Career Launcher IAS

UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS

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1. President Murmu presented with a Ramman mask

- **Festival Name:** Ramman
- **Location:** Twin villages of Saloor-Dungra, Chamoli district, Uttarakhand
- **Time of Celebration:** Annually in late April during Baisakhi
- **Dedicated To:** Bhumiyal Devta, the local tutelary deity
- **Recognized By:** UNESCO (2009) – listed as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

Cultural and Religious Significance

- A multiform cultural event combining theatre, music, dance, and oral traditions.
- Reflects the community's environmental, spiritual, and cultural identity.
- Strengthens the sense of belonging and continuity among villagers.
- Aims to preserve and transmit traditional knowledge beyond its local boundaries.

Festival Highlights and Rituals

- Begins with invocation to Lord Ganesha.
- Includes the dance of the Sun God, and the myth of Brahma and Ganesha's birth.
- Features Bur Deva's dance and performances of Krishna and Radhika.

- Central performance: Local Ramkatha (tale of Lord Rama) – sung and danced to 324 beats and steps.
- 18 different masks (made of Bhojpatra / Himalayan birch) used in the enactments.

Origins and Historical Background

- Exact origin unknown, traced to medieval times.
- Linked to the arrival of Vaishnavite saints who spread Ram Bhakti in the Garhwal Himalayas.
- Initially a purely religious tradition, later incorporated local folklore for entertainment.
- D P Sakalani's work ("The Rāmāyamā Tradition in Central Himalaya") documents its evolution.

Folk Elements and Local Legends

- **Incorporates non-Ramayana acts reflecting local life and challenges:**
  - **Mwar-Mwarin dance:** Depicts buffalo herders' perilous journey and a tiger attack.
  - **Baniya-Baniyain Nritya**: Portrays hardships and robbery of a merchant couple.
- Reflects everyday struggles and social realities of the Garhwal people.
- **Social and Caste Dimensions**
  - **Brahmins:** Lead prayers and rituals.
  - **Bhandaris (Rajputs):** Solely entitled to wear the Narasimha mask.
  - **Das drummers :** Play drums during performances.
  - **Jagaris/Bhallas (Rajputs):** Act as bards, singing Jagar – musical renditions of legends.
- Recreates the traditional caste hierarchy within ritual roles.

Connection with Nature and Local Materials

- Celebrates the bond between humans, nature, and the divine.
  - **Ritual offerings:** Sprouted maize and barley seeds to Bhumiyal Devta for prosperity and fertility.
  - **Mask make-up materials:** Sheep's wool, honey, vermilion, wheat flour, oil, turmeric, soot, and local plants/vegetables.

Essence of Ramman

- A vibrant fusion of devotion, folklore, and community life.
- Symbolizes heritage continuity, ecological respect, and social identity.
- A living example of how ritual, art, and environment coexist in the Himalayas.

1. UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Uttarakhand

Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks

- **Location:** Chamoli district (Nanda Devi) and nearby areas
- Inscribed: 1988
- Nanda Devi National Park: Known for the Nanda Devi peak and high-altitude ecosystems.
- **Valley of Flowers:** Famous for alpine flowers and biodiversity.

2. Cultural and Heritage Recognition

- Haridwar and Rishikesh: Pilgrimage sites along the Ganges.
- Jim Corbett National Park: India's first national park (though not a UNESCO site).
- Ancient temples in Dehradun, Almora, and Pithoragarh districts.

3. UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage

- Some cultural practices and festivals in Uttarakhand are recognized or considered for safeguarding under UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage program. These include:
  - Folk music and dances like Jagar and Chholiya.
  - Traditional craft forms and rituals.

Uttarakhand

- **Location:** Northern India, bordered by Himachal Pradesh (NW), Uttar Pradesh (S), Nepal (E), and Tibet/China (N).
- **Capital:** Dehradun (winter), Gairsain (summer; legislative).
- **Formation:** Became the 27th state of India on 9 November 2000, carved out from Uttar Pradesh.
- **Nickname:** "Land of the Gods" (Devbhumi), due to numerous Hindu temples and pilgrimage sites.
- **Terrain:** Predominantly Himalayan region, with dense forests, rivers, and valleys.

Religious Significance:

- Home to Char Dham pilgrimage: Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath, Badrinath.
- Haridwar and Rishikesh are globally renowned spiritual centers.

Natural Beauty & Biodiversity:

- Rich in flora and fauna, including Jim Corbett National Park (India's first national park).
- Known for glacial rivers, waterfalls, and hill stations like Nainital, Mussoorie, and Auli.

Adventure Tourism Hub:

- Famous for trekking, river rafting, skiing, paragliding, and mountaineering.

Hydroelectric Power Potential:

- Numerous rivers like Ganga, Alaknanda, and Bhagirathi make it a major hydroelectric power contributor.

Cultural Heritage:

- Unique folk dances, music, and handicrafts like woolen clothing and wooden carvings.

Environmental Consciousness:

- One of the cleanest and greenest states in India.
- Strong emphasis on forest conservation and eco-tourism.

Strategic Location:

- Shares a border with China (Tibet) and Nepal; important for defense and border security.

QUESTIONS

1. With reference to the Ramman Festival of Uttarakhand, consider the following statements:

1. It is celebrated during the month of April in the twin villages of Saloor-Dungra.
2. Masks made of Bhojpatra, a Himalayan birch, are used during performances.
3. It was inscribed in UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2019.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

2. Consider the following statements about the Ramman Festival:

1. It is dedicated to Bhumiyal Devta, the local guardian deity.
2. The festival consists of storytelling, ritual theatre, and masked dance performances.
3. It is celebrated in the Kumaon region and marked by the worship of Nanda Devi.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

3. With reference to the Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks, consider the following statements:

1. The site was initially inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site only for Nanda Devi National Park.
2. The Valley of Flowers was added to the World Heritage Site only after its recognition as a Biosphere Reserve.
3. The site includes a buffer zone that surrounds the two core areas.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

4. With reference to national parks in Uttarakhand, consider the following statements:

1. Jim Corbett National Park is the oldest national park in India.
2. Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers are part of a single UNESCO World Heritage Site.
3. Rajaji National Park lies entirely within the Kumaon region.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

5. Consider the following national parks in Uttarakhand:

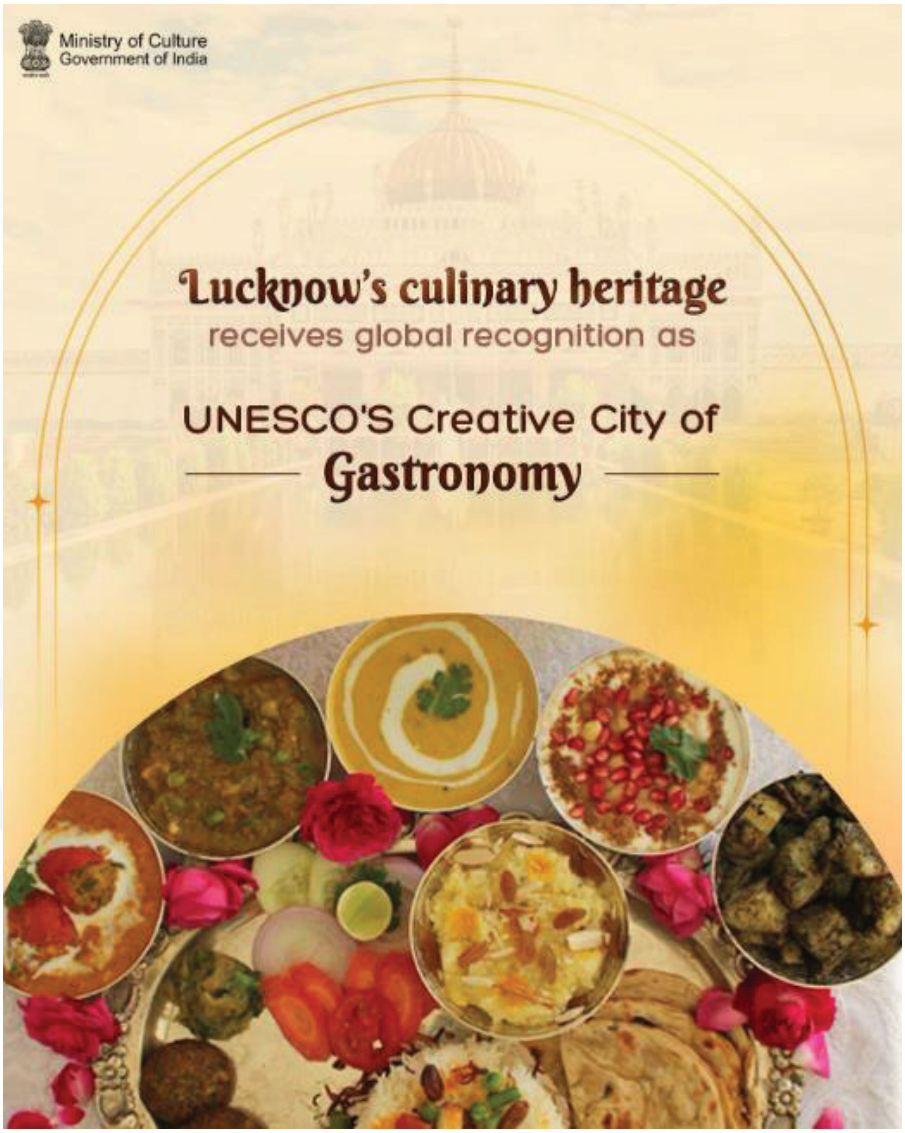
1. Gangotri National Park
2. Govind Pashu Vihar National Park
3. Jim Corbett National Park

Which of the above are located in the Garhwal region?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

2. Lucknow joins UNESCO's list of Creative Cities of Gastronomy

- **Event:** Declared during the 43rd Session of the UNESCO General Conference held in Uzbekistan.
- **Category:** Recognized as a 'Creative City of Gastronomy'.
- **Significance:** Marks global acknowledgment of Lucknow's rich and historic Awadhi cuisine and culinary traditions.



Celebration of Culinary Heritage

- Highlights centuries-old Awadhi cuisine, famous for its royal lineage, slow-cooking techniques (dum pukht), and rich flavors.
- Recognizes Lucknow's living food traditions, inclusive culinary culture, and heritage of hospitality.
- Positions the city as a symbol of cultural diplomacy and sustainable tourism through food.

Milestone for Uttar Pradesh

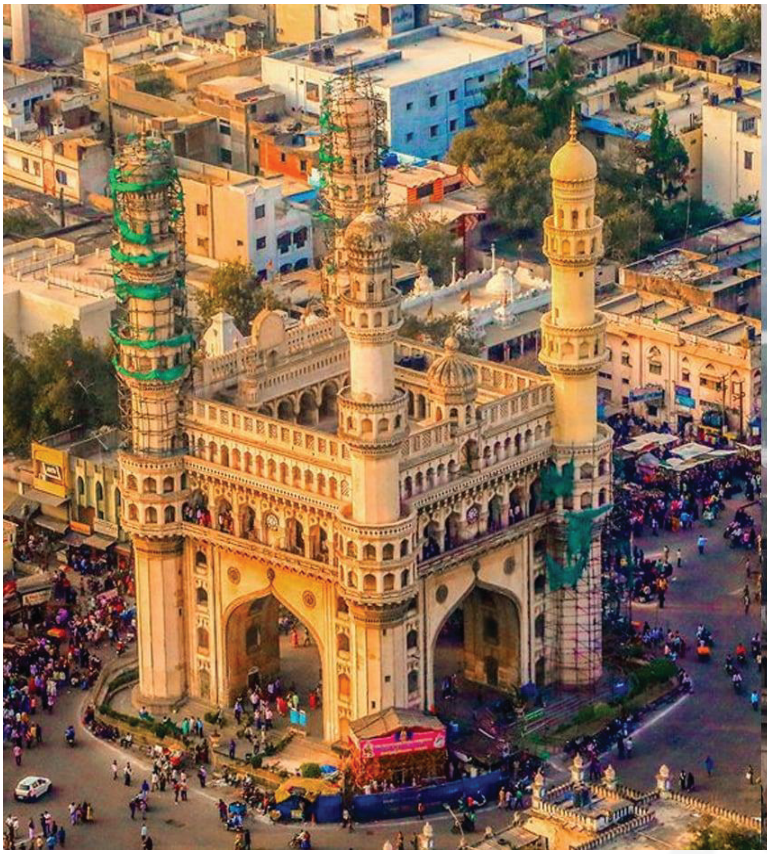
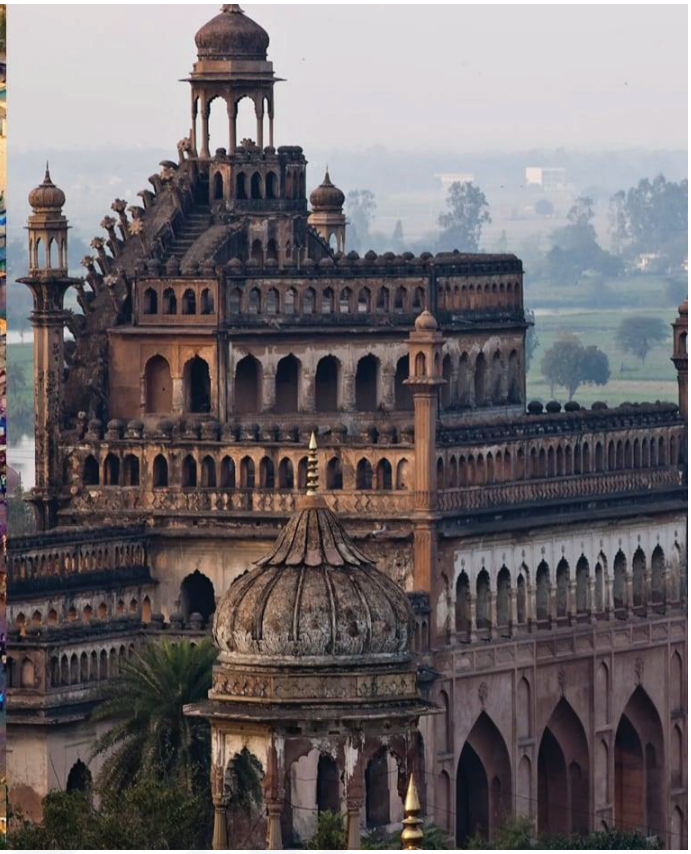
- The U.P. Government called the UNESCO tag a major milestone for the state.
- It places Lucknow among the world's top gastronomic destinations.
- Reinforces the idea that food heritage can drive international recognition and foster economic growth.

Hyderabad is the first Indian city to receive the UNESCO "City of Gastronomy" tag

- Hyderabad was designated by UNESCO as a "City of Gastronomy" in its Creative Cities Network in 2019, in the field of gastronomy.
- Under UNESCO's criteria for a "City of Gastronomy", the city must have a well-developed food culture, use indigenous ingredients and traditional cooking methods, host food-related festivals or events, and foster sustainable food systems.

Why Hyderabad earned the recognition

- Hyderabad's cuisine is a rich fusion: rooted in the local Telugu/Deccan traditions, but also drawing heavily on Persian, Turkish, Mughal and Arabic influences.

Signature dishes:

- The famous Hyderabadi biryani — layers of rice and meat cooked in the "dum" method with saffron, spices, and aromatics.
- **Haleem** — particularly popular during Ramadan, a slow-cooked stew of meat, wheat, lentils and spices.

Food-culture impact:

- The food sector in Hyderabad employs a significant fraction of the population (estimates suggest ~12% of city's workforce is directly or indirectly involved) in gastronomy-related activities.
- **Urban food-ecosystem initiatives:** The city has set up free vending zones, self-help groups for women in food businesses, and has undertaken measures to document and preserve its gastronomic heritage.

Significance & what it means

- The UNESCO tag doesn't only celebrate the dishes — it emphasises food as cultural heritage, living traditions, craftsmanship of cooking, local agriculture/ingredients, and sustainable practices.
- **For Hyderabad, this recognition helps:**
  - Promote food tourism (people visit for the cuisine as part of culture)
  - Highlight the socio-economic role of traditional food sectors
  - Encourage preservation of cooking techniques, recipes, and culinary identity

UNESCO World Heritage Sites

- UNESCO World Heritage Sites are landmarks or areas recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for their outstanding universal value to humanity.
- These sites are protected under the World Heritage Convention, which was adopted in 1972.

Categories of World Heritage Sites

Cultural Sites

- Represent human creativity, history, architecture, or traditions.
- **Examples:**
  - The Pyramids of Giza (Egypt)
  - The Great Wall (China)
  - Machu Picchu (Peru)
  - The Acropolis (Greece)

Natural Sites

- Feature natural phenomena, geological formations, or exceptional biodiversity.
- **Examples:**
  - Yellowstone National Park (USA)
  - Great Barrier Reef (Australia)
  - Galápagos Islands (Ecuador)
  - Serengeti National Park (Tanzania)

Mixed Sites

- Have both cultural and natural significance.
- **Examples:**
  - Mount Athos (Greece)
  - Machu Picchu (Peru)
  - Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park (Australia)

Statistics (as of 2025)

- **Total World Heritage Sites:** Over 1,200
- **Countries with Sites:** More than 165
- **Top 5 Countries (by number of sites):**
  - Italy
  - China
  - Germany
  - France
  - Spain

How Sites Are Selected

- **To be included on the list, a site must meet at least one of ten criteria, such as:**
  - Representing a masterpiece of human creative genius
  - Exhibiting an important interchange of human values
  - Containing exceptional natural beauty
  - Being an outstanding example of an ecosystem or biological process

Endangered Sites

- **Some sites are placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger due to:**
  - Conflict or war
  - Climate change
  - Urban development
  - Natural disasters or poor conservation
- **Examples include:**
  - The Historic Centre of Vienna (Austria)
  - Everglades National Park (USA)
  - Timbuktu (Mali)

6. Consider the following pairs of Indian cities and their respective creative fields in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network:

City	Category
1. Jaipur	Film
2. Mumbai	Music
3. Kozhikode	Literature
4. Gwalior	Music

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. Only three
D. All four

7. With reference to UNESCO's Creative Cities Network (UCCN) in India, consider the following statements:

1. Hyderabad was the first Indian city to be designated a "City of Gastronomy."
2. Varanasi and Chennai have both been recognized for their contribution to Music.
3. No Indian city has been recognized under the category of Design as of 2025.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

8. With reference to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN), consider the following statements:

1. The UCCN was established in 2004 to promote cultural cooperation and sustainable urban development.
2. Creative City designations include categories such as Literature, Media Arts, and Gastronomy.
3. Architecture has been included as a creative field of the UCCN since its inception.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

9. With reference to the recognition of Lucknow as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, consider the following statements:

1. Lucknow received this recognition at the 43rd Session of the UNESCO General Conference held in Uzbekistan.
2. Awadhi cuisine is central to Lucknow's selection and is known for slow-cooking techniques such as dum pukht.

3. Lucknow is the first Indian city to receive the UNESCO Gastronomy tag.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
C. All three
B. Only two
D. None

10. With reference to the criteria for a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, consider the following statements:

1. A city must have traditional ingredients, culinary knowledge, and food-related festivals.
2. Sustainability and community participation are part of the evaluation criteria.
3. Only cities with pre-existing UNESCO World Heritage Sites are eligible for the Gastronomy category.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
C. All three
B. Only two
D. None

3. ISRO's heaviest communication satellite launch

1. Upcoming Milestone Launch

- **Event:** LVM3 launched communication satellite CMS-03.
- **Significance:**
  First >4,000 kg Indian satellite to be launched into geosynchronous transfer orbit (GTO) from Indian soil.
- **Satellite weight:** 4,410 kg.
- **Target orbit:** 170 km × 29,970 km elliptical transfer orbit.

2. Evolution and Capability of LVM3

- **Full form**: Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (earlier GSLV Mk-3).
- **Propulsion**: Uses solid, liquid, and cryogenic engines.
- **Payload capacity:**
  - Up to 8,000 kg → Low Earth Orbit (LEO).
  - Up to 4,000 kg → Geosynchronous Orbit (GTO) (~36,000 km).
- **Adaptability:**
  - Initially designed for heavy communication satellites.
  - Modified in 2022 to launch 72 OneWeb satellites amid the Russia–Ukraine crisis.
  - OneWeb missions: Carried ~5,700 kg payloads to 450 km LEO.

3. Shift from Foreign Launchers

- **Heavier Indian satellites (>4,000 kg) were previously launched abroad:**
  - GSAT-11 (5,854 kg) and GSAT-24 (4,181 kg) by Arianespace.
  - GSAT-20 (4,700 kg) by SpaceX in 2024.
  - CMS-03 marks a major step toward self-reliant heavy satellite launches.

4. Overcoming Weight Limitations

- The CMS-03 (4,410 kg) launch exceeds standard 4,000 kg capacity.
- Achieved by slightly lowering orbit apogee (max altitude ~29,970 km).
- ISRO is actively working on enhancing payload capability.

5. Planned Upgrades to LVM3

a. Cryogenic Upper Stage Enhancement

Current C25 stage:

- **Propellant:** 28,000 kg.
- **Thrust:** 20 tonnes.
- **Future C32 stage:**
  - **Propellant:** 32,000 kg.
  - **Thrust:** 22 tonnes.
- Provides nearly 50% of total velocity required for GTO insertion.

b. Semi-Cryogenic Second Stage Development

- Planned replacement of current liquid engine with semi-cryogenic engine.
- Fuel: Refined kerosene + liquid oxygen (LOX).

Benefits:

- Higher efficiency and thrust.
- Lower cost.
- Increased LEO payload capacity from 8,000 kg → 10,000 kg.

6. Relevance for Future Missions

Enhanced LVM3 will support:

- Gaganyaan (human spaceflight) missions.
- Bharatiya Antariksh Station: Launching its first and lightest module.
- ISRO developing Lunar Module Launch Vehicle (LMLV):
- Capable of carrying ~80,000 kg to LEO.
- Designed for future human Moon missions.

7. Performance Record

- **LVM3:** 7 launches → 100% success rate.
- **Notable missions:** Chandrayaan-2, Chandrayaan-3, GSAT-19, GSAT-29.
- **GSLV:** 18 launches → 4 failures.
- **PSLV:** 63 launches → 3 failures (latest in May 2025, EOS-9 mission).
- **First LVM3 flight (2014):**
    - Tested crew module re-entry, critical for human spaceflight safety.

Communication Satellite

- A communication satellite is an artificial satellite that is primarily used to relay and amplify radio, television, telephone, internet, and military communications over long distances on Earth.
- These satellites make global communication possible, especially in areas where ground-based infrastructure is difficult or impossible to install.
    - **Purpose:** To transmit signals from one point on Earth to another by receiving signals, amplifying them, and then retransmitting them back.
    - **Orbit:** Most communication satellites are placed in geostationary orbit (GEO) about 35,786 km above the equator, allowing them to stay fixed relative to a point on Earth. Others use low Earth orbit (LEO) or medium Earth orbit (MEO) for certain applications.
    - **Frequency Bands:** They use microwave frequency bands such as C-band, Ku-band, Ka-band for data transmission.
    - **Transponders:** The satellite carries transponders, which receive signals from Earth (uplink), amplify them, and retransmit them back to Earth (downlink).

Applications

- **Television broadcasting:** Direct-to-home TV services.
- **Telephone communication:** International phone calls.
- **Internet services:** Satellite internet, especially in remote areas.
- **Military communications:** Secure communication for defense purposes.
- **Navigation:** Some satellites also support GPS and other location services.

Advantages

- Wide coverage, including remote areas.
- Rapid deployment compared to terrestrial networks.
- Reliable in adverse weather or terrain conditions.

Disadvantages

- High initial cost of launch and maintenance.
- Signal delay (latency), especially for GEO satellites.
- Vulnerable to space debris and solar radiation.

QUESTIONS

11. With reference to ISRO's CMS-03 satellite, consider the following statements:

1. CMS-03 is India's heaviest communication satellite launched from Indian soil.
2. It was launched using the LVM3 launch vehicle.
3. It replaces GSAT-7 (Rukmini), which had completed its mission life.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
C. All three
B. Only two
D. None

12. With reference to the Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM3), consider the following statements:

1. LVM3 can place up to 8,000 kg into Low Earth Orbit (LEO).
2. It uses solid, liquid, and cryogenic engines in different stages.
3. It was rebranded from GSLV Mk-3 after successful lunar and human spaceflight test missions.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
C. All three
B. Only two
D. None

13. Consider the following pairs regarding Indian space missions and corresponding launch vehicles:

Mission	Launch Vehicle
1. Chandrayaan-3	LVM3
2. GSAT-11	PSLV
3. OneWeb satellite batch	LVM3

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

A. Only one
C. All three
B. Only two
D. None

14. Which of the following improvements are being planned for the LVM3 launcher to support future missions?

1. Increasing cryogenic upper stage thrust with a new C32 engine.
2. Replacing the liquid second stage with a semi-cryogenic engine.
3. Reducing payload capacity to improve stability during launch.

How many of the above statements are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

15. With reference to communication satellites, consider the following statements:

1. Most communication satellites are placed in geostationary orbit (GEO).
2. Communication satellites use transponders to receive, amplify, and retransmit signals.
3. All communication satellites are limited to using C-band and Ka-band frequencies.

How many of the above statements are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

4. Burevestnik missile

- Russia's Burevestnik (SSC-X-9 Skyfall) nuclear-powered cruise missile:

Overview

- **Name:** 9M730 Burevestnik (Russian for storm petrel); NATO designation: SSC-X-9 Skyfall.

- **Type**: Nuclear-powered, nuclear-armed cruise missile.
- **Announced by**: Russian President Vladimir Putin in March 2018.
- **Purpose:** Designed for unlimited range, unpredictable trajectory, and ability to evade all missile defenses.

Technical and Operational Features

- **Propulsion:** Powered by a miniature nuclear reactor that heats incoming air for thrust, replacing chemical combustion.
- **Theoretical range**: Unlimited, limited only by material endurance and guidance systems.
- **Flight profile:** Low-flying cruise missile, harder to detect than ballistic or hypersonic missiles.
- **Endurance:** Can stay airborne for hours or days; claimed test lasted 14,000 km in 15 hours (October 2023 test).
- **Intended capability:** Circumnavigate the globe and strike from unexpected directions.

Science Behind Nuclear Propulsion

- Uses nuclear energy to continuously power propulsion, unlike traditional fuel-limited engines.
- Concept similar to the U.S. Project Pluto (1960s), which tested a nuclear ramjet (SLAM) but was never deployed due to safety and feasibility issues.

Testing History and Accidents

- **2017–2021:** At least 13 test attempts at Novaya Zemlya and Pankovo; most failed within minutes.
- **2019 Nyonoksa accident:** Explosion killed five nuclear specialists and caused radiation release (iodine-131 detected in Norway).
- Frequent failures suggest difficulty in sustaining controlled nuclear-powered flight.
- Recent test (Oct 2023) claimed successful 14,000 km flight, but no independent verification exists.

Possible Deployment

- **Suspected site:** Near Vologda-20 (Chebsara), about 475 km north of Moscow, adjacent to a nuclear warhead storage facility (identified by U.S. researchers in 2024).

Strategic and Geopolitical Implications

- **New START Treaty:** Limits deployed strategic nuclear warheads and launchers; extended until 2026, but Russia suspended participation in 2023.
- Burevestnik is not covered by the treaty as it represents a new class of nuclear-powered weapons.
- Seen as Russia's signal to bypass existing arms-control limits and revive the nuclear arms race.
- **Putin's message:** Russia seeks strategic superiority and deterrence beyond treaty constraints.

Key Takeaways

- **Innovation:** First modern attempt at a nuclear-powered cruise missile.
- **Risk:** High radiation hazards, technical instability, and environmental danger.
- **Reality check:** Despite Russia's claims, operational reliability remains unproven.
- **Strategic motive:** Demonstrate power, deterrence, and challenge to U.S./NATO defense systems amid arms control breakdown.

16. With reference to Russia's Burevestnik missile, consider the following statements:

1. It is a nuclear-powered cruise missile designed for unlimited range.
2. It replaces traditional chemical propulsion with a miniature nuclear reactor.
3. It follows a high-altitude ballistic trajectory similar to intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

17. Consider the following statements regarding Anti-Satellite (A-SAT) Missile:

1. 'Mission Shakti' was the country's first-ever Anti-Satellite (ASAT) Missile Test.
2. The conduct of Mission Shakti made India the fourth nation in the world with the capability to defend its assets in outer space.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

18. Consider the following statements:

1. Ballistic missiles are jet-propelled at subsonic speeds throughout their flights, while cruise missiles are rocket powered only in the initial phase of flight.
2. Agni-V is a medium-range supersonic cruise missile, while BrahMos is a solid-fuelled intercontinental ballistic missile.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

19. With reference to the BrahMos missile, consider the following statements:

1. It has a flight range of up to 290 km.
2. It is capable of attaining a speed of 2.8 Mach.
3. Its cruising altitude could be up to 30 km.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

20. With reference to nuclear-armed states and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), consider the following statements:

1. All nuclear-armed states have formally acknowledged their nuclear weapons programmes.
2. India, Pakistan, and Israel have never signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
3. North Korea withdrew from the NPT after initially acceding to it.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

5. QS World University Rankings Asia 2026

- The global higher education analysts QS Quacquarelli Symonds has released the QS World University Rankings: Asia 2026.
- As per the rankings, University of Hong Kong has been named the best university in Asia.
- While, Hong Kong dominates the top tier, with five institutions among Asia's top 10, representation of Indian universities has increased to 1,125 per cent.
- India's representation in the QS Asia rankings has surged from 24 institutions in 2016 to 294 in 2026.
- Seven Indian universities are placed in the top 100, 20 in the top 200 and 66 in the top 500.
- IIT Delhi remains India's highest-ranked institution for the fifth straight year, placing at joint 59th position.
- Nineteen Indian universities achieved their highest-ever performance, including Chandigarh University, BITS Pilani, Shoolini University and OP Jindal Global University.

The following is the list of the top institutions in India as per QS World University Rankings: Asia 2026

- Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IITD)
- Indian Institute of Science
- Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM)
- Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IITB)

- Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IITK)
- Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur (IIT-KGP)
- University of Delhi
- Chandigarh University
- Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee (IITR)
- Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati (IITG)
- Jawaharlal Nehru University
- Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani
- Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), Vellore, India
- Shoolini University of Biotechnology and Management Sciences
- O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU)

QS World University Rankings

- Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings 2025:

Top 10 Universities Globally

- Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA — Ranked #1.
- Imperial College London, UK — Moved up to #2.
- University of Oxford, UK — Ranked #3.
- Harvard University, USA — Ranked #4.
- University of Cambridge, UK — Ranked #5.
- Stanford University, USA — Ranked #6.
- ETH Zürich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology), Switzerland — Ranked #7.
- National University of Singapore (NUS), Singapore — Ranked #8.
- University College London (UCL), UK — Ranked #9.
- California Institute of Technology (Caltech), USA — Ranked #10.

2025 edition

- The 2025 edition ranked around 1,500 universities across 100+ countries and territories.
- The methodology includes factors such as academic reputation, employer reputation, and faculty/student ratio, citations per faculty, international faculty/students, and newer indicators like sustainability.
- For example, Imperial College London's rise was attributed to strong performance in the "Sustainability" metric and improved citations per faculty.
- On the Indian front: Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT Bombay) entered the top 150 at rank 118; Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT Delhi) was at rank 150; Indian Institute of Science (IISc) at around 211.

QUESTIONS

21. With reference to the QS World University Rankings 2025, consider the following statements:

1. In the 2025 rankings, MIT retained its position as the top-ranked university in the world.
2. The rankings consider sustainability as one of their evaluation criteria.
3. IIT Bombay was the highest-ranked Indian institution in the top 150 globally in 2025.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

22. Consider the following statements:

1. As per the Right to Education (RTE) Act, to be eligible for appointment as a teacher in a state, a person would be required to possess the minimum qualification laid down by the concerned State Council of Teacher Education.
2. As per the RTE Act, for teaching primary classes, a candidate is required to pass a Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) conducted in accordance with the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) guidelines.
3. In India, more than 90% of teacher education institutions are directly under the State Governments.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 and 2 only
B. 2 only
C. 1 and 3 only
D. 3 only

6. 2025 Women's Cricket World Cup

- The 2025 ICC Women's Cricket World Cup was the 13th edition of Women's Cricket World Cup.
- India hosted the World Cup for the fourth time, after the 1978, 1997 and 2013 editions, with the tournament held from 30 September to 2 November 2025.
- This was the last time the tournament had eight teams. India became champions after defeating South Africa in the final, securing their maiden World Cup title.
- The opening ceremony was held in Assam Cricket Association Stadium, Guwahati ahead of the tournament opener between India and Sri Lanka on 30 September.
- Indian singer Shreya Ghoshal performed the official World Cup anthem, "Bring it Home".
- The International Cricket Council (ICC) announced a prize fee of a total of $13.88 million.

- This marks a 297% increase in the total prize pool compared to the USD 3.5 million announced for the 2022 edition in New Zealand, and even surpasses the total prize money of the 2023 Men's Cricket World Cup.
- The winner's purse of USD 6.58 million also exceeds the USD 4 million awarded in the men's 2023 edition, highlighting a landmark commitment to gender equity in cricket.

2025 Women's Cricket World Cup final

- The 2025 ICC Women's Cricket World Cup final was a Women's One Day International (WODI) cricket match played at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai on 2 November 2025 to decide the winner of the 2025 Women's Cricket World Cup.
- It was played between host nation India and South Africa.
- This was the second time that Women's Cricket World Cup final was held in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region after 2013, and the first in Navi Mumbai.
- India defeated South Africa by 52 runs to win their maiden World Cup.
- The 2025 Women's Cricket World Cup is the thirteenth edition of the Women's Cricket World Cup, a quadrennial World Cup for Women's cricket in One Day International (ODI) format organised by the International Cricket Council (ICC).
- In July 2022, the ICC announced India as the host nation for the tournament, as part of the 2024–2027 ICC Women's Hosts Cycle.
- However, following an agreement between the BCCI and PCB, the ICC confirmed that matches between India or Pakistan at ICC events in 2024–2027 will be played at neutral venues when either of them are the hosts.
- On 2 June, the ICC announced the venues for the tournament, with the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru named as the venue for the final.
- However, on 22 August, a revised list of venues was released, in which the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai replaced Bengaluru as the final venue.
- This is South Africa's maiden final of the Women's World Cup, while India reached their third final, having been runners-up on both the occasions (2005 against Australia and 2017 against England).
- It is also the first Women's World Cup final that will not feature Australia or England.
- India won their maiden World Cup title.
- Laura Wolvaardt (SA) became the first captain to score a century in the Women's World Cup final.

ICC Women's One Day International (ODI) Cricket World Cup

- The ICC Women's One Day International (ODI) Cricket World Cup is the premier international championship of women's One Day International cricket, organized by the International Cricket Council (ICC).
- The ICC announced the team of the tournament on 4 November 2025, with Deepti Sharma being named as player of the tournament and Laura Wolvaardt as captain of the team.[
    - **First tournament:** 1973 (two years before the men's World Cup!)
    - **Format:** 50-over One Day Internationals (ODIs)
    - **Frequency:** Every 4 years
    - **Organizer:** International Cricket Council (ICC)
    - **2022 Champions:** Australia (won the 2022 edition)
    - **Most titles:** Australia – 7 titles

Past Winners

Year	Host(s)	Winner	Runner-up
1973	England	England	Australia
1978	India	Australia	England
1982	New Zealand	Australia	England
1988	Australia	Australia	England
1993	England	England	New Zealand
1997	India	Australia	New Zealand
2000	New Zealand	New Zealand	Australia
2005	South Africa	Australia	India
2009	Australia	England	New Zealand
2013	India	Australia	West Indies
2017	England	England	India
2022	New Zealand	Australia	England

QUESTIONS

23. With reference to the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025, consider the following statements:

1. India won the tournament by defeating Australia in the final.
2. The 2025 World Cup was co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka.
3. It was the last edition of the Women's World Cup to feature eight teams.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

24. Consider the following pairs of players and awards received during the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025:

Player	Award
1. Shafali Verma	Player of the Tournament
2. Deepti Sharma	Player of the Match (Final)
3. Jemimah Rodrigues	Match-winning century in semifinal

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

25. Which of the following events occurred during the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025?

1. India became the first team to win a Women's World Cup hosted in the subcontinent.
2. England hosted the tournament for the fourth time.
3. West Indies Women did not qualify due to a marginal net run rate difference.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
C. All three
B. Only two
D. None

26. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the history of the Women's Cricket World Cup?

1. The first edition of the Women's World Cup was held in England in 1973, two years before the first Men's World Cup.
2. England won the inaugural edition under the captaincy of Rachael Heyhoe Flint.
3. The inaugural Women's World Cup was decided through a knockout final.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
C. All three
B. Only two
D. None

27. Which of the following pairs regarding India's Women's Cricket World Cup final outcomes are correctly matched?

Year	Opponent in Final	Result
1. 2005	Australia	Lost by 98 runs
2. 2017	England	Lost by 9 runs
3. 2025	South Africa	Won by 52 runs

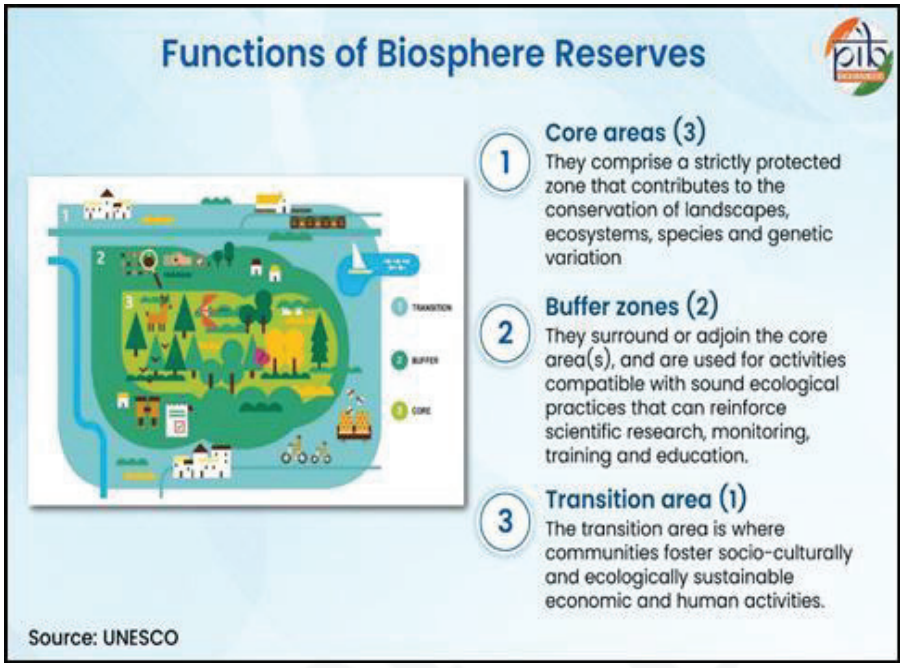
How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

A. Only one
C. All three
B. Only two
D. None

7. International Day of Biosphere Reserves

- The country has 18 Biosphere Reserves covering 91,425 sq. km, with 13 recognized by UNESCO.
- The programme operates under a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with a 60:40 funding pattern, and 90:10 for North Eastern and Himalayan states.
- India ranks 9th globally in forest area and 3rd in annual forest gain (FAO, 2025).

- The inclusion of the Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve in 2025 underscores India's growing global conservation role.
- Biodiversity conservation budget has doubled from Rs. 5 crore in 2024-25 to Rs. 10 crore in 2025-26.
- Biosphere Reserves link biodiversity protection with community welfare and sustainable livelihood opportunities.
- National initiatives like Project Tiger, Project Elephant, and Green India Mission complement Biosphere Reserve efforts.



Introduction

- On November 3, the world observes the International Day for Biosphere Reserves, celebrating regions where nature and communities coexist in harmony.
- These reserves serve as living laboratories that demonstrate practical models of sustainable development, environmental conservation, and community well-being.
- Designated by UNESCO, the day underscores the importance of biosphere reserves as vital platforms for advancing scientific research, preserving ecological and cultural diversity, and fostering a balanced relationship between people and the planet.
- India celebrates this day alongside the world, highlighting its strong network of biosphere reserves that stretch across diverse terrains: mountains, forests, coasts, and islands.
- These areas demonstrate India's commitment to conserving biodiversity and fostering harmonious living between people and nature through both national initiatives and international frameworks like the UNESCO Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme.
- The Government of India's ongoing efforts reinforce the potential of biosphere reserves to protect ecological riches and promote the well-being of present and future generations.
- These reserves continue to prove that sustainable living and conservation can go hand in hand.

What are Biosphere Reserves?

- Biosphere reserves are areas identified by national governments for conserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable development.
- They have been described as 'learning places for sustainable development'.
- They are sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity.
- Biosphere reserves include terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems.
- Each site promotes solutions reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use.
- Biosphere reserves are nominated by national governments and remain under the sovereign jurisdiction of the states where they are located.
- BRs are thus special environments for both people and the nature and are living examples of how human beings and nature can co-exist while respecting each other's needs.

- More than 260 million (26 Crore) people live in biosphere reserves across the world.
- Altogether, these sites protect more than 7 million km2, an expanse roughly equal to the size of Australia.

UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme

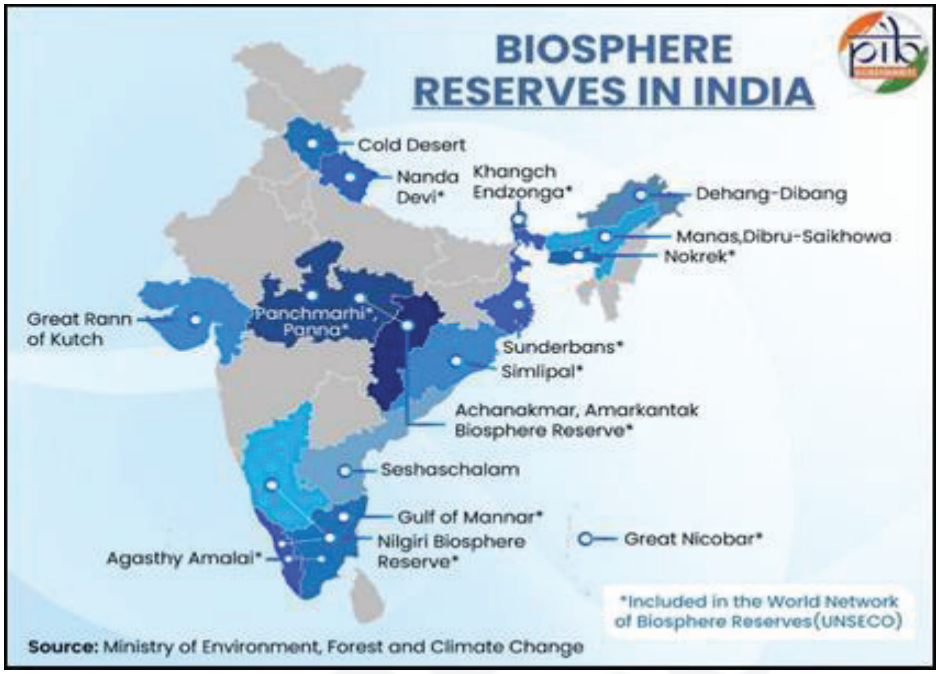
- Biosphere Reserves are areas of terrestrial, coastal or ecosystems internationally recognized under UNESCO's Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme.
- These reserves must meet specific criteria and conditions before being included in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) designated by UNESCO.
- The network represents the world's major ecosystem types and landscapes, dedicated to conserving biodiversity, promoting research and monitoring, and providing models of sustainable development.
- It combines the natural and social sciences with a view to improving human livelihoods and safeguarding natural and managed ecosystems, thus promoting innovative approaches to economic development that are socially and culturally appropriate and environmentally sustainable.
- By focusing on sites internationally recognized within the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, the MAB Programme strives to
- Identify and assess the changes in the biosphere resulting from human and natural activities and the effects of these changes on humans and the environment, in particular in the context of climate change.
- Study the interrelationships between ecosystems and socio-economic processes amid loss of biological & cultural diversity that hinders ecosystems provision of services for human wellbeing
- Ensure basic human welfare and a liveable environment in the context of rapid urbanization and energy consumption as drivers of environmental change.

- Promote the exchange and transfer of knowledge on environmental problems and solutions, and to foster environmental education for sustainable development.
- The WNBR forms a dynamic network of sites of excellence that encourages collaboration across regions and fosters international cooperation through exchange of experiences, capacity-building, and promotion of best practices among Biosphere Reserves.
- The MAB Programme operates under the guidance of UNESCO Member States.
- Its main governing body is the International Coordinating Council (MAB-ICC), also known as MAB Council, which is composed of 34 Member States.

Biosphere Reserves in India

- India has 18 notified Biosphere Reserves covering approximately 91,425 sq. km, of which 13 are recognized by UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR).
- These reserves span diverse landscapes, from mountains and forests to coasts and islands, showcasing India's ecological richness and commitment to conserving biodiversity while supporting local communities.

- The Biosphere Reserve Division of the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC) administers a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) for Biodiversity Conservation, which operates as a sub-scheme under the broader Conservation of Natural Resources and Ecosystems (CNRE) programme.
- The scheme provides financial assistance to states for targeted conservation and development activities, with implementation primarily handled by State Forest Departments.



- The scheme follows a cost-sharing model: **60:40 (Central: State) and 90:10** for the North Eastern and Himalayan states.
- The budget allocation for biodiversity conservation under CNRE has doubled from Rs. 5 crore in 2024-25 to Rs. 10 crore in 2025-26, highlighting the government's increasing commitment to sustainable ecosystem management.
- What sets this scheme apart is its focus on local communities, particularly those living in and around Biosphere Reserves.
- By promoting alternative livelihoods, eco-development activities, and sustainable resource management, the scheme helps reduce biotic pressure on core biodiversity zones.
- Special emphasis is placed on buffer and transition zones, providing supplementary support to minimize dependence on critical ecosystems and ensure long-term sustainability.
- India's Biosphere Reserves not only conserve biodiversity but also serve as living laboratories for sustainable development, integrating ecological protection with community welfare.
- They complement other national initiatives, such as Project Tiger, Project Elephant, Green India Mission, and the National Biodiversity Action Plan, creating a holistic framework for conservation and sustainable livelihoods.
- In essence, India's Biosphere Reserve programme exemplifies the balance between nature and human development, demonstrating how environmental stewardship, scientific research, and socio-economic support can coexist to secure ecological and community well-being.
- In September 2025, India's Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve in Himachal Pradesh was included in UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

Impact of Conservation Efforts

- The establishment of Biosphere Reserves in India reflects a long-term national vision for conservation and sustainable development aligned with global environmental goals under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme.
- India is at the forefront of promoting and managing Biosphere Reserves, showcasing its dedication to conserving biodiversity, empowering local communities, and advancing sustainable ecosystem practices.
- Biosphere Reserves have significantly contributed to maintaining ecosystem balance, enabling conservation of biodiversity, and strengthening climate resilience in fragile habitats.

- They serve as demonstration sites for sustainable practices and provide economic and livelihood security to forest-dependent populations through alternate livelihood measures.
- India's implementation of the Biosphere Reserve Programme has also supported measurable improvements in forest health indicators.
- As of October 2025, India ranked 9th globally in total forest area and 3rd in annual forest gain, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization's Global Forest Resources Assessment (GFRA) 2025.
- Continuous monitoring, enhanced community participation, and expansion of the Biosphere Reserve network have collectively strengthened India's position among global leaders in forest and biodiversity conservation.
- Biosphere Reserves complement India's broader conservation framework by linking habitat protection with sustainable community development.
- These reserves act as living laboratories where integrated approaches from converge to strengthen ecosystem resilience and conserve species across diverse landscapes.
- Several national schemes operate in alignment with the objectives of Biosphere Reserves, contributing collectively to habitat conservation, sustainable resource use, and community development.

Some of these are as follows:

Project Tiger–

- Initiated in 1973, has been India's flagship conservation initiative, successfully completing 50 years in 2023.
- Focused on tiger conservation through dedicated reserves and strict protection measures, it has played a crucial role in reviving tiger populations.

Project Elephant –

- India, home to over 60% of the global Asian elephant population, has undertaken significant measures to protect and conserve these majestic animals.
- Project Elephant is a flagship initiative aimed at ensuring the long-term survival of elephants in their natural habitats.
- This program focuses on habitat preservation, human-elephant conflict mitigation, and the welfare of captive elephants, reflecting India's deep-rooted cultural and ecological commitment to elephant conservation.

Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (IDWH) Scheme –

- This centrally sponsored scheme provides financial and technical assistance to state and union territory governments for wildlife conservation activities.

National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) –

- The NBA, established under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, is entrusted with the crucial responsibility of regulating access to India's vast biological resources and associated traditional knowledge.

Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) and Wildlife Corridors –

- Eco-sensitive Zones around Protected Areas i.e. National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.
- The purpose of declaring ESZ is to create some kind of "Shock Absorber" for the specialized Ecosystem, such as Protected Areas or other natural sites and is meant to act as a transition zone from areas of high protection to areas involving lesser protection.

Green India Mission-

- The mission aims to protect, restore, and enhance India's forest cover while tackling climate change.

- GIM focuses on improving biodiversity, water resources, and ecosystems like mangroves and wetlands, all while helping absorb carbon.
- India's observance of the International Day for Biosphere Reserves highlights the country's enduring commitment to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.
- By integrating ecological protection with community empowerment, India's biosphere reserves function as living examples of harmony between nature and people, supported by national policies and international partnerships like UNESCO's Man and Biosphere programme.
- With a growing network of reserves, increased forest cover, and active collaboration for innovative and inclusive approaches, India continues to set benchmarks in global conservation.
- These efforts ensure that both ecological treasures and local communities thrive, strengthening India's role as a leader in sustainable living for present and future generations.

QUESTIONS

28. With reference to Biosphere Reserves in India, consider the following statements:

1. Biosphere Reserves are designated under UNESCO's World Heritage Programme.
2. India has 18 notified Biosphere Reserves, out of which 13 are recognized under UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR).
3. The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve was the first to be established in India.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

29. Consider the following pairs of Biosphere Reserves and their locations:

Biosphere Reserve	State(s)
1. Nokrek	Meghalaya
2. Dihang-Dibang	Arunachal Pradesh
3. Agasthyamalai	Kerala and Tamil Nadu

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

30. Which of the following statements correctly describe India's ranking and performance as per the FAO's Global Forest Resources Assessment (GFRA) 2025?

1. India ranks among the top 10 countries globally in terms of total forest area.
2. India ranks third in the world for annual forest area gain.
3. The assessment highlights India's extensive mangrove cover as the primary reason behind its improved ranking.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

31. Consider the following statements about the UNESCO-recognized Biosphere Reserves in India:

1. Sundarbans is included in the UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR).
2. Manas Biosphere Reserve is the only UNESCO-recognized Biosphere Reserve in Assam.
3. Khangchendzonga in Sikkim was recognized under the WNBR in the year 2000.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

32. With reference to the structure of Biosphere Reserves as per the UNESCO MAB Programme, consider the following statements:

1. The core zone is strictly protected for biodiversity conservation and research activities.
2. The buffer zone allows for limited human activities and is meant to reinforce protection of the core area.
3. The transition zone is meant exclusively for commercial plantations and no human habitation is allowed.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

33. Consider the following pairs of Biosphere Reserves and their corresponding year of establishment:

Biosphere Reserve	**Year Established**
1. Panna	2011
2. Simlipal	1994
3. Great Rann of Kutch	2009

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

34. The most important strategy for the conservation of biodiversity together with traditional human life is the establishment of:

A. Biosphere reserves
B. Botanical gardens
C. National parks
D. Wildlife sanctuaries

8. Ten Years of the Paris Agreement

1. Introduction: A Decade since COP21

- The Paris Agreement, adopted at COP21 in 2015, marked a historic global commitment to combat climate change.
- Its central goal: limit global warming to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, while pursuing efforts to cap it at 1.5°C.
- A decade later, despite significant progress, the world continues to face unprecedented environmental and climatic challenges.

2. The Current Climate Reality

- Emissions and global temperatures are still on the rise at alarming rates, threatening ecosystems, livelihoods, and human security.
- The devastating impacts of climate change are evident worldwide, including in India, where regions such as Uttarakhand, Punjab, and Jammu & Kashmir have experienced severe weather-related disasters.
- These manifestations underscore the urgency of collective global action and the need to accelerate mitigation and adaptation measures.

3. Paris Agreement's Impact: A Shift in Trajectory

- Despite the ongoing challenges, the Paris Agreement has fundamentally altered the planet's climate trajectory.
- Before 2015, scientific projections indicated that the world was heading toward a catastrophic 4°C–5°C rise in global temperatures by the end of the century.
- Ten years later, due to international cooperation and sustained climate commitments, this projection has dropped to approximately 2°C–3°C.
- While still above the safe limits identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), this shift demonstrates the power of collective global action and the effectiveness of multilateral efforts.

4. The Strength of the Paris Agreement: Fairness and Flexibility

- The Paris Agreement's success lies in its fair, inclusive, and flexible framework.
- It is built on the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities" (CBDR-RC), ensuring that national circumstances and developmental priorities are respected.
- The agreement fosters international solidarity, particularly with developing and climate-vulnerable nations, by promoting climate finance, capacity-building, and technology transfer.
- This structure enables broad participation and shared ownership, making it a truly global pact for a sustainable future.

5. The Decade of Transition: Low-Carbon Economic Transformation

- Over the past ten years, the Paris Agreement has catalyzed a global economic transformation towards low-carbon development.

- Renewable energy has emerged as the new engine of economic growth, replacing fossil fuels as the most competitive energy source.
- Wind, solar, and hydroelectric power are now leading the global energy mix, creating millions of green jobs and enhancing energy security and sovereignty for many nations.
- This shift not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions but also decentralizes power generation, promoting resilience and self-sufficiency.

6. Electric Mobility Revolution

- A decade ago, electric mobility was considered a distant and costly dream.
- Today, thanks to rapid advancements in battery technology, energy storage, and infrastructure, electric vehicles (EVs) have become a mainstream reality.
- EVs now account for nearly 20% of global new car sales, signaling a major transformation in the transportation sector.
- The rise of electric mobility contributes to a drastic reduction in fossil fuel dependence and brings multiple co-benefits, including:
  - Cleaner air and healthier cities,
  - Reduced noise pollution, and
  - Lower maintenance and operational costs for consumers.
- This revolution underscores how innovation and policy support can align economic progress with environmental sustainability.

7. Remaining Challenges and the Way Forward

- Despite these achievements, global warming remains above safe thresholds, and emissions reduction efforts must intensify.
- The next decade demands:
  - Stronger Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs),
  - Enhanced climate finance, particularly for developing nations,
  - Greater technological collaboration, and
  - Wider adoption of sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Conference of the Parties (COP)

- The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the supreme decision-making body of an international convention. The most well-known example is the COP to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) — the global climate summit where countries negotiate and decide on actions to tackle climate change.

What is the COP (in the context of climate change)?

- **Full name:** Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- **Purpose:** To review the implementation of the Convention, assess progress in dealing with climate change, and adopt decisions and agreements to further its goals.
- **Members:** The 198 Parties (countries and the EU) that have signed the UNFCCC.

Key Functions

- **Review commitments** — Evaluate how well countries are meeting their climate targets.
- **Negotiate agreements** — Such as the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and the Paris Agreement (2015).

- **Adopt decisions** — On issues like finance, technology transfer, carbon markets, and adaptation.
- **Promote transparency and accountability** — Through reporting and monitoring frameworks.

Annual Meetings

- COP meetings are held once a year, usually hosted by a different country each time.
- Each meeting is numbered sequentially (e.g., COP21 in 2015, COP28 in 2023, COP29 in 2024).

Major Milestones

COP	Year	Location	Key Outcome
COP3	1997	Kyoto, Japan	Kyoto Protocol — first binding emission targets
COP15	2009	Copenhagen, Denmark	Political accord on limiting warming to 2°C
COP21	2015	Paris, France	Paris Agreement — universal climate accord
COP26	2021	Glasgow, UK	Glasgow Climate Pact; push to phase down coal
COP28	2023	Dubai, UAE	First Global Stocktake under Paris Agreement

Upcoming COP

- COP30 stands for the 30th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a landmark international treaty agreed in 1992, and parent treaty to the 2015 Paris Agreement.
- COP30 is being held in Belém, Brazil, from November 10–21, 2025, at the Hangar Convention and Fair Centre of the Amazon.
- This will be the first time a COP summit is hosted in the Amazon region.
- This year's summit is especially important because it marks ten years since the Paris Agreement was adopted.

Reports ahead of COP 30

- Ahead of COP30, UN Climate Change has produced three key mandated reports that shed light on where progress is happening and where more acceleration is still needed.
- The **Biennial Transparency Report (BTR) Synthesis Report**, released is the first of its kind, and shows countries starting to implement the Paris Agreement in the reporting period, in a systematic way, driving real-world progress.
- It also highlights a clear need for broader and faster progress, as well as various key enablers and barriers.
- The **NDC Synthesis Report** shows clear progress in reducing emissions, along with whole-of-economy, whole-of-economy approaches in countries' national climate plans (formally called Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs).
- Additional calculations highlighted in the accompanying statement from the Executive Secretary show global emissions clearly falling for the first time, by 10% by 2035.
- However, this is not nearly enough, and the Executive Secretary has urged urgent acceleration to keep the goals of the Paris Agreement within reach.
- The **NAP Synthesis Report** shows the directions, foundations and frameworks for building climate resilience are now increasingly in place and evident in National Adaptation Plans (NAPs).
- However the report and accompanying statement from the Executive Secretary also highlights the an urgent need for acceleration, and well as major scale of support still required, particularly for vulnerable and developing countries.

35. Consider the following statements:

1. The Paris Agreement legally binds countries to adopt nationally determined contributions (NDCs) that must be updated every five years.
2. The Paris Agreement aims to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, making this its only temperature goal.
3. The principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" is explicitly reflected in the structure of the Paris Agreement.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

36. In the context of global climate action, which of the following best describes the purpose of the Global Stocktake (GST) under the Paris Agreement?

A. It reviews each country's climate-related laws and imposes penalties for non-compliance.
B. It assesses collective progress towards achieving the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement.
C. It evaluates the performance of carbon markets under the Kyoto Protocol.
D. It determines the level of climate finance that developed countries must contribute annually.

37. Consider the following events and their corresponding outcomes under the UNFCCC's Conference of the Parties (COP) process:

COP	Outcome
COP3	Adoption of the Kyoto Protocol
COP15	Agreement on limiting global temperature to 1.5°C
COP21	Adoption of the Paris Agreement
COP28	First Global Stocktake under the Paris Agreement

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. Only three
D. All four

9. Kerala Declares Eradication of Extreme Poverty

- On 1 November 2025, the Government of Kerala announced that the state has successfully eradicated extreme poverty, marking a major milestone in India's social transformation journey.
- This achievement fulfills the promise of the Extreme Poverty Eradication Project (EPEP) launched in 2021, delivered on time.

Securing future

Through the Extreme Poverty Eradication Project launched in 2021, the Kerala government prepared micro-plans for every family

- **1,03,099** individuals from 64,006 **families** identified as extremely poor
- **21,263** families received **essential documents**
- **3,913** families were provided **new houses**
- **1,338** families were **allotted land**

- **5,651** families received up to **₹2 lakh** each for house renovation
- **3,822** families got **livelihood assistance**

Background and Evolution

- Kerala's journey began with the Ashraya project (2007), led by Kudumbashree, aimed at supporting the most vulnerable families through local self-governments.
- While Ashraya gained national recognition, it faced challenges in beneficiary selection, implementation, and follow-up.
- EPEP built on Ashraya's lessons by strengthening identification, community involvement, and continuous monitoring from the Chief Minister's Office.

The EPEP Approach

Identification:

- Started with identifying extremely poor households and individuals.
- 118,000 households were initially approached; finally, 1,03,099 individuals from 64,006 households were identified as living in extreme poverty.
- Used participatory and scientifically validated processes involving ward-level committees, panchayats, and Kudumbashree networks.

Customized Support:

- Developed household-level micro-plans tailored to each family's needs and aspirations.
- Focus areas included housing, livelihoods, health, education, food, and nutrition security.
- Plans were approved at ward level and integrated into local government sub-plans.

Integrated Governance:

- Ensured cross-departmental coordination — no department worked in isolation.
- Kudumbashree networks, panchayats, and community workers tracked each household's progress.
- Regular monitoring by the Chief Minister's Office and Local Self-Government Department.
- Dharmadam constituency was the first to declare itself extreme-poverty-free, becoming a model for others.

Strong Institutional Will

- Continuous monitoring by the Chief Minister ensured accountability.
- Dedicated budget allocations of Rs. 50 crore each in FY 2023–24 and 2024–25.

Empowered Local Governance

- Panchayats and Kudumbashree units played a central role in identifying, mentoring, and supporting households.

Scientific Validation & Data Tools

- Used mobile-based surveys, structured data tools, and ward-level audits for transparent verification and progress tracking.

Multi-Dimensional Approach

- Tackled not just income poverty but also housing, health, food, and nutrition security, ensuring holistic development.

National Context and Broader Impact

- As per NITI Aayog's National Multidimensional Poverty Index (2023):
  - Kerala had the lowest MPI score (0.55%) in India.
  - Followed by Goa (0.84%) and Tamil Nadu (2.20%).
  - NRLM and organizations like BRAC International, PRADAN, The Nudge Institute, Trickle Up, and Aga Khan Foundation are collaborating with various states to replicate such models.

Sustainability:

- Poverty is dynamic; families can slip back due to illness, job loss, or climate shocks.
- Need for continuous monitoring systems, inclusion of elderly and male-only households, and independent third-party evaluations to ensure lasting impact.

National Multidimensional Poverty Index

- The National Multidimensional Poverty Index (National MPI) is a measure developed by NITI Aayog (Government of India) in collaboration with Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- It provides a comprehensive assessment of poverty that goes beyond income-based measures by considering multiple deprivations that people face in their daily lives.

Purpose

The National MPI aims to:

- Track poverty in multiple dimensions (health, education, and standard of living).
- Help identify regions and groups that are most deprived.
- Support targeted policy interventions under programs like the Aspirational Districts Programme.

Structure of India's National MPI

- The index is based on three equally weighted dimensions, each with specific indicators:

Dimension	Indicators	Source Data
Health	Nutrition, Child & Adolescent Mortality, Maternal Health	NFHS (National Family Health Survey)
Education	Years of Schooling, School Attendance	NFHS
Standard of Living	Cooking Fuel, Sanitation, Drinking Water, Electricity, Housing, Assets, Bank Account	NFHS

- Each indicator has a specific deprivation cutoff — if a household fails to meet that cutoff, it is considered deprived in that indicator.

Methodology

- Based on the Alkire–Foster (AF) Method, which identifies multidimensionally poor individuals using a weighted deprivation score.
- A person (or household) is considered multidimensionally poor if they are deprived in one-third (33% or more) of the weighted indicators.

MPI Formula

MPI = H × A

Where:

- **H (Headcount Ratio):** Proportion of multidimensionally poor people.
- **A (Intensity of Poverty):** Average proportion of deprivations poor people experience.

India's MPI Reports

Latest Report (as of 2023–24):

- Released by NITI Aayog in July 2023.
- Based on data from NFHS-5 (2019–21).
- Shows that India's multidimensional poverty declined sharply between 2015–16 and 2019–21.

Key Findings:

- 25.01 crore people escaped multidimensional poverty between 2015–16 and 2019–21.
- India's MPI value reduced from 0.117 (2015–16) to 0.066 (2019–21).
- Headcount ratio fell from 24.85% to 14.96%.
- States showing largest improvements: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Rajasthan.

State Rankings (2023 Report)

Top Performers (Lowest Poverty)	States with Highest Poverty
Kerala, Goa, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu	Bihar, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Uttar Pradesh

Complements income poverty estimates.

- Supports SDG Target 1.2: "Reduce poverty in all its dimensions."
- Helps localize and monitor poverty reduction at state, district, and block levels.

QUESTIONS

38. Consider the following statements:

1. Kerala is the first Indian state to declare the eradication of extreme poverty under a state-led initiative.
2. The Extreme Poverty Eradication Project (EPEP) in Kerala is built on the foundation of the Kudumbashree initiative and local self-governance.
3. The National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) includes employment status as one of its core indicators of deprivation.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

39. The Extreme Poverty Eradication Project (EPEP) in Kerala is characterized by which of the following features?

1. Household-level Micro Plans
2. Technology-based data validation
3. Centralized implementation through the Ministry of Rural Development
4. Direct tracking by the Chief Minister's Office

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

A. 1, 2 and 4 only
B. 1 and 3 only
C. 2 and 4 only
D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

40. With reference to the National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) released by NITI Aayog, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The index uses the Alkire-Foster method to determine multidimensional poverty.
2. A household is considered poor if it is deprived in at least one of the 12 indicators.
3. The health dimension carries equal weight as education and standard of living in the MPI calculation.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

A. 1 only
B. 1 and 3 only
C. 2 and 3 only
D. 1, 2 and 3

ANSWER KEY AND EXPLANATION

1. B Only two

- Statement 1 is **correct**: The Ramman festival is celebrated in April during Baisakhi at Saloor-Dungra in Chamoli, Uttarakhand.
- Statement 2 is **correct**: Masks used in the festival are made from **Bhojpatra** (Himalayan birch).
- Statement 3 is **incorrect**: Ramman was inscribed in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list in **2009**, not 2019. Thus, **two** statements are correct.

2. B Only two

- Statement 1 is **correct**: The festival is dedicated to **Bhumiyal Devta**, a local divinity.
- Statement 2 is **correct**: The festival includes ritual theatre, storytelling, music, and masked dance.
- Statement 3 is **incorrect**: Ramman is celebrated in the **Garhwal region**, not Kumaon; Nanda Devi worship is associated with other festivals like the Nanda Devi Raj Jat. Thus, **two** statements are correct.

3. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct**: In **1988**, the site was first inscribed only as **Nanda Devi National Park**.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect**: The **Valley of Flowers** was added in **2005** when the site was expanded, not specifically because it was recognized as a Biosphere Reserve. The Biosphere Reserve status pertains to the larger area under the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves.
- **Statement 3 is correct**: The site includes two core areas and an **encompassing Combined Buffer Zone**, recognized in the UNESCO designation. Thus, **two statements are correct**.

4. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct**: Jim Corbett National Park, established in **1936**, is India's **oldest national park**.
- **Statement 2 is correct**: Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers together form a **single UNESCO World Heritage Site**, inscribed initially in 1988 and expanded in 2005.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect**: Rajaji National Park is located primarily in the **Garhwal region** (Haridwar, Dehradun, Pauri Garhwal districts), not in Kumaon. Thus, **two statements are correct**.

5. B Only two

- **Gangotri National Park** is located in the **Uttarkashi district** in the **Garhwal region**.
- **Govind Pashu Vihar National Park** is located primarily in the **upper reaches of the Garhwal region**, particularly in Uttarkashi district.
- **Jim Corbett National Park** is located in the **Terai region** of Kumaon (Nainital and Pauri districts), not Garhwal. Thus, **two** of the above parks (1 and 2) lie in the Garhwal region.

6. B Only two

- **Pair 1 is incorrect:** Jaipur is recognized for **Crafts and Folk Arts**, not Film.
- **Pair 2 is incorrect:** Mumbai is recognized for **Film**, not Music.
- **Pair 3 is correct:** Kozhikode was recognized under **Literature**.
- **Pair 4 is correct:** Gwalior is listed under **Music**. Thus, only two pairs are correct.

7. C All three

- **Statement 1 is correct:** Hyderabad was designated as a "City of Gastronomy" in 2019, ahead of Lucknow.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** Varanasi and Chennai are both recognized in the **Music** category.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** As of 2025, **no Indian city** has been recognized under the **Design** category in the UCCN list. All three statements are correct.

8. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct:** UCCN was launched by UNESCO in 2004 to foster cultural and creative development.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** Categories include Literature, Media Arts, Gastronomy, Film, Music, Design, and Crafts & Folk Art.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect:** Architecture was **added for the first time recently** and was not part of the original creative fields in 2004.

9. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct:** Lucknow's recognition was announced during the **43rd UNESCO General Conference in Samarkand, Uzbekistan**.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** Awadhi cuisine, including dum pukht cooking, kebabs, and sheermal, influenced the selection.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect:** Hyderabad was the first Indian city to receive the Gastronomy tag in **2019**.

10. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct:** Culinary heritage, traditional ingredients, and food festivals are part of the recognition criteria.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** Sustainability and community involvement through food education are emphasized by UNESCO.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect:** There is **no requirement that a city must have a World Heritage Site** to be recognized for Gastronomy (e.g., Gwalior and Kozhikode do not have UNESCO WHS status).

11. C All three

- **Statement 1 is correct:** CMS-03 (~4,410 kg) is the heaviest communication satellite launched to GTO from Indian soil.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** It was launched using the **LVM3-M5**, India's heaviest operational launcher.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** CMS-03 replaces **GSAT-7 (Rukmini)**, launched in 2013, which has reached the end of its mission life.

12. C All three

- **Statement 1 is correct:** LVM3 has a payload capacity of up to **8,000 kg to LEO**.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** It has a **solid-fueled first stage, liquid second stage, and cryogenic upper stage**.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** Following successes like **Chandrayaan-2, Chandrayaan-3**, and the **2014 crew module test**, it was rebranded from **GSLV Mk-3 to LVM3**.

13. B Only two

- **Pair 1 is correct:** Chandrayaan-3 was launched using **LVM3** in July 2023.
- **Pair 2 is incorrect:** GSAT-11 (heavier than 5,800 kg) was launched aboard **Ariane-5**, not PSLV.
- **Pair 3 is correct:** LVM3 launched two batches of **OneWeb satellites** in 2022 and 2023 after the Ukraine crisis.

14. B Only two

- **Statements 1 and 2 are correct:** Planned upgrades include a **C32 cryogenic stage** (higher thrust, more propellant) and the **development of semi-cryogenic second stage**, increasing payload to 10,000 kg to LEO.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect:** The upgrades are aimed at **enhancing payload capacity**, not reducing it.

15. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct:** GEO (~35,786 km altitude) is commonly used for communication satellites because they stay fixed relative to the Earth's surface.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** Transponders are essential components that receive, amplify, and retransmit signals.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect:** Communication satellites use **multiple frequency bands**, including C, Ku, Ka, and others depending on application.

16. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct:** The Burevestnik is designed as a nuclear-powered, nuclear-armed cruise missile with a **theoretical unlimited range**, allowing it to potentially circumnavigate the globe.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** It uses a **miniature onboard nuclear reactor** to heat incoming air and generate thrust, unlike traditional chemical engines.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect:** The Burevestnik follows a **low-flying cruise trajectory**, not a high-altitude ballistic trajectory like ICBMs. Its low altitude makes it harder to detect and intercept. Thus, **two** statements are correct.

17. C Both 1 and 2

- **Statement 1 is correct:** Mission Shakti, conducted on **27 March 2019**, was India's first successful **Anti-Satellite (ASAT) missile test**. The missile was developed by the DRDO and used to destroy a live satellite in low Earth orbit at around 300 km altitude.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** With the successful execution of Mission Shakti, India became the **fourth country** after the **United States, Russia, and China** to demonstrate ASAT capabilities, thereby joining the elite group of nations able to protect their space assets and potentially neutralize hostile satellites. The mission was also significant as it showcased India's commitment to maintaining peace in outer space while asserting its defensive capabilities.

18. D Neither 1 nor 2

Statement 1: Incorrect

- **Ballistic missiles** are typically **rocket-powered during the boost phase**, after which they follow a **free-fall ballistic trajectory** (similar to a projectile), often reaching **supersonic or even hypersonic speeds**.
- **Cruise missiles**, on the other hand, are **jet- or turbofan-powered for most of their flight**, and they fly **within the atmosphere at subsonic or supersonic speeds** to accurately hit targets with a guided path.

- The statement incorrectly switches the propulsion descriptions of ballistic and cruise missiles.

Statement 2: Incorrect

- **Agni-V** is **not a cruise missile**; it is an **intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM)** with a range of over **5,000 km**.
- **BrahMos** is **not an ICBM**; it is a **supersonic cruise missile** jointly developed by India and Russia, with a range now extended to 450–500 km and powered by a **ramjet engine** after booster separation.
- The statement reverses and mislabels both missiles' categories and propulsion systems. Thus, **both statements are incorrect**.

19. B Only two

Statement 1: Correct

- The original range of the BrahMos missile was **up to 290 km**, in line with the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) limitations.
- Following India's entry into the MTCR, extended-range versions (over 450 km) are being developed and tested. However, the **290 km range remains accurate** for earlier versions.

Statement 2: Correct

- BrahMos is **one of the fastest cruise missiles in the world**, capable of reaching speeds of **Mach 2.8 to Mach 3**, which is roughly **3 times the speed of sound**.

Statement 3: Incorrect

- The **cruising altitude of BrahMos is typically around 15 km** (approximately 15,000 meters) in the mid-course phase, and it descends to as low as 10 meters during the terminal phase to avoid radar detection.
- A **cruising altitude of 30 km** is not correct for BrahMos. Thus, **only two statements are correct**, making the correct answer **(b) Only two**.

20. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is incorrect:** While there are nine nuclear-capable states, **Israel has never formally acknowledged possessing nuclear weapons**, nor has it conducted an open test. It is widely believed to have acquired nuclear capability around 1967.
- **Statement 2 is correct: India, Pakistan, and Israel** have all **never signed the NPT**. They are considered non-signatory nuclear-armed states.
- **Statement 3 is correct: North Korea** acceded to the NPT in **1985**, but formally **announced its withdrawal in 2003**, and subsequently conducted its first nuclear test in 2006. Thus, **two statements are correct**, making **(b) Only two** the right answer.

21. C All three

- **Statement 1 is correct:** MIT ranked **#1 globally** in the QS World University Rankings 2025.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** The QS methodology now includes **sustainability** as a major metric, among others like academic reputation and citations per faculty.
- **Statement 3 is correct: IIT Bombay entered the top 150 globally** in 2025 with a rank of **118**, making it the **highest-ranked Indian institution in the top 150**. Thus, **all three** statements are correct.

22. B 2 only

Statement 1: Incorrect

- Under the RTE Act, the **minimum qualifications for teachers are not laid down by State Councils**, but by the **National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)**.
- States must follow these national norms, although they may set additional requirements. This statement incorrectly assigns the responsibility of setting qualifications to State Councils.

Statement 2: Correct

- The **Teacher Eligibility Test (TET)** is a mandatory qualifying exam for teachers under the RTE Act.
- It must be conducted in compliance with **NCTE guidelines**, and applies to all teachers for Classes I–VIII (primary and upper primary levels).

Statement 3: Incorrect

- The majority of teacher education institutions (TEIs) in India are **privately managed**, not directly under State Governments.
- In fact, **over 90% of TEIs are privately run**, making this statement factually incorrect. Therefore, **only statement 2 is correct**, making **Option B** the right answer.

23. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is incorrect:** India defeated **South Africa** in the final by 52 runs, not Australia.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** The 2025 edition was co-hosted by **India and Sri Lanka**, marking the tournament's return to the subcontinent.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** This was the **last time the tournament featured eight teams**. Therefore, **only two statements are correct**.

24. B Only two

- **Pair 1 is incorrect:** Shafali Verma was awarded **Player of the Match** in the final, not Player of the Tournament.
- **Pair 2 is incorrect:** Deepti Sharma was given the **Player of the Tournament** award, not Player of the Match.
- **Pair 3 is correct:** Jemimah Rodrigues scored **127 off 134 balls** in the semifinal against Australia, making her match-winning contribution. Thus, only **two of the statements are correctly matched**.

25. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct:** India not only co-hosted the event but also won its first-ever World Cup, a first for a subcontinent-hosted women's World Cup.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect:** The World Cup was **co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka**, not hosted by England.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** The **West Indies Women failed to qualify** – missing out due to a net run rate difference of just **0.01**. Thus, **two statements are correct**.

26. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct:** The **first Women's World Cup was held in 1973**, two years before the first men's edition in 1975.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** England, led by **Rachael Heyhoe Flint**, won the inaugural edition, finishing at the top of the league.

- **Statement 3 is incorrect:** The tournament followed a **round-robin league format**, not a knockout final. Thus, **only two statements are correct**.

27. C All three

- **2005:** India lost to **Australia** by 98 runs.
- **2017:** India lost to **England** by 9 runs.
- **2025:** India defeated **South Africa** by 52 runs to clinch its first Women's World Cup title.

All **three pairs are correctly matched** and reflect India's performance in all their World Cup final appearances.

28. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is incorrect:** Biosphere Reserves are not part of the **World Heritage Programme**, but are designated under UNESCO's **Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme**.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** India has **18 Biosphere Reserves**, of which **13 are recognized under the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR)**.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** The **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve**, established in **1986**, is the **first Biosphere Reserve in India**. Thus, **two statements are correct**.

29. C All three

- **Nokrek Biosphere Reserve** is located in **Meghalaya**.
- **Dihang-Dibang Biosphere Reserve** is located in **Arunachal Pradesh**.
- **Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve** spans the states of **Kerala and Tamil Nadu**. All three pairs are correctly matched.

30. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct:** As of **October 2025**, India ranks **9th globally in total forest area**.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** India ranks **3rd in annual forest gain**, demonstrating significant forest restoration and growth efforts.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect:** The assessment does not specifically attribute India's ranking improvement to mangrove cover alone. It reflects broader forest management and afforestation measures. Thus, **two statements are correct**.

31. A Only one

- **Statement 1 is correct:** Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve, located in West Bengal, is part of the UNESCO WNBR.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect:** Assam has two biosphere reserves—**Manas** and **Dibru-Saikhowa**, but only **Manas** is recognized by UNESCO.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect:** Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve in Sikkim was recognized as part of the WNBR in **2018**, not 2000. Thus, **only one statement is correct**.

32. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct:** The core area is strictly protected for **biodiversity conservation**, allowing only minimal human interference.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** The buffer zone allows for activities like **environmental education, research, and limited human activity**, to support core protection.

- **Statement 3 is incorrect:** The transition zone is a **sustainable development area**, allowing **human habitation and economic activities** like agriculture, tourism, and sustainable resource use—not exclusively for plantations.

Thus, **two statements are correct**.

33. B Only two

- **Pair 1 is correct:** Panna Biosphere Reserve in Madhya Pradesh was established in **2011**.
- **Pair 2 is incorrect:** Simlipal Biosphere Reserve (Odisha) was established in **1994**, not 1986.
- **Pair 3 is correct:** Great Rann of Kutch Biosphere Reserve in Gujarat was established in **2008** (listed as 2008–09). Thus, **two pairs are correctly matched**.

34. A Biosphere reserves

- **Biosphere reserves** are areas designated to conserve biodiversity and promote sustainable use of natural resources. They integrate **conservation with traditional lifestyles and human development**, unlike **national parks** or **wildlife sanctuaries**, which restrict most human activities.
- They consist of **core, buffer, and transition zones**:
  - **Core zone**: strictly protected for biodiversity.
  - **Buffer zone**: limited human activity allowed.
  - **Transition zone**: sustainable development and traditional activities are promoted.
- This structure allows **local communities to coexist with biodiversity**, preserving both nature and culture.

Therefore, biosphere reserves are the most suitable strategy for combining **biodiversity conservation with traditional human life**.

35. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct:** The Paris Agreement requires parties to submit and update their **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** every five years, making decarbonization a dynamic process.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect:** The Paris Agreement's **central goal is to limit warming to well below 2°C**, while **pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C**—thus, it has *dual temperature targets*.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** The principle of **common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC)** is central to the Paris Agreement, respecting national circumstances and capacities. Thus, **two statements are correct**.

36. B It assesses collective progress towards achieving the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement.

- The **Global Stocktake (GST)**, first conducted at **COP28 (Dubai, 2023)**, is a key transparency framework under the Paris Agreement.
- It **evaluates global progress** in mitigation, adaptation, and finance, **not individual penalties** or national laws.
- It aims to inform future NDCs and enhance ambition—but does **not impose enforceable penalties**.

37. C Only three

- **COP3 (Kyoto, 1997): Correct** — Kyoto Protocol adopted.
- **COP15 (Copenhagen, 2009): Incorrect** — It produced a political accord to limit warming to **2°C**, but **1.5°C became prominent later**, especially under the Paris Agreement.
- **COP21 (Paris, 2015): Correct** — Paris Agreement adopted.

- **COP28 (Dubai, 2023): Correct** — First-ever **Global Stocktake** conducted. Thus, **three pairs are correctly matched**.

38. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct:** Kerala declared itself free from extreme poverty in November 2025 – becoming the first Indian state to make such a claim.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** EPEP builds on the **Kudumbashree model** and operates through **decentralized governance driven by panchayats and local ward-level committees**.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect:** The National MPI includes indicators for **nutrition, education, sanitation, housing, electricity, etc.**, but **does NOT include employment status** as an indicator.

39. A 1, 2 and 4 only

- **Household-level Micro Plans (1): Correct.** This was a core strategy to offer customized interventions for each family.
- **Technology-based data validation (2): Correct.** EPEP used digital tools like mobile surveys and audits.
- **Centralized implementation by MoRD (3): Incorrect.** EPEP was a state-led initiative, not implemented centrally by the Ministry of Rural Development.
- **Direct tracking by CM's office (4): Correct.** Regular monitoring from the Chief Minister's Office ensured accountability. Thus, **1, 2, and 4** are correct.

40. B 1 and 3 only

- **Statement 1 is correct:** The MPI adopts the **Alkire-Foster (AF) Method**, a globally recognized methodology used by UNDP and OPHI.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect:** A household is considered multidimensionally poor if it is deprived in **one-third (33% or more)** of the weighted indicators, not merely one.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** The National MPI has **three dimensions** of **Health, Education, and Standard of Living**, each carrying **equal weight (1/3 each)**.