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DAILY QUIZ — SOLVED

Daily Quiz — May 18, 2026

18 May 2026



CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

linkedin.com/in/epicbharat

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DAILY QUIZ — SOLVED ANSWER KEY

Daily Quiz — May 18, 2026

18 May 2026 · 30 Questions · Answers & Explanations Included

Question 1

of 30

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The constitutional ceiling on the size of a State Council of Ministers — "the total number of Ministers, including the Chief Minister, shall not exceed fifteen per cent of the total number of members of the Legislative Assembly" — was inserted by which constitutional amendment?

- A 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002
- B 91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003 ✓
- C 93rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2005
- D 97th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2011

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

 **EXPLANATION**

FACT: The 91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003 inserted Article 164(1A), capping the Council of Ministers (including CM) at 15% of Legislative Assembly strength, with a floor of 12 ministers in any state. Kerala's 140-seat assembly gives a ceiling of 21 (15% of 140), which VD Satheesan's cabinet exactly hits with CM + 20 ministers.

ANALYSIS: The 86th CA relates to elementary education; the 93rd to reservations in private unaided institutions; the 97th to cooperative societies.






 **CONCEPT NOTE**

The 91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003 was enacted to end the proliferation of bloated "coalition appeasement" cabinets — Jharkhand had briefly maintained a cabinet exceeding 80 ministers. The amendment simultaneously tightened the Tenth Schedule (anti-defection law) by requiring that any minister who defects must vacate their seat.

Article 164(1A) applies to all state legislatures; the Lok Sabha's council of ministers is separately capped at 15% of Lok Sabha strength under Article 75(1A), inserted by the same amendment. The minimum floor of 12 ensures that small UTs or hill states with low House strength are not forced into impossibly small cabinets.

Kerala's Satheesan cabinet (May 2026) is at the exact 21-member ceiling — there is no room for future expansion without a resignation or reshuffle. This is a classic GS2 Prelims angle: amendment number, year, Article inserted, and the floor/ceiling numbers.

Q1  **CONCEPT KIT**

 CROSS-PAPER	GS2 (Article 164, 91st CA, Council of Ministers, Tenth Schedule, collective responsibility).
 MAINS KEYWORDS	Article 164(1A), 91st Constitutional Amendment 2003, 15% ceiling, bloated cabinets, collective responsibility.
 COMMON MISTAKE	Confusing 91st CA (Council of Ministers ceiling) with 86th CA (elementary education/RTE) — both are early-2000s amendments and appear as distractors for each other.
 EXAM TIP	91st CA = Art 164(1A) state + Art 75(1A) centre — same 15% rule applied to both tiers simultaneously. Floor = 12 in any state.
 INTERVIEW	Has the 91st Amendment succeeded in reducing patronage politics, or have CMs found alternative ways — advisory boards, parliamentary secretaries — to distribute political rewards outside the cabinet ceiling?

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Question 2

of 30

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With reference to Kerala's Council of Ministers formed in May 2026, which of the following statements is correct?

- A The cabinet of 21 (CM + 20 ministers) is within the constitutional ceiling, as 15% of Kerala's 140-seat assembly is 22.
- B **The cabinet of 21 (CM + 20 ministers) is exactly at the constitutional ceiling, as 15% of Kerala's 140-seat assembly works out to 21. ✓**
- C The cabinet of 21 exceeds the constitutional ceiling — the limit for a 140-seat assembly is 18 ministers including CM.
- D The cabinet size is decided by the Governor and is not bound by a constitutional ceiling in states with fewer than 150 seats.

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

 **EXPLANATION**

FACT: 15% of 140 = 21. The Satheesan cabinet (CM + 20 ministers = 21 total) is exactly at the constitutional ceiling under Article 164(1A).

Option A is wrong because 15% of 140 is 21, not 22. Option C is wrong — 18 is not the ceiling for a 140-seat house.

Option D is wrong — Article 164(1A) applies to all states uniformly; the Governor has no discretion over the numerical ceiling. **ANALYSIS:** Being at the exact ceiling has governance implications — no future expansion is possible without a resignation first.






 **CONCEPT NOTE**

The calculation 15% of 140 = 21 is simple but test-worthy. For Lok Sabha (543 seats), 15% = 81.45, rounded down to 81 ministers including the PM — India's Union Cabinet is currently close to but typically below this number.

For comparison: Maharashtra (288 seats) ceiling = 43; UP (403 seats) ceiling = 60; Goa (40 seats) ceiling = the floor, 12 (since 15% of 40 = 6, below the minimum). VD Satheesan's decision to fill all 21 berths at the swearing-in — rather than expanding later — is historically significant because the full simultaneous oath was the standard in earlier decades of Indian democracy.

It signals coalition discipline: all UDF partner party portfolio demands were settled before the ceremony. The IUML, UDF's second-largest constituent, received 5 of 21 berths (~24% of cabinet) reflecting its 22-seat contribution to UDF's 102-seat total.

Q2  **CONCEPT KIT**

 CROSS-PAPER	GS2 (Article 164(1A), cabinet arithmetic, coalition government, Governor's constitutional role).
 MAINS KEYWORDS	Cabinet ceiling, 15% rule, coalition arithmetic, Article 164(1A), simultaneous oath.
 COMMON MISTAKE	Applying 15% to seats won by the ruling party rather than the total House strength — the ceiling is 15% of total assembly seats, regardless of how many seats the ruling alliance holds.
 EXAM TIP	Always multiply total House strength by 15% to get the ceiling; if that number falls below 12, the floor of 12 applies.
 INTERVIEW	Should the Constitution fix the cabinet size as a fraction of the ruling majority rather than total House strength — would that prevent both bloated and disproportionately small cabinets?

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Question 3

of 30

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Article 164(1) of the Constitution provides that the Chief Minister shall be appointed by the Governor and that other ministers shall be appointed by the Governor on whose advice?

- A On the advice of the Council of Ministers collectively
- B On the advice of the Chief Minister ✓
- C On the advice of the Speaker of the State Legislative Assembly
- D On the advice of the President of India, acting through the Governor

ANSWER & ANALYSIS
✓ EXPLANATION

FACT: Article 164(1) states that the Chief Minister shall be appointed by the Governor; other ministers shall be appointed by the Governor "on the advice of the Chief Minister." This establishes the PM/CM's exclusive authority over cabinet formation — the Governor acts on advice, not independently. The Speaker has no role in cabinet formation.

The President has no direct role in state cabinet formation. **ANALYSIS:** This provision operationalises collective responsibility (Article 164(2)) — the CM is accountable for the entire cabinet to the legislature.

📌 CONCEPT NOTE

Article 164 in full: (1) CM appointed by Governor; other ministers appointed on CM's advice — Governor administers oath. (1A) 15% ceiling. (2) Collective responsibility of CoM to Legislative Assembly. (3) Oath before assuming office — Articles 164(3) and 75(3) for Centre. The Governor's role in appointing the CM is conventionally bound by the principle that the leader of the majority (or largest pre-poll alliance) is invited.

The Governor cannot independently choose a minister — the CM holds the exclusive right of cabinet recommendation. This is a critical constitutional safeguard: it locates the democratic mandate in the elected CM, not in the appointed Governor. Compare with Article 75(1): the Prime Minister shall be appointed by the President; other ministers shall be appointed by the President on the advice of the PM. The parallel structure is intentional.

Q3
 **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (Article 164, Governor's role, cabinet formation, collective responsibility, Article 75 parallel).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

Article 164(1), CM's advice, Governor's discretion, collective responsibility, oath of office.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Thinking the Governor independently selects ministers — Article 164(1) is unambiguous that non-CM ministers are appointed solely on the CM's advice, making the Governor's role ceremonial in cabinet formation.

 **EXAM TIP**

Article 164(1) mirrors Article 75(1) exactly — CM:Governor :: PM:President.
In both cases, the head of state acts on the head of government's advice for cabinet appointments.

 **INTERVIEW**

If a Governor believes a minister is unsuitable on grounds of corruption, does Article 164(1) allow the Governor to refuse to administer the oath?

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Question 4

of 30

[Source →](#)

VD Satheesan's constituency (Paravur), from which he was elected to the Kerala Legislative Assembly, is located in which district?

- A Thrissur
- B Kozhikode
- C Ernakulam ✓
- D Malappuram

ANSWER & ANALYSIS
✓ EXPLANATION

VD Satheesan (full name: Vadasseri Damodaran Satheesan) represents the Paravur constituency in Ernakulam district of Kerala. Ernakulam (Kochi) is in central Kerala and is the commercial capital of the state.

Satheesan was the Leader of the Opposition in the 14th Kerala Legislative Assembly before becoming CM.

Constituency-district mapping is a standard Prelims-level factual hook tested for leaders in news.

📖 CONCEPT NOTE

Ernakulam district is Kerala's most urbanised district, home to Kochi (the commercial capital). The Paravur constituency (not to be confused with Paravur in Kollam district — there are two constituencies with similar names in Kerala) is a coastal constituency.

VD Satheesan's background as a senior Congress lawyer with strong organisational skills made him the natural choice as Leader of the Opposition under the Pinarayi Vijayan government, a role he used to build his national profile. His full name "Vadasseri Damodaran Satheesan" follows the Kerala convention of using the ancestral home (tharavad) name as a prefix. He is now the 13th Chief Minister of Kerala — the 13th distinct person to hold the post, sworn in on May 18, 2026.

Q4  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (state governance, political geography of Kerala, coalition dynamics); GS1 (Kerala's regional culture and social development model).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

VD Satheesan, Kerala 13th CM, Paravur constituency, Ernakulam, UDF, Leader of Opposition.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Confusing Paravur (Ernakulam) with Peravoor (Kannur) — different constituencies, different districts. The factcheck error here is a classic exam trap.

 **EXAM TIP**

Satheesan = Paravur = Ernakulam. Central Kerala, coastal, commercial belt.

 **INTERVIEW**

Does Kerala's tradition of producing strong opposition leaders (Satheesan, Oommen Chandy) indicate a healthier democratic culture compared to states with perpetual single-party dominance?

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Question 5

of 30

[Source →](#)

The Royal Order of the Polar Star conferred on PM Modi during his Sweden visit in May 2026 was founded by which Swedish monarch, and in which year?

- A King Charles XII; 1718
- B King Frederick I; 1748 ✓
- C King Gustav III; 1772
- D King Oscar II; 1872

ANSWER & ANALYSIS
✓ EXPLANATION

FACT: The Royal Order of the Polar Star (Kungliga Nordstjärneorden) was founded in 1748 by King Frederick I of Sweden. Modi was conferred the Commander Grand Cross class — the highest class — making it his 31st global honour as Prime Minister.

The order's emblem is an eight-pointed star with the Polar Star (North Star) symbolising constancy. **ANALYSIS:** King Charles XII died in 1718; King Gustav III founded orders in the 1770s; King Oscar II reigned 1872–1907 — all plausible distractors.

📌 CONCEPT NOTE

The Royal Order of the Polar Star is Sweden's oldest state order, originally awarded for services to Sweden in sciences, literature, and the arts — later expanded to diplomatic and state honours. Sweden's Nobel connection is also relevant here: the Swedish Academy (founded 1786) awards the Nobel Prize in Literature; the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences awards the Nobel Prizes in Physics, Chemistry, and Economics; the Nobel Foundation (Stockholm) administers the prizes. Rabindranath Tagore received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913 — awarded by the Swedish Academy — establishing a historic India-Sweden cultural connection that PM Modi's "Tagore-Sweden Lecture Series" (announced May 2026) explicitly draws upon. Modi's 31st global honour tracker is a standard Prelims fact.

The India-Sweden Joint Action Plan 2026–2030 has four pillars, with the order conferred alongside the announcement of the JAP.

Q5  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (India's bilateral honours, soft power diplomacy, India-Sweden Strategic Partnership); GS1 (Nobel Prize history — Tagore 1913).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

Royal Order of the Polar Star, India-Sweden Strategic Partnership, Joint Action Plan 2026–2030, Tagore-Sweden Lecture Series, soft power.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Confusing the founding monarch — King Frederick I (1748) is the correct answer; King Charles XII is from the same era but died in 1718 before the order was created.

 **EXAM TIP**

Polar Star Order = 1748 = Frederick I = Sweden's oldest state order = Commander Grand Cross (highest class) given to Modi.
Five facts in one sentence.

 **INTERVIEW**

As India accumulates state honours from dozens of countries, does the conferment of foreign orders on the PM translate into tangible diplomatic outcomes, or is it primarily symbolic?

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Question 6

of 30

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With reference to India-Sweden bilateral relations as of May 2026, consider the following statements:

- 1 Sweden joined NATO in March 2024, ending more than 200 years of Swedish military neutrality.
- 2 The India-Sweden Joint Action Plan 2026–2030 is structured around five pillars.
- 3 India-Sweden bilateral trade is approximately USD 3 billion — acknowledged as below potential.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 and 2 only

B 1 and 3 only ✓

C 2 and 3 only

D 1, 2 and 3

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

EXPLANATION

FACT: Statement 1 is correct — Sweden joined NATO on March 7, 2024, ending over 200 years of neutrality/non-alignment dating to the Napoleonic Wars. Statement 2 is incorrect — the Joint Action Plan 2026–2030 has **FOUR** pillars (Strategic Dialogue; Next-Generation Economic Partnership; Emerging Technologies and Trusted Connectivity; Shaping Tomorrow Together).

Statement 3 is correct — bilateral trade is approximately USD 3 billion with both sides acknowledging it is well below potential, targeting doubling within 5 years. **ANALYSIS:** The four-pillar structure is the most commonly tested element of the JAP.

CONCEPT NOTE

Sweden's NATO accession on March 7, 2024 was contested for over two years — Turkey objected to Sweden's perceived support for Kurdish groups linked to the PKK, and Hungary delayed ratification for domestic political reasons. The accession ended a strategic posture that Sweden had maintained since the Congress of Vienna (1815), when Sweden adopted a policy of non-involvement in European conflicts.

The four pillars of the India-Sweden JAP 2026–2030: (1) Strategic Dialogue for Stability and Security — defence, cyber, counter-terrorism, multilateral; (2) Next-Generation Economic Partnership — trade doubling, investment; (3) Emerging Technologies and Trusted Connectivity — AI, 6G, quantum, critical minerals, space, life sciences; (4) Shaping Tomorrow Together — People, Planet and Resilience — climate, circular economy, people-to-people ties. Pillar 3's phrase "trusted connectivity" aligns with G7 "friend-shoring" language — deliberate vocabulary of supply chain security among allied democracies.

Q6  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (India-Sweden bilateral, India-EU relations, NATO membership implications, technology diplomacy); GS3 (6G, critical minerals, friend-shoring supply chains).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

India-Sweden Strategic Partnership, Joint Action Plan 2026–2030, NATO accession, trusted connectivity, friend-shoring, India-EU FTA.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Stating the JAP has five pillars — it has FOUR. This is the most common error on this topic. Statement-based questions deliberately add the wrong pillar count.

 **EXAM TIP**

Four JAP pillars = Strategic + Economic + Technology + Planet/People.
 NATO entry = March 7, 2024. Trade = ~USD 3 billion.
 India-EU FTA concluded January 27, 2026.

 **INTERVIEW**

How does Sweden's NATO membership change the strategic calculus for India-Sweden defence technology cooperation, given India's doctrine of strategic autonomy?

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Question 7

of 30

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The India-EU Free Trade Agreement — the conclusion of which forms the backdrop for Modi's May 2026 European tour — was formally concluded on which date, after negotiations that had been launched in 2007, stalled in 2013, and relaunched in 2022?

- A March 15, 2025
- B **January 27, 2026** ✓
- C April 2, 2026
- D February 18, 2025

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

 **EXPLANATION**

FACT: The India-EU Free Trade Agreement was concluded on January 27, 2026 after a tortuous negotiation history: launched 2007, stalled 2013 (over intellectual property rights, data security, and market access disagreements), relaunched 2022, and concluded in January 2026. Modi's May 2026 European tour — covering Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, and Italy — is directly linked to consolidating bilateral relationships with EU member states and EFTA partners in the post-FTA environment.

ANALYSIS: The FTA's conclusion makes bilateral technology partnerships with EU member states (like Sweden) more tractable — regulatory harmonisation reduces barriers to S&T collaboration.

 **CONCEPT NOTE**

The India-EU FTA covers goods, services, and investment but is supplemented by a separate India-EU Investment Agreement (bilateral investment protection) that EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called the "missing piece" still under negotiation as of May 2026. India-EU trade in 2024: approximately USD 130 billion (goods + services combined), making the EU India's largest trading bloc.

EU cumulative FDI in India: ~EUR 87 billion (2000–2024). The FTA's conclusion after 19 years of fitful negotiations signals the maturation of India-EU strategic trust — the earlier deadlock was driven by India's resistance to EU demands on intellectual property (data exclusivity for pharmaceuticals) and the EU's resistance to India's demands on Mode 4 (movement of natural persons — IT professionals).

The resolution involved both sides making calibrated concessions on these sensitive areas.

Q7  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (India-EU relations, FTA structure, WTO compatibility, strategic partnership); GS3 (trade policy, FTA vs unilateral tariff reduction, intellectual property in trade).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

India-EU FTA, January 27 2026, Mode 4, intellectual property, bilateral investment agreement, EU Commission, India-EU Strategic Partnership 2004.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Confusing the India-EU FTA (concluded January 27, 2026) with the India-EFTA TEPA (in force October 2025) — these are two separate agreements with different counterparty groups. EFTA ≠ EU.

 **EXAM TIP**

India-EU FTA = concluded January 27, 2026; India-EFTA TEPA = in force October 2025.
 EU = 27 countries including France, Germany, Sweden. EFTA = 4 countries: Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein.

 **INTERVIEW**

Given that India's pharmaceutical sector gains from Mode 4 (IT services) while fearing data exclusivity demands, who are the real domestic winners and losers from the India-EU FTA?

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Question 8

of 30

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Which of the following correctly describes the India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) that entered into force in October 2025?

- A It commits EFTA member states to invest USD 50 billion in India over 10 years and create 500,000 direct jobs.
- B It commits EFTA member states to invest USD 100 billion in India over 15 years and create 1 million direct jobs — the first binding investment commitment in any Indian FTA. ✓
- C It is a goods-only agreement covering tariff elimination on 80% of trade lines, with services excluded pending a separate negotiation.
- D It is a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding; the binding investment commitment is in a separate side letter signed only by Norway and Switzerland.

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

 **EXPLANATION**

FACT: The India-EFTA TEPA (in force October 2025, negotiations concluded January 2024 after ~16 years) commits EFTA member states to facilitate USD 100 billion in investment in India over 15 years and create 1 million direct jobs. This binding investment target is historically unprecedented in any Indian FTA — no prior Indian trade agreement has included a quantified, binding investment commitment.

ANALYSIS: Option A understates both the investment amount and timeframe. Option C is wrong — TEPA covers goods, services, investment, and intellectual property.

 **CONCEPT NOTE**

The EFTA four members — Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein — are not EU members but have bilateral free trade agreements with most countries and participate in the European Economic Area (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein) or via bilateral treaties (Switzerland). EFTA was founded in 1960 as an alternative trading bloc to what became the European Community.

For India, Switzerland is the most significant EFTA partner (pharmaceuticals — Novartis, Roche; financial services; watches; Nestlé, ABB). Norway brings the GPFG sovereign wealth fund (USD 1.7 trillion) and maritime/energy expertise. Iceland brings geothermal energy and Arctic research capacity. The USD 100 billion commitment is spread across 15 years (~USD 6–7 billion/year), which, while ambitious, is achievable given EFTA firms' existing India exposure. The TEPA is being watched as a potential template for the India-EU Investment Agreement negotiations.

Q8  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (India-EFTA TEPA, trade agreements, EFTA vs EU, foreign investment policy); GS3 (FDI, investment facilitation, employment generation from trade).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

India-EFTA TEPA, USD 100 billion, 1 million jobs, binding investment commitment, EFTA members, trade and economic partnership.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Confusing EFTA (non-EU: Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein) with the EU. In UPSC contexts, "European" FTAs often get conflated — TEPA is with EFTA, not the EU; the India-EU FTA is separate.

 **EXAM TIP**

TEPA = in force October 2025; USD 100 bn / 15 years / 1 million jobs — three numbers to memorise. EFTA = 4 members (not EU). Concluded January 2024 after 16-year negotiation.

 **INTERVIEW**

A binding investment commitment is novel in Indian FTA history — what enforcement mechanism exists if EFTA firms collectively fall short of the USD 100 billion target?

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Question 9

of 30

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India's Arctic research station Himadri is located at Ny-Ålesund in the Svalbard archipelago. Svalbard is a territory of which country, and when did India establish the Himadri station?

- A Russia; 2012
- B Norway; 2008 ✓
- C Denmark (Greenland); 2010
- D Iceland; 2005

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

✓ EXPLANATION

FACT: Svalbard is a Norwegian archipelago in the High Arctic, governed under the 1920 Svalbard Treaty. India's Himadri station at Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard was established in 2008, making it India's first Arctic research station. India became an observer to the Arctic Council in 2013. **ANALYSIS:** Russia has its own Svalbard presence (Barentsburg), but Svalbard itself is Norwegian sovereign territory. Denmark's Arctic territory is Greenland (self-governing; not technically under Danish sovereignty after 1979 home rule). Iceland is a separate Arctic nation, not Svalbard.

📌 CONCEPT NOTE

The 1920 Svalbard Treaty (also called the Spitsbergen Treaty) grants Norway sovereignty over Svalbard while allowing signatory nations' citizens to engage in commercial activities. India is not a party to the Svalbard Treaty but operates Himadri under Norway's governance framework.

Ny-Ålesund is an international research community on Svalbard — several nations (Germany, UK, China, India, South Korea, Japan) have research stations there. India's Arctic Policy (2022) has six pillars: science/research, climate/environment, economic/human development, transport/connectivity, governance/international cooperation, national capacity building.

The Arctic is strategically relevant for India because: (a) glacial melt at the poles affects Indian monsoon patterns; (b) the Northern Sea Route (NSR) could cut Mumbai-Hamburg shipping distance by approximately 7,000 km; (c) Arctic holds ~30% of the world's undiscovered natural gas. India has been an Arctic Council observer since 2013.

Q9
 **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS1 (Arctic geography, climate science); GS2 (Arctic Council, India's observer status, Arctic Policy 2022, India-Norway relations); GS3 (Northern Sea Route, energy security, Arctic resources).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

Himadri station, Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard, Norway, Arctic Council observer 2013, India's Arctic Policy 2022, Northern Sea Route.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Placing Svalbard under Russian control — Russia has a settlement (Barentsburg) on Svalbard but the archipelago is Norwegian sovereign territory under the 1920 Svalbard Treaty.

 **EXAM TIP**

Himadri = 2008 = Ny-Ålesund = Svalbard = Norway.
 India observer at Arctic Council since 2013. Arctic Policy = 2022.
 Three dates to link.

 **INTERVIEW**

As Arctic sea ice melts and the Northern Sea Route becomes commercially viable, what strategic investments should India make to secure its maritime and resource interests in the region?

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Question 10

of 30

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The 3rd India-Nordic Summit held in Oslo in May 2026 was hosted in Norway. Where were the 1st and 2nd India-Nordic Summits held, respectively?

- A Helsinki (2018) and Reykjavik (2022)
- B Stockholm (2018) and Copenhagen (2022) ✓
- C Oslo (2018) and Copenhagen (2022)
- D Copenhagen (2018) and Stockholm (2022)

ANSWER & ANALYSIS
✓ EXPLANATION

FACT: The 1st India-Nordic Summit was held in Stockholm, Sweden in 2018; the 2nd was in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2022; the 3rd in Oslo, Norway in 2026. The format gathers five Nordic leaders (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland) alongside PM Modi in a single multilateral dialogue.

ANALYSIS: Helsinki (Finland) and Reykjavik (Iceland) have not yet hosted a summit; rotating among the five Nordic capitals is the implied pattern.

📌 CONCEPT NOTE

The India-Nordic Summit format is unique in India's diplomatic architecture — it is the only format where India engages five European nations simultaneously as a distinct regional bloc. All five Nordic countries are among the world's top performers on Human Development Index, Global Innovation Index, and Rule of Law Index — making this a values-aligned partnership.

PM Modi's May 2026 Oslo visit was the first by an Indian PM in 43 years (since Indira Gandhi in 1983). Key 3rd Summit themes: climate and clean energy, digital public goods (India Stack as a global model), Arctic governance, and circular economy.

The Nordic countries' combined GDP is approximately USD 1.6–1.7 trillion (roughly equivalent to India's annual GDP), and their combined sovereign and institutional investment capacity (especially Norway's GPF at USD 1.7 trillion) makes them significant financial partners.

Q10  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (India-Nordic relations, multilateral diplomacy, Nordic countries' strategic profiles); GS3 (circular economy, green technology, digital public goods).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

India-Nordic Summit, Stockholm 2018, Copenhagen 2022, Oslo 2026, Nordic HDI, digital public goods, Arctic governance.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Confusing the cities — Stockholm is Sweden's capital, Copenhagen is Denmark's capital, Oslo is Norway's, Helsinki is Finland's, Reykjavik is Iceland's. The summit has rotated among three of the five capitals (Stockholm → Copenhagen → Oslo).

 **EXAM TIP**

India-Nordic Summit pattern: 2018 Stockholm, 2022 Copenhagen, 2026 Oslo — three years and three Scandinavian capitals. The format started under Modi.

 **INTERVIEW**

Should India formalise the India-Nordic Summit into a treaty-based institutionalised forum, or does its current flexible format serve India's interests better?

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Question 11

of 30

[Source →](#)

Norway's Government Pension Fund Global (GPF) — the world's largest sovereign wealth fund at approximately USD 1.7 trillion — is managed by which institution, and what is its approximate exposure to Indian capital markets?

- A Norwegian Ministry of Finance; USD 10 billion
- B Norges Bank Investment Management (NBIM); USD 28 billion ✓**
- C Statens pensjonsfond; USD 45 billion
- D Nordic Investment Bank (NIB); USD 15 billion

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

 **EXPLANATION**

FACT: Norway's GPF is managed by Norges Bank Investment Management (NBIM), the investment management division of Norway's central bank (Norges Bank). GPF's exposure to Indian capital markets (listed equities and bonds) is approximately USD 28 billion as of 2024.

ANALYSIS: The Ministry of Finance sets the fund's mandate and ethical guidelines but does not manage investments directly. Statens pensjonsfond is the fund's Norwegian name, not the managing institution.

The Nordic Investment Bank is a separate multilateral development bank — it does not manage the GPF.

 **CONCEPT NOTE**

The GPF — also called Norway's "Oil Fund" — was established in 1990 to invest the surplus revenues from Norway's oil and gas sector, preventing Dutch Disease (the hollowing out of a non-resource economy when resource revenues cause currency appreciation). It owns approximately 1.5% of all listed shares globally — making it the world's single largest minority shareholder in thousands of companies.

Its India exposure of ~USD 28 billion grows automatically as India's weight in the MSCI Emerging Markets Index increases. The GPF's ethical exclusion list (managed by the Council on Ethics) excludes companies involved in tobacco, nuclear weapons, cluster munitions, and severe environmental or human rights violations.

Several Indian companies have been on the exclusion list. The GPF is cited globally as the gold standard for sovereign wealth fund governance: full transparency (quarterly public disclosure of all holdings), independent ethical oversight, and a clear separation between fund management and political decision-making.

Q11  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (sovereign wealth funds, Norway-India relations, global capital flows); GS3 (SWF governance, patient capital, Dutch Disease, MSCI indices, ESG investment).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

GPFG, NBIM, sovereign wealth fund, USD 1.7 trillion, USD 28 billion India exposure, ethical exclusion, Dutch Disease, Oil Fund.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Confusing NBIM (manages the fund) with Norges Bank (Norway's central bank, of which NBIM is a division) — both are correct but NBIM is the more precise answer for "who manages the GPFG."

 **EXAM TIP**

GPFG = Oil Fund = world's largest SWF = USD 1.7 trillion = managed by NBIM (part of Norges Bank) = ~1.5% of all global listed shares = ~USD 28 billion in India.

 **INTERVIEW**

Should India establish its own sovereign wealth fund from its foreign exchange reserves, and if so, what governance model — Norway's GPFG, Singapore's GIC, or Abu Dhabi's ADIA — would best suit India's macroeconomic context?

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Question 12

of 30

[Source →](#)

International Museum Day (IMD) is observed annually on May 18. It was established by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in which year?

A 1972

B 1977 ✓

C 1984

D 1946

ANSWER & ANALYSIS
✓ EXPLANATION

FACT: International Museum Day was established by ICOM in 1977 and has been observed on May 18 every year since. ICOM itself was founded in 1946 (post-World War II), and 2026 marks its 80th anniversary.

The 1972 date is a distractor referring to the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. The 1984 date has no particular ICOM significance.

ANALYSIS: The 1977 establishment aligns with post-1972 international heritage momentum, including the UNESCO Convention on World Heritage (1972) and its early operationalisation.

📌 CONCEPT NOTE

ICOM (International Council of Museums) was founded in 1946 in Paris as a non-governmental organisation with formal consultative relations with UNESCO. It has 50,000+ museum professionals as members across 141 countries — the largest professional network in the museum sector. ICOM's 2022 revised definition of a museum ("a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage") was adopted at the Prague General Conference after years of debate.

The 2026 IMD theme "Museums Uniting a Divided World" aligns with SDGs 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). ICOM also maintains the Red List of Cultural Objects at Risk — used by Interpol and customs agencies globally to identify stolen artefacts from conflict zones.

Q12  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS1 (museums, heritage preservation, cultural institutions); GS2 (ICOM-UNESCO relationship, NGO governance, soft power); GS3 (SDG linkages — SDG 10, 16, 17).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

International Museum Day, ICOM, 1977, May 18, UNESCO consultative NGO, museum as a public institution, SDG 10/16/17.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Confusing ICOM's founding year (1946) with the year IMD was established (1977) — the organisation is older than the day it created. The 1946 date is for ICOM's founding, not IMD.

 **EXAM TIP**

ICOM founded 1946; IMD established 1977; both linked to May 18 since 1977. HQ Paris. 80th ICOM anniversary in 2026.

 **INTERVIEW**

Should ICOM be given binding standard-setting authority over national museum practices, including mandatory repatriation of colonial-era acquisitions, or should this remain purely advisory?

 [Read Full Article →](#)

Question 13

of 30

[Source →](#)

The Indian Museum in Kolkata is described as the oldest museum in India and in the Asia-Pacific region. In which year was it established, and by which institution?

- A 1857; by the Archaeological Survey of India
- B 1814; by the Asiatic Society of Bengal ✓
- C 1911; by the British Indian government under the Indian Councils Act
- D 1875; by the Indian National Congress precursor organisations

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

✓ EXPLANATION

FACT: The Indian Museum, Kolkata was established in 1814 by the Asiatic Society of Bengal — making it the oldest and largest museum in India and the oldest in the Asia-Pacific region. It was formally opened to the public in 1878 at its current Chowringhee Road location.

The ASI was established in 1861 — decades after the museum's founding. **ANALYSIS:** The Asiatic Society of Bengal (founded 1784 by William Jones) was the premier colonial-era learned society in India, making it a logical founder of the country's first museum.

📌 CONCEPT NOTE

The Asiatic Society of Bengal was founded in 1784 by Sir William Jones, a British jurist and philologist, to pursue the study of Asia's history, languages, arts, and sciences. It was the primary institution through which colonial-era Orientalist scholarship systematically catalogued Indian artefacts.

The Indian Museum, Kolkata houses six major sections: Archaeology, Art, Geology, Zoology, Economic Botany, and Anthropology — with over 100,000 artefacts. The museum's founding predates the Archaeological Survey of India (est. 1861), the Indian National Congress (est. 1885), and the formal colonial museum network.

Other significant Indian museums: National Museum New Delhi (inaugurated 1960, 200,000+ artefacts — largest by collection); CSMVS Mumbai (est. 1922 — Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, formerly Prince of Wales Museum); Salar Jung Museum Hyderabad (1951 — largest one-person private collection in the world).

Q13  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS1 (Indian museum heritage, Asiatic Society of Bengal, colonial-era cultural institutions, repatriation of artefacts); GS2 (ASI's mandate, Ministry of Culture governance).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

Indian Museum Kolkata, 1814, Asiatic Society of Bengal, oldest museum Asia-Pacific, Salar Jung, National Museum New Delhi, CSMVS.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Attributing the Indian Museum's founding to the ASI (1861) — the museum (1814) predates the ASI by 47 years.
The ASI administers site museums but did not found the Indian Museum.

 **EXAM TIP**

Indian Museum = 1814 = Asiatic Society of Bengal = oldest in Asia-Pacific.
ASI = 1861 = Alexander Cunningham = under Ministry of Culture (now). National Museum New Delhi = 1960 inauguration (collection moved from 1949).

 **INTERVIEW**

Given that the Indian Museum Kolkata holds artefacts from northeastern India and indigenous communities whose descendants are still living, how should the museum balance preservation with community ownership of heritage?

 [Read Full Article →](#)

Question 14

of 30

[Source →](#)

Under which UNESCO Convention — ratified by India in 1977 — are signatory states obligated to prevent the illicit import, export, and transfer of ownership of cultural property, and to return illegally exported objects?

- A UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)
- B UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970) ✓
- C UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)
- D UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects (1995)

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

 **EXPLANATION**

FACT: The UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property was adopted in 1970 in Paris and ratified by India in 1977. It obliges signatories to prevent trafficking of stolen or illegally exported cultural property.

India has used it as the legal basis for repatriating 300+ artefacts from USA, UK, Australia, and Germany between 2022–2026. **ANALYSIS:** The 1972 Convention protects World Heritage Sites.

The 2003 Convention covers intangible heritage. The UNIDROIT (1995) is a private law instrument, not a UNESCO convention.

 **CONCEPT NOTE**

India's repatriation diplomacy has accelerated significantly under PM Modi — artefacts repatriated during his visits to the USA (2021, 2023), Australia (2023), and bilateral negotiations with UK museums. The legal chain is: UNESCO 1970 Convention (inter-state obligation); Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972 (domestic law prohibiting export of objects over 100 years old); ASI enforcement; diplomatic negotiations.

The UNIDROIT Convention (1995) provides private law remedies — suing for return in civil courts — complementing the UNESCO 1970 Convention's state-to-state framework. India has ratified UNESCO 1970 and UNESCO 1972 (World Heritage); it is yet to ratify UNIDROIT 1995.

The 2026 IMD theme "Museums Uniting a Divided World" directly engages the repatriation debate — ICOM has developed guidelines (ICOM Code of Ethics 2004) but cannot enforce them.

Q14  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS1 (cultural heritage, repatriation, UNESCO conventions); GS2 (India's soft power, cultural diplomacy, bilateral negotiations on artefact return).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

UNESCO 1970 Convention, Antiquities and Art Treasures Act 1972, repatriation, UNIDROIT 1995, cultural property, ASI enforcement.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Confusing the three UNESCO cultural conventions: 1970 (illicit trafficking of cultural property); 1972 (World Heritage — natural and cultural sites); 2003 (intangible cultural heritage). These three are regularly tested together as a set.

 **EXAM TIP**

UNESCO 1970 = illicit cultural property trafficking = India ratified 1977. UNESCO 1972 = World Heritage Convention.
UNESCO 2003 = Intangible Heritage (ICH). All three Paris-adopted.
India ratified all three.

 **INTERVIEW**

Should India pursue a binding UN General Assembly resolution mandating return of all colonial-era artefacts, and what risks does this carry for bilateral relationships with museum-rich former colonial powers?

 [Read Full Article →](#)

Question 15

of 30

[Source →](#)

A Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) is declared under which Article of the International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005, and who has the authority to declare it?

- A Article 42; the UN Secretary-General
- B Article 12; the WHO Director-General ✓
- C Article 18; the WHO Executive Board
- D Article 12; the WHO Health Assembly (WHA) by two-thirds majority

ANSWER & ANALYSIS
✓ EXPLANATION

FACT: A PHEIC is declared under Article 12 of the IHR 2005. The WHO Director-General is the sole authority with power to declare a PHEIC, after convening an Emergency Committee of experts.

The UN Secretary-General has no role in PHEIC declarations. The WHO Executive Board and Health Assembly do not declare PHEICs — this is an executive function vested solely in the DG. The Ebola Bundibugyo PHEIC was declared by the DG on May 17, 2026 — the 7th in WHO history.

ANALYSIS: This is one of the most frequently tested IHR 2005 provisions in UPSC papers.

📌 CONCEPT NOTE

IHR 2005 (revised from the original 1969 IHR) entered into force on June 15, 2007 and is binding on 196 states. It requires: (a) states to develop core surveillance and response capacities; (b) states to notify WHO within 24 hours of events that may constitute a PHEIC; (c) states to accept WHO-coordinated international assistance.

Article 43 is equally important: additional health measures (beyond WHO's recommendations) are permitted but must not be more restrictive than what the scientific evidence justifies — blanket travel or trade bans are generally considered non-compliant. The 7 PHEICs: H1N1 2009; Polio 2014 (ongoing); Ebola West Africa 2014 (ended 2016); Zika 2016 (ended 2016); COVID-19 2020 (ended May 2023); Mpox 2022 (ended 2023, re-declared August 2024); Ebola Bundibugyo 2026.

India's IHR National Focal Point is the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Q15  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (WHO governance, IHR 2005, global health security, pandemic treaty negotiations); GS3 (disease surveillance, biosecurity, One Health).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

PHEIC, IHR 2005 Article 12, WHO Director-General, Emergency Committee, Temporary Recommendations, Article 43, blanket travel ban.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Attributing PHEIC declaration power to the WHO Health Assembly (WHA) — the WHA is the policy-making body but the DG alone declares PHEICs. This is the most common error on this topic.

 **EXAM TIP**

PHEIC = Article 12 IHR 2005 = WHO Director-General = sole authority. IHR in force June 15, 2007. Binding on 196 countries. Seven PHEICs total as of May 2026.

 **INTERVIEW**

The IHR 2005 vests enormous unilateral power in a single official (the WHO DG) to trigger obligations on 196 countries — is this appropriate, or should PHEIC declarations require some form of multilateral consensus?

 [Read Full Article →](#)

Question 16

of 30

[Source →](#)

With reference to the Bundibugyo ebolavirus, which of the following statements is correct?

- A The Bundibugyo strain has a case fatality rate (CFR) of approximately 50–90%, similar to the Zaire strain, and the Ervebo vaccine (rVSV-ZEBOV) provides cross-protection.
- B **The Bundibugyo strain was first identified in 2007 in Uganda, has a CFR of approximately 25%, and has no approved vaccine as of 2026. ✓**
- C The Bundibugyo strain is non-pathogenic in humans — it only infects primates — and is the same species as the Reston ebolavirus.
- D The Bundibugyo strain was first identified in 2001 in the Democratic Republic of Congo and has a CFR of approximately 40%.

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

✓ EXPLANATION

FACT: The Bundibugyo ebolavirus was first identified in 2007 in Bundibugyo district, western Uganda — hence the name. Its CFR is approximately 25% — significantly lower than the Zaire strain (50–90%) but still high.

Critically, there is **NO** approved vaccine for the Bundibugyo strain as of 2026. The Ervebo vaccine (rVSV-ZEBOV, manufactured by Merck) is effective only against the Zaire ebolavirus.

Option A is wrong on both CFR and vaccine cross-protection. Option C is wrong — Reston ebolavirus is the non-pathogenic-in-humans strain.

ANALYSIS: The absence of a vaccine is why the Bundibugyo PHEIC 2026 is especially concerning.

📖 CONCEPT NOTE

The Orthoebolaviruses genus (formerly Ebolavirus) has 6 species: (1) Zaire — deadliest, CFR ~50–90%, approved vaccine (Ervebo/rVSV-ZEBOV, WHO prequalified 2019; also J&J's Ad26.ZEBOV/MVA-BN-Filo regimen); (2) Sudan — CFR ~50%, candidate vaccines in trials; (3) Bundibugyo — CFR ~25%, no approved vaccine; (4) Tai Forest — only 1 known human case (1994); (5) Reston — non-pathogenic in humans, found in macaques from Philippines; (6) Bombali — identified 2018 in Sierra Leone bats, no confirmed human cases. The 2007 Bundibugyo outbreak in Uganda was the first identification of this species; a second outbreak occurred in the DRC (2012).

The 2026 outbreak in Ituri Province, DRC spreading to Kinshasa (~17 million people) and Kampala represents the most severe Bundibugyo outbreak since discovery.

Q16  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS3 (Ebola virology, vaccine development, biosafety levels, WHO prequalification); GS2 (global health governance, One Health, DRC conflict context).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

Bundibugyo ebolavirus, Zaire ebolavirus, rVSV-ZEBOV Ervebo, CFR, no approved vaccine, Orthoebolaviruses, first identified 2007 Uganda.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Assuming the Ebola vaccines (Ervebo, J&J regimen) provide cross-protection against all Ebola species — they specifically target Zaire ebolavirus. Bundibugyo has no approved vaccine.

 **EXAM TIP**

Zaire strain = highest CFR (50–90%) + approved vaccine (Ervebo). Bundibugyo = 2007 Uganda + CFR ~25% + NO vaccine.
Reston = non-pathogenic in humans. Three species, three key facts each.

 **INTERVIEW**

Given that Bundibugyo ebolavirus has now caused two major outbreaks and a PHEIC, should accelerating a Bundibugyo-specific vaccine become part of the global 100-Days Mission for pandemic preparedness?

 [Read Full Article →](#)

Question 17

of 30

[Source →](#)

India's Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) — which was activated for Ebola monitoring following the May 2026 PHEIC — operates under which nodal body within the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare?

- A National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune
- B Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)
- C National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Delhi ✓
- D Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS)

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

 **EXPLANATION**

FACT: The Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) operates under the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), headquartered in Delhi, which is under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. NCDC is the nodal agency for epidemic-prone disease monitoring and outbreak coordination.

NIV Pune is an ICMR institute that handles laboratory diagnostics (including BSL-4 capability for Ebola samples) but is not the IDSP's nodal body. ICMR is the apex research body but does not operationally run IDSP. **ANALYSIS:** The IDSP-NCDC chain is the standard first-response surveillance structure for international health alerts.

 **CONCEPT NOTE**

IDSP was launched in 2004 with World Bank assistance. It operates surveillance units at district, state, and central levels across all states/UTs.

It monitors 33 epidemic-prone diseases including Ebola, cholera, dengue, malaria, typhoid, and scrub typhus using S/P/L (suspected/probable/lab-confirmed) reporting formats. NCDC (National Centre for Disease Control), New Delhi, is the operational nodal body.

NIV Pune (under ICMR) is a separate, specialised institute — India's only BSL-4 laboratory, capable of handling the world's most dangerous pathogens. For the Ebola PHEIC: NCDC/IDSP coordinates national surveillance; NIV Pune handles any laboratory confirmation of suspected samples; MoHFW communicates with WHO as IHR National Focal Point; airports and seaports activate Point of Entry (PoE) surveillance under IHR 2005.

NVBDCP (National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme) is a separate directorate for vector-borne diseases — not the nodal body for IDSP.

Q17  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (health governance — NCDC, ICMR, MoHFW institutional architecture); GS3 (disease surveillance, IDSP framework, IHR 2005 national focal points, biosafety levels).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

IDSP, NCDC, NIV Pune, BSL-4, IHR 2005 National Focal Point, MoHFW, S/P/L reporting, PoE surveillance.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Placing IDSP under ICMR rather than NCDC/MoHFW — ICMR is the research apex body; NCDC is the public health operational body that runs IDSP for outbreak surveillance.

 **EXAM TIP**

IDSP = 2004 = NCDC = MoHFW. NIV Pune = ICMR = BSL-4 lab.
These are two different institutions with complementary roles in India's health emergency architecture.

 **INTERVIEW**

India's IDSP covers 33 diseases but Ebola has historically been managed through ad hoc protocols — should India establish a permanent "high-consequence infectious disease" (HCID) framework like the UK's, separate from the general IDSP architecture?

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Question 18

of 30

[Source →](#)

The May 2026 Ebola Bundibugyo outbreak is the 7th Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) in WHO history. Which of the following is the correct chronological sequence of PHEICs?

- A** H1N1 (2009) → Polio (2014) → Ebola West Africa (2014) → Zika (2016) → COVID-19 (2020) → Mpox (2022) → Ebola Bundibugyo (2026) ✓
- B** Polio (2009) → H1N1 (2014) → Ebola West Africa (2014) → Zika (2015) → COVID-19 (2020) → Mpox (2022) → Ebola Bundibugyo (2026)
- C** H1N1 (2009) → Ebola West Africa (2012) → Zika (2014) → Polio (2016) → COVID-19 (2019) → Mpox (2022) → Ebola Bundibugyo (2026)
- D** H1N1 (2009) → Polio (2014) → Ebola West Africa (2014) → Zika (2016) → Mpox (2019) → COVID-19 (2020) → Ebola Bundibugyo (2026)

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

 **EXPLANATION**

FACT: The 7 PHEICs in correct order are: (1) H1N1 Influenza 2009 — ended 2010; (2) Polio 2014 — ongoing; (3) Ebola West Africa (Zaire strain) 2014 — ended 2016; (4) Zika 2016 — ended 2016; (5) COVID-19 2020 — ended May 2023; (6) Mpox (Monkeypox) 2022 — ended 2023, re-declared August 2024; (7) Ebola Bundibugyo 2026.

Option A is the only correct sequence.

Option B incorrectly reverses H1N1 and Polio. Option D places Mpox before COVID-19.

ANALYSIS: Memorising the PHEIC sequence is high-value Prelims material.

 **CONCEPT NOTE**

Key supplementary details: H1N1 (Swine Flu) 2009 PHEIC was the first ever declared under the IHR 2005 framework; its declaration by DG Margaret Chan was controversial because H1N1's severity was lower than feared. Polio PHEIC (2014) is unique — it is the only PHEIC that has never formally ended, as wild poliovirus continues to circulate in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Ebola West Africa (2014–2016) was the largest Ebola outbreak ever — over 11,000 deaths; primarily Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone. Zika 2016 was declared due to the association between Zika virus infection during pregnancy and microcephaly — the neurological consequence that elevated a relatively mild arbovirus to PHEIC status.

COVID-19 PHEIC ended May 5, 2023. Mpox PHEIC was re-declared in August 2024 due to a new clade (Clade Ib) spreading in DRC and neighbouring countries.

Q18  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (WHO governance, IHR 2005, global health security timeline); GS3 (emerging infectious diseases, pandemic preparedness, GHSA).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

PHEIC sequence, H1N1, Polio, Ebola, Zika, COVID-19, Mpox, Bundibugyo, IHR 2005, WHO DG, global health governance.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Placing Mpox before COVID-19 in the sequence — Mpox PHEIC was declared in 2022, after COVID-19 (2020). This is the most frequent error in sequence questions on PHEICs.

 **EXAM TIP**

Memorise by year: 2009 H1N1 → 2014 Polio + Ebola → 2016 Zika → 2020 COVID → 2022 Mpox → 2026 Ebola Bundibugyo. Six years: 2009, 2014 (×2), 2016, 2020, 2022, 2026.

 **INTERVIEW**

The fact that two PHEICs were declared in 2014 (Polio and Ebola) — and one of them (Polio) has never ended — raises questions about whether the PHEIC instrument is being used appropriately. Should WHO develop a separate, permanent framework for endemic but not-yet-eradicated diseases?

 [Read Full Article →](#)

Question 19

of 30

[Source →](#)

The National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducts NEET-UG among other examinations, was established in November 2017. Which of the following correctly describes its legal status and parent ministry?

- A Statutory body established under the NTA Act, 2017; under the Ministry of Human Resource Development
- B Society registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860; under the Ministry of Education ✓
- C Autonomous body established under the University Grants Commission Act, 1956; under the University Grants Commission
- D Statutory authority established under the National Medical Commission Act, 2019; under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

 **EXPLANATION**

FACT: NTA is a registered society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 — it is NOT a statutory body. It functions under the Ministry of Education (renamed from Ministry of Human Resource Development in 2020). It was established in November 2017. Option A is wrong — there is no NTA Act of 2017.

Option C is wrong — NTA has no connection to the UGC Act. Option D is wrong — the NMC Act 2019 governs medical education regulation, not NTA's establishment.

ANALYSIS: NTA's non-statutory status is at the heart of the FAIMA petition seeking its dissolution and replacement with a statutory examination commission with parliamentary accountability.

 **CONCEPT NOTE**

NTA was established following the recommendation of the T. S. R. Subramanian Committee (2016) on education reforms, which suggested separating examination conduct from regulatory/academic functions. The Ministry of Education previously conducted examinations directly through the CBSE. NTA now conducts NEET-UG, JEE-Main, CUET-UG, CUET-PG, UGC-NET, CMAT, GPAT, CSIR-UGC-NET, and several other national-level examinations for ~5 crore candidates annually.

As a registered society, NTA is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Ministry of Education, but it lacks the parliamentary accountability that a statutory body would have. Critics argue that the consecutive 2025–2026 NEET-UG paper leak crises are a direct consequence of this accountability gap.

The FAIMA petition seeks either a statutory NTA or a new "National Examination Commission" established by Act of Parliament with a judicial member on its governing board.

Q19  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (regulatory bodies — statutory vs non-statutory, parliamentary accountability, education governance, Article 21 right to fair examination).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

NTA, Societies Registration Act 1860, Ministry of Education, NEET-UG, non-statutory body, FAIMA, National Examination Commission, parliamentary accountability.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Calling NTA a statutory body — it is a registered society, which means it lacks the legal autonomy and parliamentary accountability of a statutory authority like UPSC or SSC.

 **EXAM TIP**

NTA = registered society (NOT statutory) = Ministry of Education = November 2017 = ~5 crore candidates/year. UPSC = Article 315 = constitutional body.
This is the structural contrast UPSC Prelims tests.

 **INTERVIEW**

Can a registered society — accountable primarily to its own Board and the Ministry — ever provide the institutional independence and accountability required to fairly conduct examinations for crores of aspirants with high socioeconomic stakes?

 [Read Full Article →](#)

Question 20

of 30

[Source →](#)

NEET-UG's constitutional basis — allowing Parliament to legislate for a single national medical entrance examination — rests on which Entry of the Seventh Schedule?

- A Entry 25, Concurrent List — Education
- B **Entry 66, Union List — Coordination and determination of standards in institutions for higher education ✓**
- C Entry 11, State List — Education (before the 42nd Amendment)
- D Entry 97, Union List — Residuary powers of Parliament

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

✓ EXPLANATION

FACT: NEET-UG's constitutional basis is Entry 66 of the Union List (Seventh Schedule), which gives Parliament exclusive power over "coordination and determination of standards in institutions for higher education or research and scientific and technical institutions." The Supreme Court in *Prerit Charitable Trust v. State of Tamil Nadu* (2016) upheld NEET's validity on this basis. Entry 25 (Concurrent List) covers education generally but Entry 66 is the specific, higher-level provision for standards in higher education.

Entry 11 (State List) covered education but was moved to the Concurrent List by the 42nd Amendment 1976.

ANALYSIS: The Entry 66 basis gives Parliament overriding authority despite state objections to NEET.

📖 CONCEPT NOTE

The NEET controversy is partly federal — Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and other states have repeatedly sought exemption from NEET, arguing it disadvantages rural, regional-language-medium students and undermines state autonomy over educational admissions. The Tamil Nadu government passed a law exempting the state from NEET (2021, passed twice; central assent denied).

The constitutional position is clear: Entry 66, Union List = central government has exclusive power to set standards in higher education = NEET as a standard-setting measure is constitutionally valid. NEET was introduced by the Medical Council of India in 2013, first implemented in 2016, made mandatory from 2017, and transferred to NTA in 2019.

The NMC Act 2019 replaced the MCI with the National Medical Commission. JEE is similarly based on Entry 66.

Q20  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (Seventh Schedule, Entry 66 Union List, federal tensions over education, NEET federalism debate, 42nd Amendment); GS1 (Indian education system, cooperative federalism).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

NEET-UG, Entry 66 Union List, Seventh Schedule, NMC Act 2019, cooperative federalism, state exemption from NEET, MCI, NTA.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Citing Entry 25 Concurrent List (Education) as NEET's basis — Entry 25 covers general education, but NEET's validity is grounded specifically in Entry 66 Union List (standards in higher education), which gives Parliament exclusive jurisdiction.

 **EXAM TIP**

Entry 66 Union List = standards in higher education = UPSC, NEET, JEE — all use this provision.
 Entry 25 Concurrent List = general education.
 After 42nd Amendment 1976, education shifted from State List (Entry 11) to Concurrent List (Entry 25).

 **INTERVIEW**

Is NEET's imposition via Entry 66 a legitimate exercise of the Union's standard-setting power, or does it disguise a substantive encroachment into what should be concurrent state-centre governance of educational admissions?

 [Read Full Article →](#)

Question 21

of 30

[Source →](#)

Consider the following advantages claimed for Computer-Based Testing (CBT) over Pen-and-Paper Based Testing (PBT) in the context of India's national entrance examinations:

1. CBT eliminates the need for question paper normalisation across different testing sessions.
2. CBT significantly reduces the risk of physical paper leaks because no printed question booklets need to be transported or stored in advance.
3. CBT creates a complete digital audit trail — timestamped, session-tracked — making post-exam malpractice investigation easier. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 and 2 only

B 2 and 3 only ✓

C 1 and 3 only

D 1, 2 and 3

ANSWER & ANALYSIS
EXPLANATION

FACT: Statement 1 is incorrect — CBT does NOT eliminate the need for normalisation; in fact, multi-session CBT (as used in JEE-Main) requires percentile normalisation to adjust for difficulty variations across sessions, and this normalisation process has itself been a source of controversy. Statement 2 is correct — no printed booklets means no physical chain of custody to compromise, sharply reducing paper leak vectors.

Statement 3 is correct — digital audit trails (login timestamps, response timestamps, session records) provide far richer investigative data than physical OMR sheets. **ANALYSIS:** Statement 1 is the trap — normalisation is a CBT problem, not a PBT problem.

CONCEPT NOTE

JEE-Main's multi-session CBT illustrates both the advantage and the challenge: the shift to CBT (2018) eliminated paper leaks but introduced normalisation controversy. The percentile normalisation formula used by NTA for JEE-Main has been challenged in courts (students arguing different sessions have systematically different difficulty levels).

For NEET-UG's transition to CBT (announced for 2027), NTA faces a specific challenge: NEET-UG has 2.2 million+ candidates but historically ran as a single-session, single-day exam. Moving to multi-session CBT to manage this scale would require normalisation; keeping it single-session CBT would require thousands of test centres conducting simultaneously — a massive infrastructure build.

The UGC-NET's shift to CBT after its 2018 paper leak in PBT mode is the most direct precedent. The UGC-NET CBT has been largely controversy-free since the shift.

Q21  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (education governance, examination reform, NTA accountability, technology in governance); GS3 (digital public infrastructure, cyber security of examination systems).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

CBT vs PBT, normalisation controversy, JEE-Main, NEET-UG CBT 2027, audit trail, paper leak prevention, digital governance.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Assuming CBT eliminates all examination problems — it eliminates physical paper leaks but introduces normalisation complexity and digital infrastructure requirements; it also raises equity concerns about digital divide for rural candidates.

 **EXAM TIP**

CBT advantages: no physical paper → no leak; digital audit trail → better investigation.
 CBT disadvantage: multi-session requires normalisation (itself a source of controversy). PBT disadvantage: physical paper leak risk; limited audit trail.

 **INTERVIEW**

If NEET-UG moves to multi-session CBT with normalisation, it creates a new source of grievance for candidates who argue different sessions are inequitable — can normalisation ever be made truly transparent and judicially defensible?

 [Read Full Article →](#)

Question 22

of 30

[Source →](#)

The Pahalgam terror attack of April 22, 2025 — which triggered the chain of events leading to Operation Sindoor — was carried out by which organisation, and how many civilians were killed?

- A Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM); 19 killed
- B **The Resistance Front (TRF), a proxy of Lashkar-e-Taiba; 26 killed ✓**
- C Hizbul Mujahideen; 31 killed
- D Al-Badr (a subsidiary of HM); 26 killed

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

EXPLANATION

FACT: The Pahalgam attack on April 22, 2025 in Baisaran Valley was carried out by The Resistance Front (TRF), a shadow organisation of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). 26 civilians were killed — predominantly Hindu tourists visiting the meadow, making it the deadliest civilian attack in India since the 2008 Mumbai attacks. JeM has historically targeted security forces and conducted suicide bombings (e.g., Pulwama 2019) rather than this type of targeted civilian massacre.

ANALYSIS: TRF emerged around 2019 as LeT's deniable face in Kashmir.

CONCEPT NOTE

The Resistance Front (TRF) was designated as a terrorist organisation by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2023. It was created after the abrogation of Article 370 (August 2019) as Lashkar-e-Taiba's attempt to rebrand its Kashmir operations under a locally credible name — the "Resistance" label was designed to cast the violence as indigenous resistance rather than Pakistan-sponsored terrorism.

The Pahalgam attack targeted tourists in Baisaran Valley, a high-altitude meadow accessible only on horseback — the choice of target was designed to destroy Kashmir's post-2019 tourism revival narrative. India's immediate response: suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (signed 1960; in abeyance since April 23, 2025), expulsion of Pakistani diplomats, closure of the Attari-Wagah border crossing, and mutual airspace closure — a near-total severing of bilateral relations. This created the diplomatic-military context for Operation Sindoor (May 6–7, 2025).

Q22  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS3 (internal security, cross-border terrorism, TRF, Lashkar-e-Taiba); GS2 (India-Pakistan relations, Indus Waters Treaty suspension, bilateral CBMs).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

Pahalgam attack, TRF, Lashkar-e-Taiba, 26 civilians, Baisaran Valley, IWT suspension, Operation Sindoor trigger.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Attributing the Pahalgam attack to Jaish-e-Mohammed (which conducted the Pulwama attack of 2019) — the Pahalgam attack (2025) was the TRF/LeT.

 **EXAM TIP**

Pahalgam = April 22, 2025 = TRF (LeT proxy) = 26 civilians = Baisaran Valley. Pulwama = February 14, 2019 = JeM = 40 CRPF personnel.
Two attacks, two different organisations — a classic distractor pair.

 **INTERVIEW**

The TRF's use of a "resistance" identity to distance Pakistan-sponsored terrorism from its backers has been broadly seen through internationally — what steps can India take to remove the deniability that Pakistan's proxy architecture provides?

 [Read Full Article →](#)

Question 23

of 30

[Source →](#)

Operation Sindoor (May 6–7, 2025) was described as the first time since the 1971 war that India struck targets deep inside Pakistan's Punjab province. Which of the following correctly identifies the weapons systems used and the nature of the strikes?

- A** BrahMos cruise missiles launched from Indian Navy ships, targeting 9 terror launchpads in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) only
- B** SCALP cruise missiles and AASM HAMMER precision munitions, delivered by Rafale jets from within Indian airspace, targeting 9 terror infrastructure sites including Muridke (LeT HQ) and Bahawalpur (JeM HQ) in Pakistan Punjab ✓
- C** Agni-IV ballistic missiles targeting underground bunkers at 3 sites in Muzaffarabad; no strikes in Pakistan Punjab
- D** Surgical strikes by Indian Special Forces crossing the Line of Control on foot — similar in nature to the 2016 Uri surgical strikes

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

 **EXPLANATION**

FACT: Operation Sindoor used SCALP (Storm Shadow) cruise missiles and AASM HAMMER precision-guided munitions, both carried and launched by Rafale fighter jets from within Indian airspace — meaning no Indian aircraft entered Pakistani airspace. 9 terror sites were struck, including Muridke (LeT headquarters in Pakistan Punjab) and Bahawalpur (JeM headquarters in Pakistan Punjab). This was the first deep strike inside Pakistan Punjab since 1971.

BrahMos was not confirmed as the primary weapon. Agni-IV is a ballistic missile, not a precision-strike weapon for this type of operation.

ANALYSIS: Launching from Indian airspace while striking targets hundreds of km inside Pakistan was operationally significant — it demonstrated stand-off precision capability.

 **CONCEPT NOTE**

SCALP (also known as Storm Shadow) is a Franco-British long-range air-launched cruise missile — India procured it as part of the 36-Rafale deal (signed September 2016; delivery completed 2022). AASM HAMMER (Highly Agile Modular Munition Extended Range) is a French precision guidance kit attached to conventional bombs — it provides GPS/INS/laser guidance.

Both systems were delivered with the Rafale and can be launched from 50–60+ km away, well within Indian airspace, while striking targets deep inside Pakistan. The significance: India demonstrated a stand-off precision strike capability that Pakistan's air defences could not intercept in time, fundamentally changing deterrence calculations.

The 9 targets included: Muridke, Bahawalpur, Muzaffarabad, Kotli, Bhimber, Sialkot vicinity, and other PoK sites. The 2016 Uri "surgical strikes" were cross-LoC special forces operations of far more limited scope — Operation Sindoor was qualitatively and strategically different.

Q23  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS3 (defence — Rafale, SCALP, AASM HAMMER, precision strike doctrine); GS2 (India-Pakistan relations, coercive diplomacy, Operation Sindoor strategic significance).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

Operation Sindoor, SCALP cruise missile, AASM HAMMER, Rafale, Muridke, Bahawalpur, stand-off precision strike, Pakistan Punjab, 1971 parallel.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Conflating Operation Sindoor with the 2016 Uri surgical strikes — both are "India strikes across the border" but are categorically different in scale, depth, weapons, and strategic signalling.

 **EXAM TIP**

Operation Sindoor weapons: SCALP (cruise missile) + AASM HAMMER (precision bomb) = both from Rafale = from within Indian airspace. 9 targets.
First Punjab strike since 1971. Night of May 6–7, 2025, ~25 minutes.

 **INTERVIEW**

Does India's demonstrated stand-off precision strike capability under Operation Sindoor constitute a credible conventional deterrence against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, or does it risk accelerating nuclear escalation by narrowing the space below the nuclear threshold?

 [Read Full Article →](#)

Question 24

of 30

[Source →](#)

The Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) mechanism in India-Pakistan military relations includes a dedicated hotline for crisis communication. The current India-Pakistan DGMO-level understanding that produced the May 10, 2025 ceasefire is distinct from — and built on top of — which earlier DGMO-level agreement?

- A The Lahore Declaration (1999) — which included a DGMO hotline as a confidence-building measure
- B **The DGMO-level agreement of February 25, 2021 — which renewed the 2003 LoC ceasefire commitment ✓**
- C The Shimla Agreement (1972) — which established the first DGMO hotline as part of the LoC demarcation process
- D The Kargil Review Committee recommendations (2000) — which mandated a permanent DGMO hotline

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

 **EXPLANATION**

FACT: The most immediate predecessor to the May 10, 2025 ceasefire is the DGMO-level agreement of February 25, 2021, which renewed the 2003 LoC ceasefire commitment. After the 2021 agreement, cross-LoC firing violations dropped sharply.

The Pahalgam attack (April 2025) effectively ended the 2021 understanding. The Lahore Declaration (1999) included CBMs but was never implemented due to Kargil.

The Shimla Agreement (1972) established the LoC as the framework but did not create the DGMO hotline as a formal instrument. **ANALYSIS:** The 2003 → 2021 → 2025 lineage is the important chain for UPSC.

 **CONCEPT NOTE**

The 2003 India-Pakistan LoC ceasefire was announced jointly in November 2003 and significantly reduced cross-border firing. It held until approximately 2016 when violations began increasing.

By 2020–21, violations had reached near-record levels (~5,000/year). The DGMO-level agreement of February 25, 2021 committed both sides to "strict observance" of the 2003 ceasefire in letter and spirit — violations dropped to near-zero in 2021–22.

The Pahalgam attack in April 2025 broke this equilibrium. The Simla Agreement (1972) remains the foundational bilateral document: it replaced the UN ceasefire line with the Line of Control (LoC), committed both sides to bilateral resolution of disputes, and has been interpreted by India as precluding third-party mediation — a position India invoked when rejecting US claims of ceasefire facilitation after Operation Sindoor.

The Lahore Declaration (1999) added a nuclear dimension (DGMO hotline + agreement to notify nuclear tests) but was never implemented after Kargil.

Q24  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (India-Pakistan CBMs — Simla Agreement, Lahore Declaration, DGMO mechanism, bilateral vs multilateral resolution); GS3 (military operations, LoC management, nuclear deterrence architecture).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

DGMO hotline, 2003 LoC ceasefire, 2021 DGMO agreement, Simla Agreement 1972, Lahore Declaration 1999, CBMs, Operation Sindoor ceasefire.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Attributing the DGMO hotline's establishment to the Simla Agreement (1972) — the Simla Agreement created the LoC framework but the DGMO hotline as a crisis communication instrument was established later through bilateral military protocols, not codified in the Simla text.

 **EXAM TIP**

2003 LoC ceasefire → renewed by 2021 DGMO agreement (February 25, 2021) → broken by Pahalgam (April 2025) → new ceasefire (May 10, 2025).
Three agreements, three dates — one chain.

 **INTERVIEW**

India's position that the May 2025 ceasefire is an "operational military understanding" rather than a political treaty means it requires no parliamentary ratification — is this constitutionally and democratically appropriate for a decision of such geopolitical magnitude?

 [Read Full Article →](#)

Question 25

of 30

[Source →](#)

With reference to the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) — which India suspended following the Pahalgam attack — which of the following statements about the treaty is correct?

- A** The IWT (1960) allocates the three eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej) to India and the three western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab) to Pakistan, with a Permanent Indus Commission for dispute resolution. ✓
- B** The IWT (1960) allocates all six rivers equally — each country gets three eastern and three western tributaries — with disputes resolved by the International Court of Justice.
- C** The IWT grants India full consumptive use rights over all six Indus system rivers; Pakistan has secondary rights only.
- D** The IWT was mediated by the World Bank and gives the eastern rivers entirely to Pakistan, with India having only transit rights.

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

 **EXPLANATION**

FACT: The Indus Waters Treaty (1960), brokered by the World Bank and signed by PM Nehru and President Ayub Khan, allocates: eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej) to India for unrestricted use; western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab) to Pakistan, with India permitted only limited non-consumptive use (run-of-river hydropower, irrigation subject to limits). A Permanent Indus Commission (one commissioner each side) meets annually.

Disputes go to a neutral expert or Court of Arbitration — not the ICJ. **ANALYSIS:** India's April 2025 suspension of the IWT (putting it "in abeyance") is legally unprecedented — the treaty has no unilateral exit or suspension clause.

 **CONCEPT NOTE**

The IWT is one of the world's few water treaties to survive multiple wars (1965, 1971, 1999 Kargil) between the signatory states. The allocation: 80.52% of Indus waters to Pakistan (western rivers) and 19.48% to India (eastern rivers).

India has been developing hydropower projects on the western rivers (within its permitted limits) — Pakistan has contested several at the Court of Arbitration and Permanent Court of Arbitration. The suspension "in abeyance" (India's term) rather than outright abrogation is legally significant: it signals India's intent to renegotiate or modify the treaty without formally triggering the treaty's dispute resolution mechanism.

Pakistan considers India's suspension a violation of IWT's Article XII (no unilateral modification). The Permanent Indus Commission has not met since April 2025.

Q25  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (India-Pakistan relations, Indus Waters Treaty, transboundary water diplomacy); GS3 (water resources — Indus river system, hydropower, water security).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

Indus Waters Treaty 1960, eastern rivers (Ravi/Beas/Sutlej) to India, western rivers (Indus/Jhelum/Chenab) to Pakistan, Permanent Indus Commission, World Bank mediation, IWT suspension.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Reversing the allocation — thinking Pakistan gets the eastern rivers. Eastern (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej) = India.
Western (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab) = Pakistan. A simple mnemonic: "Eastern rivers flow East into India; India gets them."

 **EXAM TIP**

IWT = 1960 = Nehru + Ayub Khan = World Bank brokered.
Eastern (RBS) = India; Western (IJC) = Pakistan (80% of water). Permanent Indus Commission = annual meetings.
No unilateral exit clause.

 **INTERVIEW**

India's suspension of the IWT "in abeyance" has no precedent in 65 years — does this strategy of using water as a diplomatic lever against Pakistan risk normalising water weaponisation in South Asian geopolitics?

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Question 26

of 30

[Source →](#)

India's post-Operation Sindoor strategic doctrine — which defence analysts describe as "Proactive Deterrence with Calibrated Coercive Capability" — represents a shift from which earlier posture?

- A Non-Alignment 2.0 — India's policy of equidistance from all major powers in security crises involving neighbours
- B Strategic restraint — India's earlier default posture of absorbing cross-border terror attacks with diplomatic responses rather than military action ✓**
- C Minimum Credible Deterrence — India's nuclear doctrine which explicitly prohibited conventional strikes on Pakistan
- D Cold Start Doctrine — India's offensive military planning concept, which post-Sindoor India officially retired

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

 **EXPLANATION**

FACT: India's post-Sindoor doctrine represents a departure from "strategic restraint" — the pre-2025 posture where India responded to Pakistan-sponsored terror attacks (Mumbai 2008, Pathankot 2016, Pulwama 2019) primarily through diplomatic pressure, de-escalatory signalling, and international lobbying. Operation Sindoor marked India's willingness to use calibrated military force deep inside Pakistan as a response to state-sponsored terrorism. Non-Alignment 2.0 is an academic strategic concept, not India's operational doctrine. Minimum Credible Deterrence is India's nuclear doctrine — it was not incompatible with conventional strikes. Cold Start was never officially acknowledged. **ANALYSIS:** The shift from restraint to calibrated response is the core strategic doctrinal change.

 **CONCEPT NOTE**

"Strategic restraint" was codified in practice (if not in doctrine documents) through India's responses to: Kargil 1999 (military victory but limited to LoC); Mumbai 2008 (no military response, diplomatic pressure); Uri 2016 (limited surgical strikes, denied at first); Pulwama 2019 (Balakot air strike — the first air strike inside Pakistan since 1971 but across-the-border into PoK and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, not Punjab). Operation Sindoor (2025) crossed the threshold that Balakot did not: deep strikes inside Pakistan Punjab — Lahore is in Punjab. India's post-Sindoor public messaging emphasised three "new red lines": (a) any future terror attack traceable to Pakistan will trigger military response; (b) there is no safe sanctuary anywhere in Pakistan; (c) nuclear threats will not deter India. This represents the most significant shift in India's declared deterrence posture since independence.

Q26  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS3 (strategic doctrine, deterrence theory, Operation Sindoor, coercive diplomacy, nuclear threshold management); GS2 (India-Pakistan doctrine, bilateral relations framework post-Sindoor).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

Strategic restraint, proactive deterrence, calibrated coercive capability, Operation Sindoor doctrine, nuclear threshold, Balakot 2019 comparison, deterrence escalation ladder.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Confusing India's nuclear doctrine ("minimum credible deterrence," "no first use") with India's conventional deterrence posture ("strategic restraint" pre-2025, "proactive deterrence" post-2025) — these are separate doctrinal domains.

 **EXAM TIP**

Pre-2025 = strategic restraint (diplomacy first, military last).
 Post-2025 = proactive deterrence with calibrated coercive capability (military response as default for state-sponsored terror). The shift is tested as a doctrinal evolution question.

 **INTERVIEW**

India's new deterrence doctrine is only credible if Pakistan believes India will act again — given that Pakistan is a nuclear state, how does India maintain deterrence credibility without triggering inadvertent nuclear escalation?

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Question 27

of 30

[Source →](#)

Match the following India-related international agreements or frameworks with their correct year of entry into force or conclusion: 1. India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) 2. India-EU Free Trade Agreement 3. Sweden joins NATO (directly relevant to India-Sweden strategic partnership) Which of the following gives the correct years?

LIST I

LIST II

- A** TEPA: 2024; India-EU FTA: 2025; Sweden-NATO: 2023
- B** TEPA: October 2025; India-EU FTA: January 27, 2026; Sweden-NATO: March 7, 2024 ✓
- C** TEPA: January 2026; India-EU FTA: October 2025; Sweden-NATO: April 2024
- D** TEPA: 2022; India-EU FTA: 2024; Sweden-NATO: March 7, 2024

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

 **EXPLANATION**

FACT: India-EFTA TEPA entered into force in October 2025 (concluded January 2024 after ~16 years of negotiations). India-EU FTA was concluded on January 27, 2026.

Sweden joined NATO on March 7, 2024. All three are from the same geopolitical period — India's accelerating European diplomatic engagement from 2024 onwards.

Option A has wrong years for all three. Option C reverses TEPA and FTA dates.

Option D gives wrong TEPA year. **ANALYSIS:** These three dates collectively define the framework for Modi's May 2026 European tour.

 **CONCEPT NOTE**

The convergence of three major European milestones in a 16-month window (March 2024 – January 2026) is not coincidental — it reflects a structural shift in the India-Europe relationship. Sweden's NATO entry (March 2024) made it a de facto member of the Western security architecture, changing the strategic value of India-Sweden technology cooperation.

The India-EFTA TEPA (in force October 2025) created binding investment obligations — the first time in Indian trade history. The India-EU FTA (concluded January 27, 2026) was the diplomatic breakthrough after 19 years of on-off negotiations, the culmination of which was marked by Modi's European tour in May 2026.

For UPSC Prelims, these three dates are high-priority facts — they are recent, geopolitically significant, and likely to appear as individual entries or as a matching question.

Q27  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (India's European diplomacy, TEPA, India-EU FTA, India-Sweden Strategic Partnership, NATO enlargement implications for India).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

India-EFTA TEPA October 2025, India-EU FTA January 2026, Sweden NATO March 2024, European multilateral engagement, Modi's European tour 2026.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Reversing the TEPA and India-EU FTA dates — TEPA entered into force first (October 2025); India-EU FTA was concluded later (January 2026). They are from different blocs (EFTA vs EU).

 **EXAM TIP**

Three dates to memorise in order: Sweden-NATO = March 7, 2024; TEPA in force = October 2025; India-EU FTA concluded = January 27, 2026. An ascending sequence from 2024 to 2026.

 **INTERVIEW**

With TEPA in force and the India-EU FTA concluded, does India need a separate bilateral free trade agreement with individual EU member states like Sweden, or does the EU FTA framework subsume bilateral economic engagement?

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Question 28

of 30

[Source →](#)

With reference to India's diplomatic engagements in May 2026, consider the following pairs — (visit/event) : (first occurrence or notable milestone):

1. PM Modi's visit to Norway : First Indian PM visit to Norway in 43 years 2. India-Sweden ties upgraded : First Strategic Partnership India has with any Nordic country 3. India-EFTA TEPA : First Indian FTA containing a binding investment commitment How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

A Only one

B Only two

C All three ✓

D None

ANSWER & ANALYSIS
✓ EXPLANATION

FACT: All three pairs are correctly matched. (1) Modi's Norway visit was the first by an Indian PM in 43 years — the last was Indira Gandhi in 1983. (2) India-Sweden Strategic Partnership (May 2026) is the first formal Strategic Partnership India has elevated with a Nordic country — earlier ties were "framework partnerships." (3) India-EFTA TEPA (in force October 2025) contains a binding USD 100 billion/15-year investment commitment — unprecedented in any Indian FTA. All three are accurate "firsts" or milestones. **ANALYSIS:** None of the pairs contain errors, making "all three" the correct answer.

📖 CONCEPT NOTE

The "43-year gap" for Norway makes historical context important: Indira Gandhi visited Oslo in 1983 — the year she also visited the USA, UK, and pushed the Non-Aligned Movement agenda. India-Norway relations have historically been workmanlike — Norway was an important development cooperation partner in the 1960s–1990s (Norwegian Development Cooperation — NORAD).

The relationship was strained in 2011–12 by the Bhattacharya child custody case (Norwegian child welfare services took two Indian-origin children from Indian parents — a diplomatic row). Modi's 2026 visit is the first since then at PM level. For UPSC, integrative questions testing whether students can correctly categorise "firsts" across multiple diplomatic events are common in recent Prelims papers.

Q28  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (India's European diplomacy, Nordic countries, EFTA TEPA, India-Norway relations history); GS1 (India's diplomatic milestones timeline).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

India-Norway 43-year gap, Indira Gandhi 1983, India-Sweden Strategic Partnership first Nordic, TEPA binding investment commitment, Modi's European tour firsts.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Flagging pair 2 as incorrect by saying India has had "Strategic Partnerships" with Nordic countries before — India has had broad bilateral engagement frameworks but the formal "Strategic Partnership" designation with Sweden (May 2026) is the first such formal elevation with a Nordic country.

 **EXAM TIP**

When the question uses "only one / only two / all three" format, test each pair carefully against the article facts before selecting the answer.
The trap is assuming one pair is wrong when all three are in fact correct.

 **INTERVIEW**

India's diplomatic "firsts" with European countries in 2025–26 (TEPA, EU FTA, Nordic Strategic Partnership) — are these genuine strategic depth improvements or largely transactional upgrades driven by the India-EU FTA negotiations?

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Question 29

of 30

[Source →](#)

Article 164(2) of the Constitution provides that the Council of Ministers shall be collectively responsible to the Legislative Assembly of the State. This principle of collective responsibility implies which of the following?

- A Each minister is individually accountable to the Governor and can be dismissed by the Governor independently of the CM.
- B **If the Council of Ministers loses the confidence of the Legislative Assembly, every minister — including the CM — must resign, even if individual ministers did not support the policy that triggered the vote of no-confidence. ✓**
- C Collective responsibility means ministers can publicly dissent from cabinet decisions but remain in office as long as they do not vote against the CM in the Assembly.
- D The CM alone is collectively responsible; individual ministers are only responsible to the CM, not to the Assembly.

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

 **EXPLANATION**

FACT: Collective responsibility (Article 164(2)) means the Council of Ministers stands and falls together before the Assembly. If a no-confidence motion passes, the entire cabinet resigns — including ministers who may have personally opposed the policy.

No minister can publicly dissent while remaining in cabinet; the "agree in cabinet or resign" convention applies.

Individual ministerial accountability to the Assembly is separate — individual ministers can be questioned in question hour — but the collective responsibility principle means the whole cabinet is bound by cabinet decisions.

ANALYSIS: This is distinct from individual ministerial responsibility (accounting to Parliament for their ministry's functioning).

 **CONCEPT NOTE**

Collective responsibility is a Westminster convention codified in Article 164(2) for states and Article 75(3) for the Union. Key implications: (a) Cabinet confidentiality — all cabinet deliberations are confidential so that decisions appear unanimous externally; (b) ministerial solidarity — once a decision is taken in cabinet, every minister must defend it publicly, regardless of their private view; (c) collective resignation — a vote of no-confidence against the CM brings down the whole cabinet, not just the CM. Exceptions in practice: Indian cabinets have tolerated "dissent within" in coalition governments (e.g., partners publicly opposing specific policies) — this is a political accommodation that technically strains the constitutional principle. VD Satheesan's simultaneous full-cabinet oath in Kerala (May 2026) is partly aimed at operationalising collective responsibility from Day 1 — all partners sworn in together have equal ownership of the government's mandate.

Q29  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS2 (collective vs individual ministerial responsibility, Article 164(2), Article 75(3), Westminster conventions in India, coalition cabinets).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

Collective responsibility, Article 164(2), vote of no-confidence, cabinet confidentiality, ministerial solidarity, coalition governance, Kerala swearing-in.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Confusing individual ministerial responsibility (a minister accounts to the Assembly/Parliament for their ministry) with collective responsibility (the whole cabinet is accountable as a unit, stands or falls together).

 **EXAM TIP**

Collective responsibility = whole cabinet resigns if no-confidence passes.
Individual responsibility = each minister answers in Question Hour for their ministry. Both derive from Westminster convention, both codified in Indian Constitution — Articles 164(2) and 75(3).

 **INTERVIEW**

Coalition governments in India regularly violate the spirit of collective responsibility by allowing coalition partners to publicly oppose specific policies while remaining in cabinet — should the Constitution be amended to formally codify when coalition "dissent" is permissible?

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Question 30

of 30

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The Arctic Council, of which India has been an observer since 2013, was established by the Ottawa Declaration in 1996. Which of the following is **NOT** one of the eight Arctic state members of the Arctic Council?

A Sweden

B Norway

C Iceland

D United Kingdom ✓

ANSWER & ANALYSIS

 **EXPLANATION**

FACT: The eight Arctic state members of the Arctic Council are: USA, Canada, Russia, Norway, Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Sweden, Finland, and Iceland. The United Kingdom is NOT an Arctic state and therefore not a full member — it is an observer.

The UK has significant Arctic research interests and a presence on Svalbard, but it lies south of the Arctic Circle. India is also an observer, along with China, Japan, South Korea, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Poland, Singapore, and Switzerland — 13 observers total.

ANALYSIS: UK being a European power with Arctic interests is a common confusion with full member status.

 **CONCEPT NOTE**

The Arctic Council was established by the 1996 Ottawa Declaration. Its mandate covers: sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.

It does NOT deal with military security (by its founding declaration). The eight "Arctic states" are defined as those with territory within the Arctic Circle: USA (Alaska), Canada, Russia, Norway, Denmark (Greenland), Sweden (northern tip), Finland (northern tip), Iceland.

India's Arctic interests: (a) climate science — Himadri station at Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard since 2008; (b) monsoon science — Arctic melt affects Indian Ocean circulation; (c) Northern Sea Route — would cut shipping costs significantly; (d) Arctic resources. India's Arctic Policy (2022) has six pillars.

Sweden and Finland are Arctic members despite being non-NATO members at the time of the Arctic Council's founding (both have since joined NATO — Finland in April 2023, Sweden in March 2024).

Q30  **CONCEPT KIT**
 **CROSS-PAPER**

GS1 (Arctic geography, circumpolar region); GS2 (Arctic Council, India's observer status, Arctic governance, multilateral forums).

 **MAINS KEYWORDS**

Arctic Council, Ottawa Declaration 1996, 8 Arctic states, observer states, India observer 2013, Himadri station, Northern Sea Route, Arctic Policy 2022.

 **COMMON MISTAKE**

Assuming the UK is an Arctic Council member because of its presence on Svalbard and significant Arctic research activity — the UK is an observer, not a full member, because it has no territory within the Arctic Circle.

 **EXAM TIP**

Arctic Council 8 members: USA, Canada, Russia, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Iceland.
 UK = Observer. India = Observer (since 2013).
 Secretariat = Tromsø, Norway. Founded = 1996 Ottawa Declaration.

 **INTERVIEW**

Russia's suspension from many Western-led multilateral forums (G8 → G7, Council of Europe) has not extended to the Arctic Council — is this appropriate given that Russia controls approximately 50% of the Arctic coastline and its cooperation is indispensable for Arctic governance?

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

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