fallen to 50-60 individuals.

✦ CPI(Maoist) was formed in 2004 through the merger of CPI-ML People War Group and MCCI. It is designated a terrorist organisation under UAPA (Unlawful Activities Prevention Act). The Red Corridor at its peak covered 106 districts in 10 states (circa 2010). CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action) is the CRPF specialised anti-LWE force -- 10 battalions raised 2008-09. The Saranda Action Plan (2011, Rs 73 crore) focused on roads, schools, health sub-centres, and livelihood for Saranda tribals. The government set a target of eliminating Left Wing Extremism by March 2026.

[Read Source →](#)

Q81

The SAMADHAN strategy, India's comprehensive approach to Left Wing Extremism, is formulated by which ministry? What does the acronym SAMADHAN expand to?

- A** Ministry of Tribal Affairs; Security, Administration, Motivation, Accountability, Development, Human resources, Action, Networking
- B** Ministry of Home Affairs; Smart leadership, Aggressive strategy, Motivation and training, Actionable intelligence, Dashboard-based KPIs, Harnessing technology, Action plan, No access to financing
- C** NITI Aayog; Strategic, Administrative, Military, Anti-insurgency, Development, Humanitarian, Awareness, Networking
- D** Ministry of Defence; Security, Agility, Modernisation, Anti-terrorism, Development, Humanitarian, Action, Networking

✓ B Ministry of Home Affairs; Smart leadership, Aggressive strategy, Motivation and training, Actionable intelligence, Dashboard-based KPIs, Harnessing technology, Action plan, No access to financing

SAMADHAN is the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) comprehensive LWE strategy, introduced in 2017. It expands to: Smart leadership, Aggressive strategy, Motivation and training, Actionable intelligence, Dashboard-based KPIs and KRAs (Key Result Areas), Harnessing technology, Action plan for each theatre, No access to financing. The strategy reflects a dual-track approach -- security operations combined with targeted development -- and provides both short-term and long-term policy frameworks across central and state levels.

✦ India counter-LWE strategy became significantly more effective after 2014 with an explicit dual-track approach. Track 1 (Security): Intelligence-Based Operations (IBOs) replacing mass cordon-and-search; CoBRA units; drone and satellite imagery; better central-state coordination. Track 2 (Development): Aspirational Districts Programme (2018) covered many LWE-affected districts; PM Gram Sadak Yojana for roads in forest areas; banking correspondents for financial inclusion; mobile towers in cut-off areas. Roads are described by security analysts as the single most important anti-Naxal tool because they simultaneously enable state presence, market access, and security force mobility.

[Read Source →](#)

Social Issues

Q82

The Forest Rights Act (2006) is relevant to the persistence of Left Wing Extremism in India primarily because:

- A It gives Maoists legal cover to operate in forest areas by granting them land rights
- B It criminalises Maoist activities in forest zones under forest protection provisions
- C Its incomplete implementation left tribal land alienation grievances unresolved, which Maoists exploited
- D It transferred forest land from tribals to mining companies, directly funding Maoist operations

✓ C Its incomplete implementation left tribal land alienation grievances unresolved, which Maoists exploited

The Forest Rights Act 2006 (full title: Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers Recognition of Forest Rights Act) was intended to recognise individual and community forest rights of tribal communities historically alienated from forest land. In LWE-affected states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha, implementation has been patchy -- large numbers of claims remain unresolved. This incompleteness left the fundamental tribal land grievance unaddressed. Maoists exploited this by positioning themselves as enforcers of community rights against forest departments, non-tribal settlers, and mining companies, giving them a social legitimacy base for recruitment.

✦ Alongside FRA, PESA Act (1996) -- Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act -- provides tribal self-governance mechanisms. Both laws recognise that Naxalism persisted because it exploited genuine structural grievances: land alienation, forest access denial, and state absence in education and healthcare. Article 244 of the Constitution governs administration of Scheduled Areas (Fifth Schedule) and Tribal Areas (Sixth Schedule). The endgame for LWE will be written in district collectors settling forest rights claims, staffed primary health centres, and first-generation learners completing education -- not just security operations.

[Read Source →](#)

Q83

Consider the following statements about India's biosafety infrastructure for handling dangerous pathogens: 1. NIV Pune operates at BSL-3+ only (enhanced BSL-3) and is the apex virology reference laboratory 2. India has an operational BSL-4 facility at Bhopal (NIHSAD) for work on Ebola and Marburg 3. NIV Pune is under ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) 4. All suspected Nipah samples from across India must be sent to NIV Pune for final confirmation Which of the above statements are correct?

A 1 and 2 only

B 1, 3 and 4 only

C 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ C 3 and 4 only

Only Statements 3 and 4 are correct. Statement 1 is WRONG: NIV Pune does NOT operate at BSL-3+ only -- it houses Asia's first operational BSL-4 laboratory (Microbial Containment Complex at Pashan, inaugurated December 28, 2012), capable of handling Ebola, Marburg, Nipah, and other Category A pathogens. Statement 2 is WRONG: NIHSAD (National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases) Bhopal under ICAR is currently rated ABSL-3+ (Animal BSL-3 enhanced) -- it is NOT a BSL-4 facility; a planned upgrade is underway. Separately, Gujarat (Gandhinagar) is building India's first state-funded BSL-4 (foundation stone laid January 13, 2026). Statements 3 and 4 are correct: NIV Pune is under ICMR and is the sole ICMR-authorized lab for final Nipah confirmation in India.

✦ BSL-4 facilities handle the most dangerous pathogens -- no vaccine or treatment, high transmission risk (Ebola, Marburg, CCHF, some Nipah strains). They require full positive-pressure suits and completely isolated air supply. Globally, smallpox (variola) is maintained only at two WHO-authorized BSL-4 facilities -- CDC Atlanta (USA) and VECTOR (Russia). India having an operational BSL-4 at NIV Pune since 2012 means diagnostic and research capacity for Category A bioterrorism agents exists, but it is a single facility -- the single-point dependency is a biosecurity risk highlighted in the BioE3 Policy context. India still lacks a BARDA equivalent (US Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority) for medical countermeasure development.

[Read Source →](#)
Q84

The natural reservoir host of the Nipah virus is:

- A Horseshoe bats (*Rhinolophus* species)
- B Pteropus fruit bats (flying foxes)
- C Infected pigs
- D *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes

✓ B Pteropus fruit bats (flying foxes)

The natural reservoir of Nipah virus is Pteropus fruit bats (flying foxes), confirmed by WHO. In India and Bangladesh, the specific species is *Pteropus giganteus*. Bats harbour the virus without falling ill. Transmission pathways to humans: (1) direct contact with bat saliva, urine, or partially consumed fruit -- bat-to-human; (2) through infected pigs as intermediate hosts (Malaysia 1999 pattern); (3) through date palm sap contaminated by bat excreta (Bangladesh and most India outbreaks); (4) human-to-human contact via bodily fluids (confirmed in Kerala outbreaks, CFR among close contacts up to 100% in some clusters). Nipah is a WHO priority pathogen with no approved vaccine as of 2026.

✦ Nipah virus (NiV) belongs to genus *Henipavirus*, family *Paramyxoviridae*. First identified in 1999 in Sungai Nipah village, Malaysia. CFR is 40-75% -- among the highest of known human pathogens. India outbreak history: Siliguri WB 2001 (66 cases, 45 deaths); Nadia WB 2007 (5 cases, 5 deaths, CFR 100%); Kozhikode Kerala 2018 (18 cases, 17 deaths); Ernakulam Kerala 2021 (1 death); Kozhikode Kerala 2023 (6 deaths); Barasat WB 2026 cluster. The One Health framework (WHO-FAO-WOAH) recognises that zoonoses account for approximately 75% of emerging infectious diseases. Nipah is a notifiable disease under IHR 2005, which is legally binding on all 196 states parties (194 WHO member states plus Liechtenstein and the Holy See).

[Read Source →](#)

Q85

India's BioE3 Policy (2024) targets building a bioeconomy of what value, and which department is the nodal authority for this policy?

- A** USD 100 billion; Ministry of Science and Technology
- B** USD 200 billion; Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- C** USD 300 billion; Department of Biotechnology (DBT)
- D** USD 500 billion; NITI Aayog

✓ C USD 300 billion; Department of Biotechnology (DBT)

The Union Cabinet approved the BioE3 Policy (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment) on 24 August 2024, targeting a USD 300 billion bioeconomy by 2030. The nodal implementing authority is the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) under the Ministry of Science and Technology. India's bioeconomy had already grown from \$10 billion in 2014 to over \$130 billion in 2024, making the \$300 billion target achievable within six years.

✦ BioE3 focuses on six thematic areas: (1) high-value bio-based chemicals, biopolymers and enzymes; (2) smart proteins and functional foods; (3) precision biotherapeutics; (4) climate-resilient agriculture; (5) carbon capture and its utilisation; and (6) marine and space research. The policy also mandates establishing Biomanufacturing and Bio-AI Hubs and Biofoundry networks to accelerate commercialisation. DBT also administers BIRAC (Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council). India lacks a US BARDA-equivalent for countermeasure development and a comprehensive Dual-Use Research of Concern (DURC) oversight mechanism.

[Read Source →](#)

Q86

Consider the following statements about the International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005 in the context of outbreak response: 1. IHR 2005 is binding on 196 States Parties, including all 194 WHO member states. 2. It requires notification of Public Health Emergencies of International Concern (PHEIC). 3. India was exempted from IHR 2005 reporting during COVID-19. 4. Nipah virus is a notifiable disease under IHR 2005. Which of the above statements are correct?

A 1 and 4 only

B 1, 2 and 4 only

C 2, 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ B 1, 2 and 4 only

Statements 1, 2 and 4 are correct. IHR 2005 is legally binding on 196 States Parties — all 194 WHO member states plus 2 non-WHO members — and requires mandatory notification of events that may constitute a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). Nipah is a notifiable disease under IHR 2005. Statement 3 is incorrect: India was NOT exempted from IHR reporting; all countries including India were subject to IHR obligations during COVID-19 (declared PHEIC in January 2020, ended May 2023).

✦ PHEICs declared under IHR 2005: H1N1 (2009), Polio (2014, ongoing), Ebola West Africa (2014-16), Zika (2016), Ebola DRC (2019-20), COVID-19 (Jan 2020 - May 2023), Mpox/Monkeypox (Aug 2022). The One Health framework — now a Quadripartite collaboration of WHO, FAO, WOA (formerly OIE), and UNEP since 2022 — recognises that roughly 75% of emerging human diseases are zoonotic. India's NCDC (National Centre for Disease Control) in Delhi under MoHFW is the epidemiological surveillance nodal body, distinct from NIV Pune (virology reference lab under ICMR).

[Read Source →](#)

Q87

The Aspirational Districts Programme (2018), which covered many LWE-affected districts, is centrally monitored by which body?

- A Ministry of Home Affairs
- B Ministry of Tribal Affairs
- C NITI Aayog
- D Ministry of Rural Development

✓ C NITI Aayog

The Aspirational Districts Programme, launched in January 2018, covers 112 of India's most underdeveloped districts across 27 states. It is monitored by NITI Aayog through the real-time Champions of Change digital dashboard (set up in April 2018 in partnership with the Government of Andhra Pradesh). Rankings are based on 49 Key Performance Indicators across five sectors: Health and Nutrition, Education, Agriculture and Water Resources, Financial Inclusion and Skill Development, and Infrastructure.

✦ Many of the 112 aspirational districts overlap with LWE-affected zones, making the programme a core Track 2 (development) component of India's dual-track counter-LWE strategy. Track 1 (Security) uses Intelligence-Based Operations (IBOs) and CoBRA units; Track 2 (Development) combines the Aspirational Districts Programme, PM Gram Sadak Yojana road connectivity, banking correspondents for financial inclusion, and mobile tower deployment. Roads are described by security experts as the single most effective anti-Naxal tool because they enable state presence, market access, and security force mobility simultaneously.

[Read Source →](#)

Q88

Consider the following statements regarding India's PESA Act (1996): 1. PESA stands for Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act. 2. It extends ordinary panchayat provisions to Fifth Schedule (tribal) areas without modification. 3. It recognises tribal customary laws and traditions in self-governance. 4. It was enacted to give tribal communities greater self-governance before conventional panchayats took over their areas. Which of the above statements are correct?

A 1 and 3 only

B 1, 3 and 4 only

C 2 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ B 1, 3 and 4 only

Statements 1, 3 and 4 are correct. PESA (Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act, 1996) was enacted on 24 December 1996 to extend Part IX of the Constitution to Fifth Schedule tribal areas — but specifically WITH modifications and exceptions that recognise tribal customary laws, social and religious practices, and traditional community resource management. Statement 2 is therefore wrong: the extension is explicitly NOT without modification. PESA empowers Gram Sabhas in tribal areas with significant powers over land, natural resources, and minor forest produce.

✦ PESA applies to 10 states with Fifth Schedule areas: Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Telangana. The Fifth Schedule governs Scheduled Areas (tribal areas) in peninsular and central India; the Sixth Schedule governs tribal areas in northeastern states. PESA Gram Sabha powers over minor forest produce, minor water bodies, minor minerals, and prevention of land alienation directly address the structural land rights grievances that Left Wing Extremism historically exploited.

[Read Source →](#)

Q89

Consider the following about CoBRA units used in anti-LWE operations:

- A** CoBRA stands for Counter-terrorism Operations Battalion with Rapid Action capacity; it is under the BSF
- B** CoBRA stands for Commando Battalion for Resolute Action; it is under the CRPF; 10 battalions were raised between 2008 and 2011
- C** CoBRA stands for Combined Operations Battalion for Recon and Assault; it is under the NSG
- D** CoBRA stands for Commando Battalion for Rural Antiterrorism; it is under the Army's Rashtriya Rifles



CoBRA stands for Commando Battalion for Resolute Action; it is under the CRPF; 10 battalions were raised between 2008 and 2011

CoBRA stands for Commando Battalion for Resolute Action. It is a specialised jungle warfare and intelligence-based operations unit under the CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force) — India's largest paramilitary force. A total of 10 CoBRA battalions were raised between 2008 and 2011 (not just 2008-09 as sometimes reported). CoBRA units are trained in guerrilla warfare, jungle survival, explosive tracking, and Intelligence-Based Operations (IBOs) against Maoist cadres in difficult forested terrain.

✦ India's central armed police forces involved in LWE response: CRPF (primary anti-LWE force, largest paramilitary), BSF (border security), CISF (industrial security), ITBP (Himalayan border), and SSB (Seema Suraksha Bal). At state level, Chhattisgarh's DRG (District Reserve Guards) — locally recruited tribal personnel with knowledge of terrain and Maoist networks — has been particularly effective. Maharashtra Police's C-60 commando unit in Gadchiroli is another model of locally-raised anti-LWE forces. CPI(Maoist) was formed in 2004 through merger of CPI-ML People's War and MCCI; it is designated a terrorist organisation under UAPA.

[Read Source →](#)

Q90

Consider the following about India Semiconductor Mission's first approved fabrication project: 1. The project is located in Dholera, Gujarat. 2. The Indian company involved is Tata Electronics. 3. The foreign technology partner is PSMC from Taiwan. 4. The technology node targeted is 5nm (leading edge). Which of the above statements are correct?

A 1 and 2 only

B 1, 2 and 3 only

C 2, 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ B 1, 2 and 3 only

Statements 1, 2 and 3 are correct. Tata Electronics partnered with PSMC (Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation, Taiwan) to build India's first semiconductor fab at Dholera in Gujarat, with a total investment of Rs 91,000 crore (~USD 11 billion). Statement 4 is incorrect: the technology node targeted is 28nm (mature node) — not 5nm leading edge. The Dholera fab aims to manufacture chips for power management ICs, display drivers, microcontrollers, and high-performance computing, with the first chip expected by end of 2026.

✦ India's semiconductor strategy targets mature nodes (28nm-110nm) because these are the highest-volume segments for automotive, industrial, defence, and telecom applications. India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) three-pillar structure: Pillar 1 (Fabs, 50% fiscal support) — Tata-PSMC at Dholera (28nm); Pillar 2 (ATMP/OSAT, 50% fiscal support) — Micron Technology at Sanand, CG Power + Renesas + Stars Microelectronics at Sanand, Kaynes Semicon at Sanand; Pillar 3 (Design) — DLI Scheme administered by MeitY. Total ISM outlay: Rs 76,000 crore (~\$9 billion). Leading-edge sub-7nm fabrication remains a 20-30 year ambition.

[Read Source →](#)

Q91

Which of the following correctly describes the "One Health" concept and its current institutional framework?

- A** A domestic Indian health policy under AYUSH that integrates modern and traditional medicine approaches
- B** A Quadripartite (WHO-FAO-WOAH-UNEP) framework recognising the interconnection of human, animal, and ecosystem health; about 75% of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic
- C** A bilateral agreement between India and WHO for pandemic preparedness funding specifically for BSL-4 facilities
- D** A UN Sustainable Development Goal sub-target linking nutrition, public health, and environmental protection

✓ B **A Quadripartite (WHO-FAO-WOAH-UNEP) framework recognising the interconnection of human, animal, and ecosystem health; about 75% of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic**

One Health is a global framework recognising that human, animal, and environmental health are interdependent. It was a Tripartite collaboration of WHO, FAO, and WOAHA (formerly OIE) until 2022, when UNEP joined to form a Quadripartite collaboration — reflected in the One Health Joint Plan of Action (2022-2026). Approximately 75% of emerging and re-emerging human infectious diseases are zoonotic in origin, including Nipah, COVID-19, Ebola, SARS, MERS, and Avian Influenza.

✦ India's institutional response to zoonotic outbreaks involves multiple agencies: ICMR-NIV Pune (virology reference lab, BSL-3+), NCDC Delhi (epidemiological surveillance, under MoHFW), NIHSAD Bhopal (animal pathogen research, under ICAR, BSL-4 under construction), DBT (BioE3 policy), NDMA (disaster management), and WHO India Country Office (IHR notifications). The absence of a unified One Health coordinating authority in India — comparable to the US CDC's One Health Office — creates institutional fragmentation in zoonotic outbreak response. WOAHA was formerly called OIE (Office International des Epizooties).

[Read Source →](#)

International Relations

Q92

Which of the following correctly describes the composition of BRICS as of January 2026?

- A** 10 members: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE (Indonesia only a partner state)
- B** 11 members: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Indonesia
- C** 10 members: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia (UAE declined membership)
- D** 12 members: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Indonesia, Turkey

✓ B

11 members: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Indonesia

By January 2026, BRICS has 11 full members. The Johannesburg Summit (August 2023) admitted Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and UAE effective January 2024, taking the total to 10. Indonesia officially joined as the 11th full member on 6 January 2025 — the first Southeast Asian state to do so. Indonesia was initially invited as a partner country in October 2024 but was elevated to full membership just months later. Turkey and other countries remain at partner-country or aspirant status as of January 2026.

✦ BRICS expansion matters for UPSC because it changed the bloc's collective GDP share to exceed G7 at PPP. The distinction between full members and partner countries is a frequently tested detail. BRICS partner countries (as of early 2026) include Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam. BRICS+ accounts for about 46% of global population and over 40% of world GDP (PPP). The Kazan Summit (October 2024) was hosted by Russia and admitted Indonesia as a partner before it was elevated to full member in January 2025.

[Read Source →](#)

Q93

Consider the following statements about the New Development Bank (NDB): 1. Its headquarters are located in Beijing, China. 2. China is the largest borrower from the NDB. 3. Non-BRICS countries such as Bangladesh and Uruguay have been admitted as members. 4. The NDB was formally established at the Fortaleza Summit in 2014. Which of the statements given above are correct?

A 1, 2 and 3 only

B 2, 3 and 4 only

C 1, 3 and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ B 2, 3 and 4 only

Statements 2, 3 and 4 are correct. Statement 1 is incorrect: NDB headquarters are in Shanghai, not Beijing. China is the largest borrower from the NDB (approximately USD 6.5 billion for 22 projects), followed by India (approximately USD 6.1 billion for 24 projects). Non-BRICS members — including Bangladesh, UAE, Uruguay, Egypt, and Algeria — have been admitted. The NDB Agreement was signed on 15 July 2014 at the 6th BRICS Summit in Fortaleza, Brazil.

✦ The NDB was designed to offer development finance without conditionality, as an alternative to IMF and World Bank. Its authorised capital is USD 100 billion; initial subscribed capital was equally distributed among the five founding BRICS members. Current President is Dilma Rousseff of Brazil (appointed 2023, formerly Brazil's President 2011-2016). The NDB primarily finances infrastructure and sustainable development projects. Unlike the IMF and World Bank, it does not attach governance or structural-adjustment conditionalities to loans — a key distinction tested in UPSC.

[Read Source →](#)

Q94

For the first time in Republic Day history, India invited a collective entity rather than a single nation as chief guest in 2026. Which of the following pairs correctly identifies the two EU officials who attended?

- A Charles Michel (European Council) and Ursula von der Leyen (European Commission)
- B Antonio Tajani (European Parliament) and Ursula von der Leyen (European Commission)
- C Antonio Costa (European Council) and Ursula von der Leyen (European Commission)
- D Antonio Costa (European Council) and Thierry Breton (European Commission)

✓ C Antonio Costa (European Council) and Ursula von der Leyen (European Commission)

India's 77th Republic Day (26 January 2026), themed "150 Years of Vande Mataram," marked the first time a collective entity was invited as chief guest. Antonio Costa became European Council President in December 2024, succeeding Charles Michel (who held the post 2019-2024). Ursula von der Leyen was re-elected European Commission President in July 2024 for a second five-year term to 2029. Both attended as joint chief guests, and a European Union military contingent participated in the parade — the EU's first such participation outside Europe.

✦ The European Council represents heads of EU member state governments and sets the EU's overall political direction; it is presided over by a full-time President (currently Antonio Costa). The European Commission is the EU's executive arm, proposing legislation and implementing decisions (President: Ursula von der Leyen). The European Parliament represents EU citizens directly (President: Roberta Metsola since 2022). Distinguishing these three EU institutions and their presidents is a frequently tested UPSC detail, especially given India-EU relations context.

[Read Source →](#)

Q95

Consider the following statements about the India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC): 1. It was announced in April 2022 and formally launched in 2023. 2. It focuses exclusively on trade liberalisation and tariff reduction. 3. Semiconductors, 5G/6G and AI governance are among its focus areas. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 1 and 3 only

C 2 and 3 only

D 1, 2 and 3

✓ B 1 and 3 only

Statements 1 and 3 are correct. The EU-India TTC was announced by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and PM Modi on 25 April 2022 in New Delhi and formally launched at its first meeting on 6 February 2023. Statement 2 is incorrect: the TTC does not focus exclusively on tariff reduction — it has three working groups covering strategic technologies and digital governance, green and clean energy technologies, and resilient value chains. Both sides committed to collaboration on semiconductors (including a 2023 MoU), 5G/6G, AI governance, and High-Performance Computing.

✦ The India-EU TTC is the first TTC India established with any partner, and the EU's second such body (after the US-EU TTC). It mirrors the US-India iCET (Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology) and is designed to create a third pole in global technology governance outside US and Chinese dominance. Key non-tariff friction points in India-EU trade: CBAM (Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism), EUDR (EU Deforestation Regulation), and CSDDD (Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive) — all affecting Indian exporters of steel, leather, coffee, and soya.

[Read Source →](#)

Q96

The Ganga Waters Treaty between India and Bangladesh was signed in which year, and for what duration?

- A** 1972; 25-year term
- B** 1983; renewable 10-year term
- C** 1996; 30-year term
- D** 2011; indefinite

✓ C 1996; 30-year term

The Ganga Waters Treaty was signed on 12 December 1996 by Indian PM H.D. Deve Gowda and Bangladeshi PM Sheikh Hasina, for a 30-year term. It governs water-sharing at the Farakka Barrage, which controls Ganga flow into Bangladesh. The treaty expires on 12 December 2026, making its renewal a pressing diplomatic issue in India-Bangladesh relations. The Teesta water-sharing agreement, by contrast, has been under negotiation since 1983 but remains unsigned due to West Bengal's longstanding objections.

✦ The Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) was established in 1972 as the bilateral body for India-Bangladesh river management — UPSC often confuses this 1972 JRC founding date with the Ganga Treaty (1996). Key India water treaties for UPSC: Indus Waters Treaty (1960, with Pakistan, mediated by World Bank); Ganga Waters Treaty (1996, with Bangladesh, expires December 2026); Mahakali Treaty (1996, with Nepal). India has over 50 shared river basins; the unsigned Teesta agreement and expiring Ganga Treaty are currently the most diplomatically sensitive.

[Read Source →](#)

Q97

For the first time in Republic Day history, India invited a collective entity rather than a single nation as chief guest in 2026. Which of the following pairs correctly identifies the two EU officials who attended?

- A** Charles Michel (European Council) and Ursula von der Leyen (European Commission)
- B** Antonio Tajani (European Parliament) and Ursula von der Leyen (European Commission)
- C** Antonio Costa (European Council) and Ursula von der Leyen (European Commission)
- D** Antonio Costa (European Council) and Thierry Breton (European Commission)



Antonio Costa (European Council) and Ursula von der Leyen (European Commission)

Antonio Costa succeeded Charles Michel as European Council President on December 1, 2024 (he was previously Prime Minister of Portugal, 2015-2024). Ursula von der Leyen was re-elected European Commission President in July 2024 for a second term running to 2029. Both attended India's Republic Day 2026 as the EU's collective chief guests -- a historic first.

✦ The European Council (heads of EU member-state governments, sets overall political direction) and the European Commission (the EU's executive arm, proposes legislation) are frequently confused in UPSC questions. The European Parliament (directly elected) is a third distinct body. Thierry Breton resigned as EU Commissioner in September 2024, making option D a useful distractor testing awareness of EU personnel changes.

[Read Source →](#)

Q98

Consider the following statements about the India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC): 1. It was established in 2022. 2. It focuses exclusively on trade liberalisation and tariff reduction. 3. Semiconductors, 5G/6G and AI governance are among its focus areas. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 1 and 3 only

C 2 and 3 only

D 1, 2, and 3

✓ B 1 and 3 only

Statement 1 is correct: the India-EU TTC was announced in April 2022 by PM Modi and European Commission President von der Leyen during the India-EU Summit. Statement 2 is incorrect: the TTC has three working groups covering strategic technologies and digital governance, green and clean energy technologies, and trade and investment -- it is emphatically not limited to tariff reduction. Statement 3 is correct: semiconductors, 5G/6G, AI governance, and quantum computing are all explicit TTC focus areas.

✦ The India-EU TTC mirrors the US-India iCET (Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies, 2023) and is designed to deepen India's role in global technology governance outside US-China competition. On the trade side, CBAM (Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism), EUDR (EU Deforestation Regulation), and CSDDD (corporate due diligence directive) are the non-tariff barriers creating India-EU friction alongside the stalled Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) negotiations.

[Read Source →](#)

Q99

The Ganga Waters Treaty between India and Bangladesh was signed in which year, and for what duration?

- A** 1972; 25-year term
- B** 1983; renewable 10-year term
- C** 1996; 30-year term
- D** 2011; indefinite

✓ C 1996; 30-year term

The Ganga Waters Treaty was signed on December 12, 1996 by PM H.D. Deve Gowda and Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina for a 30-year term, making it due to expire in December 2026. It governs water-sharing at the Farakka Barrage using a formula based on average historic flow data from 1949 to 1988, divided into 15 ten-day cycles during the dry season (January to May). The Teesta water-sharing agreement, by contrast, has been under negotiation since 1983 but remains unsigned as of 2026 due to West Bengal's objections.

✦ The Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) was established in 1972 for India- Bangladesh river management and covers all 54 shared rivers. UPSC regularly tests India's key water treaties: Indus Waters Treaty (1960, World Bank- brokered, with Pakistan), Ganga Waters Treaty (1996, with Bangladesh), and the unsigned Teesta deal. The 30-year term of the 1996 treaty expiring in 2026 makes renegotiation a live UPSC topic.

[Read Source →](#)

Q100

Assertion (A): India does not have an operative extradition treaty with Bangladesh.

Reason (R): Without a bilateral extradition treaty, extradition under Indian law requires specific legislative action and cannot proceed solely through executive discretion. Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above?

- A** Both A and R are correct and R is the correct explanation of A
- B** Both A and R are correct but R is not the correct explanation of A
- C** A is correct but R is incorrect
- D** A is incorrect but R is correct

✓ D A is incorrect but R is correct

Assertion A is factually incorrect: India and Bangladesh signed a bilateral Extradition Treaty on January 28, 2013, which entered into force on October 23, 2013 (after ratification instruments were exchanged), and was further amended in 2016 to lower the evidentiary threshold. Reason R is correct as a general principle of extradition law -- without a treaty, extradition requires specific statutory action. Since A is wrong but R is correct, option D is the right answer.

✦ India's Extradition Act, 1962 governs the legal framework. India has bilateral extradition treaties with approximately 48 countries. The India-Bangladesh treaty covers offences punishable by at least one year imprisonment and incorporates the dual criminality principle. The 2025-26 controversy over extraditing Sheikh Hasina involved not the absence of a treaty but treaty clauses allowing refusal on political offence or fair trial grounds -- a nuance UPSC interview panels may probe.

[Read Source →](#)

Q101

With reference to the World Health Organization (WHO), consider the following statements: 1. WHO was founded in 1948, replacing the League of Nations Health Organization. 2. WHO headquarters are in New York, with the South-East Asia Regional Office (SEARO) in New Delhi. 3. The International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005 are legally binding on all 194 WHO member states. 4. India supplies approximately 60 percent of WHO vaccine procurement by volume. Which of the statements given above are correct?

A 1, 3, and 4 only

B 2, 3, and 4 only

C 1, 2, and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3, and 4

✓ A 1, 3, and 4 only

Statement 2 is the only incorrect statement: WHO headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland (not New York -- that is the UN General Assembly). The SEARO regional office in New Delhi is correctly stated. Statements 1, 3, and 4 are all correct: WHO was founded on April 7, 1948 (World Health Day), succeeding the League of Nations Health Organisation; IHR 2005 is legally binding on all 194 member states; and India -- primarily through the Serum Institute of India -- supplies approximately 60% of WHO vaccine procurement by volume, earning India the title "pharmacy of the world."

✦ WHO has six regional offices: AFRO (Brazzaville), AMRO/PAHO (Washington DC), SEARO (New Delhi), EURO (Copenhagen), EMRO (Cairo), WPRO (Manila). India was certified polio-free by WHO in March 2014. The US withdrawal from WHO effective January 22, 2026 threatens approximately \$500 million in annual WHO funding and India's vaccine export pipeline. The TRIPS waiver campaign co-sponsored by India and South Africa at WTO in 2020 is also UPSC-relevant in the global health governance context.

[Read Source →](#)

Q102

Which of the following correctly matches the US withdrawal from multilateral institutions with the year of first withdrawal? 1. Paris Climate Agreement -- 2017 2. UNESCO -- 1984 3. WHO -- 2017 (formal notice) 4. Trans-Pacific Partnership -- 2017
Select the correct answer:

A 1 and 4 only

B 1, 2, and 4 only

C 2, 3, and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3, and 4

✓ B 1, 2, and 4 only

Statements 1, 2, and 4 are correct. The US first withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement under Trump in June 2017 (effective November 2020); from UNESCO under Reagan in December 1984 (rejoined briefly, withdrew again in 2018); and from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in January 2017. Statement 3 is incorrect: the US issued formal notice of WHO withdrawal in July 2020 (not 2017) during Trump's first term -- Biden reversed it in January 2021. The second and effective US WHO withdrawal was on January 22, 2026.

✦ The US has never ratified the Rome Statute (ICC), the Kyoto Protocol, or the UNCLOS -- illustrating a consistent pattern of selective multilateral engagement. US withdrawal from WHO threatens ~18% of WHO's assessed and voluntary contributions. India benefits from a strong WHO due to its vaccine export position, pandemic preparedness interests, and SEARO leadership role. UPSC tests this US disengagement pattern in context of multilateralism vs. unilateralism debates.

[Read Source →](#)

Q103

The 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention was held in which city, and what was its theme?

- A** Varanasi; "Connecting Diaspora, Enriching India"
- B** Bhubaneswar; "Diaspora's Contribution to Viksit Bharat"
- C** New Delhi; "Indian Diaspora and Sustainable Development"
- D** Ahmedabad; "Diaspora's Contribution to Viksit Bharat"

✓ B Bhubaneswar; "Diaspora's Contribution to Viksit Bharat"

The 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention was held from January 8-10, 2025 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The theme was "Diaspora's Contribution to a Viksit Bharat." The chief guest was Christine Carla Kangaloo, President of Trinidad and Tobago, who attended virtually. This was the first PBD convention in Odisha and coincided with events surrounding the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award ceremony.

✦ PBD is organised by the Ministry of External Affairs. January 9 is chosen because it marks the date Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa in 1915. PBD was first held in 2003 under PM Vajpayee and became biennial in 2015. India has the world's largest diaspora at approximately 3.2 crore people across 150+ countries. PBD conventions alternate between large cities; past hosts include Indore, Bengaluru, Gandhinagar, Varanasi.

[Read Source →](#)

Q104

Match List I (India-Bangladesh connectivity infrastructure) with List II (description): List I: A. India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline B. Maitri Setu C. Agartala-Akhaura Rail Link D. Karnaphuli Tunnel List II: 1. First undersea road tunnel in South Asia, Chinese-built, Chittagong 2. Inaugurated November 2023; connects Tripura to the Bangladesh rail network 3. Bridge over Feni River connecting Sabroom (Tripura) to Ramgarh (Bangladesh); inaugurated March 2021 4. First cross-border petroleum pipeline in South Asia; Numaligarh (Assam) to Parbatipur; March 2023

A A-4, B-3, C-2, D-1

B A-4, B-2, C-3, D-1

C A-3, B-4, C-1, D-2

D A-2, B-3, C-4, D-1

✓ A A-4, B-3, C-2, D-1

A-4: India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline runs from Numaligarh Refinery (Golaghat, Assam) to Parbatipur petroleum depot (Dinajpur, Bangladesh); inaugurated March 18, 2023; first cross-border petroleum pipeline in South Asia. B-3: Maitri Setu is the 1.9 km bridge over the Feni River connecting Sabroom (Tripura) to Ramgarh (Chittagong Division, Bangladesh); inaugurated March 9, 2021 by PM Modi. C-2: Agartala-Akhaura Rail Link (12.24 km) was inaugurated on November 1, 2023 virtually by Modi and Sheikh Hasina. D-1: Karnaphuli Tunnel (Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Tunnel) is the first undersea road tunnel in South Asia under the Karnaphuli River, Chinese-built (CCCC), inaugurated October 28, 2023.

✦ India-Bangladesh connectivity is central to India's Neighbourhood First Policy. The Siliguri Corridor (the "Chicken's Neck," ~22 km wide) is India's most acute territorial vulnerability; Bangladesh's geography makes it strategically critical for Northeast India access. Border Haats (small cross-border markets) and the Matarbari Deep Sea Port cooperation are additional instruments. The Karnaphuli Tunnel was renamed from "Bangabandhu Tunnel" in February 2025 by Bangladesh's interim government.

[Read Source →](#)

History, Art and Culture

Q105

The Indian independence movement saw multiple strategic approaches by different leaders. Which of the following best describes Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's Forward Bloc and the year of its founding?

- A** A left-wing political party founded in 1938 after Haripura Congress session
- B** A left-wing political faction within Congress founded in 1939 after Bose resigned as Congress President
- C** A militant underground organisation founded in 1941 after Bose escaped from house arrest
- D** A political alliance with Muslim League founded in 1939 to counter Gandhi's influence

✓ B

A left-wing political faction within Congress founded in 1939 after Bose resigned as Congress President

Bose resigned from the Congress presidency on April 29, 1939, after being outmaneuvered by the Gandhian wing following his re-election at the Tripuri session (March 1939). He founded the Forward Bloc on May 3, 1939, initially as a left-wing faction within the Congress to consolidate radical forces, before it became an independent party. It was not an underground organisation -- Bose's Great Escape from house arrest in Calcutta occurred in January 1941, two years later.

✦ Bose was first elected Congress President at the Haripura session (1938) and controversially re-elected at Tripuri (1939), defeating Gandhi's candidate Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Gandhi called Sitaramayya's defeat his own defeat -- illustrating the tension between democratic mandate and moral authority in the Congress. The Forward Bloc today remains a recognised political party in West Bengal. Bose's 1941 escape route went Calcutta to Peshawar to Kabul to Moscow to Berlin.

[Read Source →](#)

Q106

The Azad Hind Government, established by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, was formally declared on which date and in which city?

A December 30, 1943, Port Blair

B October 21, 1943, Singapore

C August 15, 1942, Berlin

D January 16, 1941, Kabul

✓ B **October 21, 1943, Singapore**

The Provisional Government of Azad Hind (Arzi Hukumat-e-Azad Hind) was formally declared by Netaji on October 21, 1943, at the Cathay Cinema Hall in Singapore (then Japanese-occupied). That same night, the government declared war on Britain and the United States. Port Blair is significant for a separate reason: Netaji hoisted the Tricolour there on December 30, 1943, making it the first time the Indian flag was raised on Indian soil.

✦ Parakram Diwas (January 23) was declared in 2021 to mark Netaji's birth anniversary (born January 23, 1897 in Cuttack, Odisha). The INA trials at Red Fort (1945-46) backfired on the British: the three accused -- Shah Nawaz Khan (Muslim), P.K. Sehgal (Hindu), G.S. Dhillon (Sikh) -- represented communal unity and became national heroes, defended by Bhulabhai Desai. The trials accelerated British decision to leave India. Azad Hind exercised nominal sovereignty over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, renamed Shaheed and Swaraj Dweep.

[Read Source →](#)

Persons and Awards in News

Q107

With reference to Padma Awards, consider the following statements: 1. Padma Awards were instituted in the same year as the Bharat Ratna -- 1954. 2. Under Article 18 of the Constitution, Padma Awards are classified as titles and are therefore restricted to citizens only. 3. The awards have been suspended twice -- in 1977-80 and in 1992-97. 4. The Padma selection committee is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary. Which of the statements given above are correct?

A 1 and 4 only

B 1, 3, and 4 only

C 2, 3, and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3, and 4

✓ B 1, 3, and 4 only

Statement 2 is incorrect: the Supreme Court ruled in December 1995 that Padma Awards are NOT titles under Article 18 of the Constitution -- they are honorary recognitions carrying no privileges, monetary benefit, or hereditary rights. This means they can be conferred on foreign nationals and NRIs and are not restricted to citizens. Statements 1, 3, and 4 are all correct: Padma Awards and Bharat Ratna were both instituted in 1954; the first suspension ran from 1977-1980 (Janata government, Article 18 concerns) and the second from 1992-1997 (Supreme Court litigation); and the selection committee is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary and includes the Home Secretary and Secretary to the President.

✦ Article 18(1) prohibits the State from conferring titles other than military or academic distinctions. The first suspension (1977-1980) was under PM Morarji Desai; the second (1992-1997) followed PIL litigation in Kerala and Madhya Pradesh High Courts. The December 1995 SC ruling restored the awards' constitutional validity. In Padma Awards 2026: 131 total -- 5 Padma Vibhushan, 17 Padma Bhushan, 109 Padma Shri; 19 posthumous awardees; 23 women; 8 foreign nationals or NRIs.

[Read Source →](#)

Q108

The civilian award hierarchy in India, from highest to lowest, is:

- A** Bharat Ratna -- Padma Vibhushan -- Padma Bhushan -- Padma Shri
- B** Bharat Ratna -- Padma Bhushan -- Padma Vibhushan -- Padma Shri
- C** Padma Vibhushan -- Bharat Ratna -- Padma Bhushan -- Padma Shri
- D** Padma Vibhushan -- Padma Bhushan -- Bharat Ratna -- Padma Shri

✓ A **Bharat Ratna -- Padma Vibhushan -- Padma Bhushan -- Padma Shri**

The correct descending hierarchy is: Bharat Ratna (highest civilian honour, maximum three per year), then Padma Vibhushan (exceptional and distinguished service to the nation), then Padma Bhushan (distinguished service of a high order), and finally Padma Shri (distinguished service in any field). All four were instituted in 1954; Bharat Ratna was first awarded to C. Rajagopalachari, S. Radhakrishnan, and C.V. Raman in 1954.

✦ Bharat Ratna can be awarded posthumously (first posthumous: Lal Bahadur Shastri, 1966). It is not restricted to Indian citizens -- Mother Teresa (1980) and Nelson Mandela (1990) received it. The award carries no monetary benefit but entitles the recipient to use the Bharat Ratna insignia and ranks above all other civilian honours in the Indian order of precedence. Bharat Ratna awardees rank 7th in the Indian table of precedence (after President, VP, PM, Speaker, Chief Justice, and former Presidents).

[Read Source →](#)

Q109

Assertion (A): Padma Awards can be conferred on foreign nationals and non-resident Indians. **Reason (R):** The Supreme Court has ruled that Padma Awards are honorary recognitions and not titles within the meaning of Article 18 of the Constitution, which prohibits the State from conferring titles on citizens. Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above?

- A** Both A and R are correct and R is the correct explanation of A
- B** Both A and R are correct but R is not the correct explanation of A
- C** A is correct but R is incorrect
- D** A is incorrect but R is correct

✓ A Both A and R are correct and R is the correct explanation of A

Both statements are correct and causally linked. In *Balaji Raghavan vs Union of India* (December 15, 1995), a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court unanimously held that Bharat Ratna and Padma awards are not titles under Article 18(1) of the Constitution. Because these awards do not function as prefixes or suffixes to a name and do not create a separate social class, they are permissible. As a result, they can be conferred on foreign nationals and NRIs -- the 2026 Padma Awards included six such recipients.

✦ Article 18(1) prohibits the State from conferring titles other than military or academic distinctions. The provision specifically targeted colonial-era titles such as Rai Bahadur, Khan Bahadur, and Sir. The Supreme Court distinguished between titles (which precede or follow a name and alter social standing) and awards (which are honours without any name prefix or suffix). Padma awardees may mention the award in parenthetical form only -- not as a title or suffix.

[Read Source →](#)

Q110

With reference to the INA Trials of 1945-46, which of the following statements is correct?

- A** The trials were held at the Cellular Jail in Port Blair
- B** The three principal accused were Shah Nawaz Khan, P.K. Sahgal, and Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon, symbolising Hindu-Muslim-Sikh unity
- C** The defence was led by Nehru alone; no other Congress leader participated
- D** All three accused were convicted and sentenced but later pardoned

 **B**

The three principal accused were Shah Nawaz Khan, P.K. Sahgal, and Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon, symbolising Hindu-Muslim-Sikh unity

The INA trials were held at the Red Fort in Delhi, not the Cellular Jail. The first court-martial commenced on November 5, 1945. The three principal accused were Shah Nawaz Khan (Muslim), Prem Kumar Sahgal -- also written P.K. Sahgal (Hindu), and Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon (Sikh) -- their communal composition was a deliberate symbolic choice. The defence was led by Bhulabhai Desai; the wider defence team also included Jawaharlal Nehru, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Asaf Ali, and K.N. Katju. All three were found guilty and sentenced to transportation for life, but Commander-in-Chief Claude Auchinleck ordered their release due to overwhelming public pressure -- the sentence was never formally pardoned but was remitted.

✦ General Claude Auchinleck privately assessed that Indian soldiers could no longer be reliably used against Indian nationalists after the INA trials -- a decisive factor in the British decision to leave India. The Royal Indian Navy Mutiny of February 1946 (78 ships, 20,000 sailors) followed and is seen as a direct consequence of the INA trials inspiring nationalist sentiment among the armed forces.

[Read Source →](#)

Q111

Which of the following correctly identifies the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY) and the eMigrate system?

- A** PBBY is an investment scheme; eMigrate is a portal for NRI property registration
- B** PBBY is a mandatory insurance scheme for workers going to ECR countries; eMigrate is an online emigration clearance system for workers to ECR countries
- C** PBBY is a skill development programme; eMigrate tracks remittance flows from Gulf countries
- D** PBBY provides housing loans to diaspora; eMigrate issues OCI cards online

PBBY is a mandatory insurance scheme for workers going to ECR countries; eMigrate is an online emigration clearance system for workers to ECR countries

PBBY (Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana), originally launched in 2003 and revised in 2017, is a mandatory insurance scheme for Indian workers travelling to ECR (Emigration Check Required) countries for employment. It provides Rs 10 lakh cover for accidental death or permanent disability, with an annual premium of Rs 275. Following the launch of the eMigrate portal in 2014, PBBY became mandatory for all ECR passport holders travelling for employment. The scheme covers 18 ECR countries, mostly in the Gulf and Southeast Asia.

✦ The kafala (sponsorship) system in Gulf countries ties a migrant worker's legal status to their employer, limiting rights and mobility. ECR (Emigration Check Required) passport holders are typically less-educated workers who need government clearance before going abroad for employment; ECNR (Emigration Check Not Required) holders are exempt. India's total remittances in 2024 were approximately \$129 billion -- the world's largest -- equal to roughly 3 percent of GDP. Gulf remittances from Indian workers total approximately \$40 billion per year.

[Read Source →](#)

Q112

The Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan (Accessible India Campaign) was launched in December 2015. Which of the following is NOT one of its three stated focus areas?

- A** Built environment accessibility (government buildings, public spaces)
- B** Transport accessibility (railways, airports, buses)
- C** ICT accessibility (government websites, digital infrastructure)
- D** Employment reservation enforcement for persons with disabilities

✓ D **Employment reservation enforcement for persons with disabilities**

The Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan was launched on December 3, 2015 -- the International Day of Persons with Disabilities -- by Prime Minister Modi. Its three focus areas are: built environment (government buildings, schools, hospitals, public spaces), transport (railways, airports, buses), and ICT (government websites, digital services). Employment reservation enforcement is governed separately under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016, which mandates 4 percent reservation in government jobs, and is not one of the three campaign pillars.

✦ International Day of Persons with Disabilities (December 3) has been observed since 1992 following a UNGA designation. India ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in October 2007. The RPwD Act 2016 replaced the Persons with Disabilities Act 1995 and expanded the list of recognised disabilities from 7 to 21. GIGW (Guidelines for Indian Government Websites) mandates WCAG 2.0 compliance for accessibility.

[Read Source →](#)

Q113

Consider the following statements about Swami Vivekananda and his educational philosophy: 1. Vivekananda delivered his famous Chicago address at the Parliament of World Religions in 1893. 2. The Ramakrishna Mission was founded on May 1, 1897. 3. Vivekananda was critical of colonial education for producing what he called machines for making clerks. 4. National Youth Day has been observed on January 12 since 1975. Which of the statements given above are correct?

A 1, 2, and 3 only

B 2, 3, and 4 only

C 1 and 3 only

D 1, 2, 3, and 4

✓ A 1, 2, and 3 only

Statement 4 is incorrect: the Government of India declared January 12 as National Youth Day in 1984, and it has been observed every year since 1985 -- not 1975. Statements 1, 2, and 3 are correct. Vivekananda addressed the Parliament of the World Religions in Chicago on September 11, 1893 ("Sisters and Brothers of America"). The Ramakrishna Mission was founded on May 1, 1897, in Belur. His critique of colonial education as producing clerks rather than self-reliant humans is extensively documented.

✦ The NEP 2020 is theoretically aligned with Vivekananda's holistic education vision emphasising character formation alongside knowledge. NIPUN Bharat (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy) targets foundational literacy and numeracy by Grade 3. The ASER report documents persistent learning outcome gaps in government schools despite rising enrolment.

[Read Source →](#)

Q114

Match List I (persons) with List II (their role or recognition in January 2025 context): List I: A. Dilma Rousseff B. Antonio Costa C. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus D. Christine Kangaloo List II: 1. Chief Guest at 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention (January 2025, Bhubaneswar); President of Trinidad and Tobago 2. Director-General of WHO; first African to hold the post; Ethiopia 3. European Council President since December 2024; former Prime Minister of Portugal 4. President of the New Development Bank since 2023; former President of Brazil

A A-4, B-3, C-2, D-1

B A-3, B-4, C-2, D-1

C A-4, B-2, C-3, D-1

D A-4, B-3, C-1, D-2

✓ A A-4, B-3, C-2, D-1

A-4: Dilma Rousseff became NDB President in March 2023 (former President of Brazil, 2011-2016; she was re-elected for a second term in March 2025). B-3: Antonio Costa was elected European Council President on June 27, 2024 and took office on December 1, 2024 (former Prime Minister of Portugal). C-2: Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has been WHO Director-General since July 2017 -- the first African to hold the post, from Ethiopia. D-1: Christine Kangaloo, President of Trinidad and Tobago, was Chief Guest at the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention held January 8-10, 2025 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

✦ Recognising heads of international organisations is a recurring UPSC Prelims requirement. Key distinction: European Council President (Costa) chairs EU heads-of-state summits; European Commission President (Ursula von der Leyen, second term from July 2024) heads the EU executive. The NDB (New Development Bank) was established by BRICS nations in 2014 and is headquartered in Shanghai.

[Read Source →](#)

Q115

The Imphal-Kohima campaign of 1944, in which the Indian National Army participated alongside Japanese forces, resulted in which outcome?

- A** A military victory that allowed the INA to briefly occupy parts of northeast India and hoist the Tricolour at Kohima
- B** One of the largest defeats suffered by Japanese-aligned forces in World War II, ending the INA's hope of entering India militarily
- C** A stalemate that led to ceasefire negotiations and Bose's departure for Germany
- D** A partial success that allowed the INA to hold Imphal for three months before retreating

✓ B

One of the largest defeats suffered by Japanese-aligned forces in World War II, ending the INA's hope of entering India militarily

Operation U-Go (March to July 1944) ended in catastrophic defeat for the Japanese and INA. Of the approximately 85,000 Japanese troops who crossed the Chindwin River, only about 20,000 remained standing; the rest were killed or died of starvation, disease, and exhaustion during the retreat. The battles of Imphal and Kohima constituted the largest defeat in Japanese Army history up to that point in the war. The INA never succeeded in entering India in force. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose died in a plane crash in Taiwan on August 18, 1945 -- not in Germany.

✦ Despite military failure, the INA's political impact was enormous. The Red Fort trials (November 1945 to May 1946) turned INA officers into national heroes. The symbolism of Shah Nawaz Khan (Muslim), Prem Kumar Sahgal (Hindu), and Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon (Sikh) standing trial together resonated deeply in pre-partition India. Bhulabhai Desai led the defence; Nehru also appeared as part of the wider defence team.

[Read Source →](#)

Q116

Which of the following statements about the Republic Day chief guest tradition is correct?

- A** The first Republic Day chief guest in 1950 was Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom
- B** Barack Obama was the first US President to attend as Republic Day chief guest, in 2015
- C** Emmanuel Macron attended as chief guest in 2023
- D** The EU was the first collective entity invited as chief guest, in 2024



Barack Obama was the first US President to attend as Republic Day chief guest, in 2015

Barack Obama was the first sitting US President to be invited as India's Republic Day chief guest; he attended on January 26, 2015 (66th Republic Day). The first Republic Day chief guest in 1950 was Indonesian President Sukarno -- not Queen Elizabeth II. Emmanuel Macron attended as chief guest in 2024 (75th Republic Day, January 26, 2024) -- not 2023. The EU leaders were the collective chief guest in 2026 -- not 2024.

 Republic Day chief guest selection is a diplomatic signal of the bilateral relationship India wishes to honour most prominently that year. The EU invitation in 2026 coincided with the conclusion of India-EU Broad-Based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) negotiations, which had begun in 2007. Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto attended as chief guest for the 76th Republic Day in 2025, repeating the 1950 precedent set by Sukarno.

[Read Source →](#)

Q117

With reference to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, consider the following statements: 1. Bose was elected Congress President at the Haripura session in 1938 and re-elected at the Tripuri session in 1939. 2. He defeated Rabindranath Tagore in the 1939 Tripuri election for Congress presidency. 3. Parakram Diwas was officially declared on January 23 and first observed in 2021. 4. Bose met Adolf Hitler in 1942 to seek German support for Indian independence. Which of the statements given above are correct?

A 1, 3, and 4 only

B 2 and 3 only

C 1, 2, and 4 only

D 1, 2, 3, and 4

✓ A 1, 3, and 4 only

Statement 2 is incorrect: Bose defeated Pattabhi Sitaramayya (Gandhi's preferred candidate) in the 1939 Tripuri election -- not Rabindranath Tagore. The result declared on January 29, 1939 was 1,580 votes for Bose vs 1,377 for Sitaramayya. Statements 1, 3, and 4 are correct: Haripura (1938) and Tripuri (1939) presidencies are confirmed; Parakram Diwas was first observed on January 23, 2021; and Bose met Hitler on May 29, 1942 at the Reich Chancellery in Berlin.

✦ Bose escaped from house arrest in Calcutta on January 16-17, 1941 (the Great Escape) and travelled through Afghanistan and the Soviet Union to reach Germany. He resigned from the ICS in 1921 to join the independence movement, having topped the ICS examination in 1920. After leaving Germany, he travelled by submarine to Southeast Asia and assumed command of the INA in Singapore in July 1943.

[Read Source →](#)

Q118

The Menstrual Hygiene Scheme in India was launched in which year and by which ministry?

A 2015, Ministry of Women and Child Development

B 2011, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

C 2009, Ministry of Education

D 2014, Ministry of Jal Shakti

✓ B 2011, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

The Scheme for Promotion of Menstrual Hygiene was launched in 2011 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. It was initially implemented in 107 selected districts across 17 states, providing a pack of six sanitary napkins branded "Freedays" to rural adolescent girls aged 10-19 for Rs 6. Distribution is carried out through ASHAs (Accredited Social Health Activists), who receive an incentive of Rs 1 per pack sold. The scheme operates under the National Health Mission (NHM) framework.

✦ The Supreme Court ruling in *Dr. Jaya Thakur vs Government of India* (2026) elevated menstrual health access from a welfare entitlement to a constitutional obligation under Article 21 (right to life and dignity). UDISE+ (Unified District Information System for Education Plus) data shows approximately 70 percent of government schools have functional gender-segregated toilets. Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan is the umbrella school education programme that funds school sanitation infrastructure.

[Read Source →](#)

Q119

Consider the following statements about the Sangeet Natak Akademi: 1. It was established in 1952 as an autonomous body under the Ministry of Culture. 2. Its highest honour is called the Akademi Ratna Sadasyata (Akademi Fellow). 3. It covers music, dance, and drama but not folk and tribal arts. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 1 and 2 only

C 2 and 3 only

D 1, 2, and 3

✓ B 1 and 2 only

Statements 1 and 2 are correct. The Sangeet Natak Akademi was set up by the Indian education ministry on May 31, 1952 and is now an autonomous body under the Ministry of Culture. Its highest honour is the Akademi Ratna Sadasyata (commonly called the Akademi Fellowship or Akademi Fellow), restricted to 40 living individuals at any time; recipients receive Rs 3 lakh, an Angavastram, and a Tamrapatra. Statement 3 is incorrect: the Akademi's mandate covers music, dance, drama, folk, and tribal performing arts -- not just classical forms.

✦ India has three national akademis: Sangeet Natak Akademi (performing arts, 1952), Sahitya Akademi (literature, 1954), and Lalit Kala Akademi (visual arts, 1954). The Sangeet Natak Akademi also administers the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar (instituted 2006) for young artists up to age 40. The Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) documents traditional medicinal and cultural knowledge to prevent biopiracy -- relevant to the protection of tribal performing arts traditions.

[Read Source →](#)

Q120

With reference to Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, match the following landmark cases with the right they recognised: List I (Case): A. Maneka Gandhi vs Union of India (1978) B. PUCL vs Union of India (2001) C. K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India (2017) D. Dr. Jaya Thakur vs Government of India (2026) List II (Right recognised under Article 21): 1. Right to menstrual health 2. Right to privacy 3. Right to food 4. Right to fair, just, and reasonable procedure (not merely formal)

A A-4, B-3, C-2, D-1

B A-3, B-4, C-1, D-2

C A-4, B-2, C-3, D-1

D A-2, B-3, C-4, D-1

✓ A A-4, B-3, C-2, D-1

A-4: Maneka Gandhi vs Union of India (1978) -- the Supreme Court held that procedure under Article 21 must be fair, just, and reasonable, not merely formally prescribed; it also established the golden triangle connecting Articles 14, 19, and 21. B-3: PUCL vs Union of India (2001) -- the right to food was derived from the right to life; this case directly led to the mid-day meal scheme being constitutionally directed. C-2: K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India (2017) -- a nine-judge bench unanimously declared the right to privacy a fundamental right under Articles 21 and 19. D-1: Dr. Jaya Thakur vs Government of India (2026) -- right to menstrual health as part of the right to life and dignity.

✦ The expansion of Article 21 through judicial interpretation is one of UPSC's most tested constitutional law topics. Other key cases: Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samity (1996) -- right to health and emergency medical care; Francis Coralie Mullin (1981) -- right to live with human dignity; Olga Tellis vs Bombay Municipal Corporation (1985) -- right to livelihood as part of right to life.

[Read Source →](#)

Q121

Which of the following is an incorrect description of a recent Indian diaspora-related scheme or fact as of January 2026?

- A** The PBD Samman Award is the highest honour for overseas Indians, presented by the President of India at the PBD convention
- B** India has the world's largest diaspora by absolute numbers, at approximately 3.2 crore people
- C** The Know India Programme (KIP) is an approximately three-week programme for Persons of Indian Origin youth between the ages of 21 and 35
- D** The first Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was held in 2005 and became biennial from 2015



The first Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was held in 2005 and became biennial from 2015

Option D contains two errors: the first Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was held on January 9, 2003 (not 2005), organised under PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The biennial format since 2015 is correct. The other three options are accurate: PBD Samman Award is presented by the President; India has approximately 3.2-3.5 crore overseas Indians (world's largest diaspora); KIP is an approximately 21-day programme for Persons of Indian Origin youth aged 21-35 (NRIs are not eligible; PIOs from Giritiya countries get preference).

✦ January 9 was chosen for PBD because it marks the anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's return to India from South Africa on January 9, 1915. The 18th PBD Convention was held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, January 8-10, 2025, with Christine Kangaloo, President of Trinidad and Tobago, as Chief Guest. Top remittance source countries for India: UAE (approximately \$13 billion), USA (approximately \$10 billion), Saudi Arabia (approximately \$9 billion) annually.

[Read Source →](#)

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

 [linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

 [Read Full Article on Ujyari](#) →

<https://ujyari.com/monthly/2026/january/prelims/>

Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs · ujyari.com