

UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS

NOVEMBER 2025 : WEEK-2

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1. David Szalay has won the Booker Prize 2025

- David Szalay's novel *Flesh* won the 2025 Booker Prize, announced at a ceremony in London on 10 November.
- He received £50,000 and a trophy, presented by last year's winner, Samantha Harvey.
- The judging panel, chaired by 1993 Booker winner Roddy Doyle and including Ayòbámi Adébáyò, Sarah Jessica Parker, Chris Power, and Kiley Reid, selected *Flesh* from 153 eligible novels published between October 2024 and September 2025.
- Written in spare prose and spanning decades—from a Hungarian housing estate to London's wealthy circles—the novel follows an emotionally detached man whose life unravels through uncontrollable events.
- This is Szalay's sixth novel; he was previously shortlisted for the Booker in 2016.



About Novel *Flesh*

- A spare but propulsive novel, *Flesh* follows a man from adolescence to old age as he is unravelled by a series of events beyond his grasp.
- Fifteen-year-old István lives with his mother in a quiet apartment complex in Hungary.
- New to the town and shy, he is unfamiliar with the social rituals at school and soon becomes isolated, with his neighbour – a married woman close to his mother's age – as his only companion.
- Their encounters shift into a clandestine relationship that István barely understands, and his life soon spirals out of control.
- As the years pass, he is carried gradually upwards on the 21st century's tides of money and power, moving from the army to the company of London's super-rich, with his own competing impulses for love, intimacy, status and wealth winning him unimaginable riches, until they threaten to undo him completely.
- *Flesh* asks profound questions about what drives a life, what makes it worth living, and what breaks it.

David Szalay

'Brilliance on every page' SAMANTHA HARVEY, author of *Orbital*



Who is David Szalay?

- David Szalay is the first Hungarian-British writer to win the Booker Prize. Born in Canada, Szalay has lived in Lebanon, the UK, Hungary, and now Vienna.

- He is the author of six works of fiction that have been translated into over 20 languages, as well as several BBC radio dramas.
- Szalay's debut novel, *London and the South-East*, won Betty Trask and Geoffrey Faber Memorial prizes in 2008.
- *All That Man Is* was awarded the Gordon Burn Prize and Plimpton Prize for Fiction, and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2016.
- Szalay won the Edge Hill Prize in 2019 for his short story collection *Turbulence*. *Flesh* is his sixth work of fiction.
- In 2010 Szalay appeared in the Telegraph's list of the top 20 British writers under 40, and he was selected as one of Granta's Best of Young British Novelists in 2013.
- Szalay isn't the only writer of Hungarian heritage to have won the Booker or International Booker Prize: László Krasznahorkai, who won this year's Nobel Prize in Literature, won the International Booker Prize in 2015.

Booker Prize

- The Booker Prize is the leading literary award in the English speaking world, and has brought recognition, reward and readership to outstanding fiction for over five decades
- Each year, the prize is awarded to what is, in the opinion of the judges, the best sustained work of fiction written in English and published in the UK and Ireland. It is a prize that transforms the winner's career.
- The winner receives £50,000 as well as the £2,500 awarded to each of the six shortlisted authors.
- Both the winner and the shortlisted authors are guaranteed a global readership and can expect a dramatic increase in book sales

The International Booker Prize

- The International Booker Prize is awarded annually for a single book, translated into English and published in the UK or Ireland
- The Booker Prizes exist to reward the finest in fiction.
- The symmetrical relationship between the Booker Prize and the International Booker Prize ensures that the Booker honours fiction on a global basis: world-class fiction is highlighted by the prizes for English-speaking readers, whether that work was originally written in English (the Booker Prize) or translated into English (the International Booker Prize).
- The International Booker Prize began life in 2005 as the Man Booker International Prize.
- It was initially a biennial prize for a body of work, and there was no stipulation that the work should be written in a language other than English.
- Early winners of the Man Booker International Prize therefore include Alice Munro, Lydia Davis and Philip Roth, as well as Ismail Kadare and Laszlo Krasznahorkai.
- In 2015, after the rules of the original Booker Prize expanded to allow writers of any nationality to enter - as long as their books were written in English and published in the UK - the International Prize evolved to become the mirror image of the English-language prize.
- Since then it has been awarded annually for a single book, written in another language and translated into English.
- The Man Group continued to sponsor both prizes until 2019, when Crankstart became the funder, and the prize names reverted to the familiar 'Booker' name alone.
- This prize aims to encourage more reading of quality fiction from all over the world, and has already had an impact on those statistics in the UK.

- The vital work of translators is celebrated, with the £50,000 prize money divided equally between the author and translator.
- Each shortlisted author and translator also receives £2,500.
- Novels and collections of short stories are both eligible.

QUESTIONS

1. Consider the following statements:

1. David Szalay won the 2025 Booker Prize for his novel *Flesh*.
2. Arundhati Roy is the first Indian author to win the Booker Prize.
3. Geetanjali Shree won the International Booker Prize for a book originally written in English.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

2. Consider the following statements:

1. The Booker Prize is awarded for the best sustained work of fiction written in English and published in the UK or Ireland.
2. The International Booker Prize awards £50,000, split equally between author and translator.
3. The Booker Prize was originally established in 2005.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

3. Consider the following statements:

1. The International Booker Prize is awarded annually for a single translated book.
2. The International Booker Prize originally awarded a prize for a body of work.
3. Aravind Adiga won the International Booker Prize in 2008.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

4. Consider the following statements:

1. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* won the Booker Prize in 1981.
2. VS Naipaul won the Booker Prize for *A Bend in the River*.
3. Kiran Desai won the Booker Prize for *The Inheritance of Loss* in 2006.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

5. Consider the following statements:

1. The Booker Prize awards £50,000 to the winner and £2,500 to each shortlisted author.
2. The International Booker Prize money is awarded entirely to the translator.
3. Both novels and short story collections are eligible for the International Booker Prize.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

2. President of India visit to Angola and Botswana



India–Botswana Cheetah Translocation Pact

- India and Botswana formally announced the translocation of eight cheetahs from Botswana to India, during President Droupadi Murmu's State visit.

Symbolic Handover:

- Botswana will hand over the cheetahs to President Murmu on November 13, 2025.
- Five of the eight cheetahs will be released into a quarantine facility at Mokolodi Nature Reserve near Gaborone.
- The cheetahs were brought from Ghanzi town in the Kalahari Desert to Mokolodi Reserve.
- After quarantine, the cheetahs will be transported to India as part of 'Project Cheetah'—a joint wildlife conservation initiative.

Project Cheetah

- First phase launched on September 17, 2022, when PM Narendra Modi released eight Namibian cheetahs at Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh.
- Twelve more cheetahs were imported from South Africa in February 2023.

Current Status (2025):

- Total cheetahs: 27 (including 16 born in India)
- 24 at Kuno, 3 at Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary (GSWS)
- 19 deaths reported (9 imported adults, 10 cubs)
- 26 cubs born so far — net gain of 7 cheetahs since project start.



India–Botswana Bilateral Cooperation

Health Sector Agreement

- An MoU on cooperation in the health sector was exchanged.

Focus areas:

- Strengthening pharmaceutical collaboration, especially in generic drug manufacturing.
- Ensuring access to affordable, quality medicines in Botswana.
- India to supply ARV (antiretroviral) medicines to Botswana on request.

Leaders' Statements

- President Murmu: Emphasized India's development philosophy — “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, aur Sabka Prayaas.”
- President Duma Boko: Termed the visit “historic and significant,” marking 60 years of diplomatic ties (2026).

Both leaders discussed cooperation in:

- Trade & investment
- Defence & digital technology
- Agriculture & education
- Health & pharmaceuticals

Economic Collaboration

- Indian companies' growing role in Botswana's economy, notably in the diamond sector, was acknowledged.

India–Angola Relations

- President Murmu attended Angola's 50th Independence Day celebrations — first-ever visit by an Indian Head of State to Angola.

Angola agreed to:

- Join the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA).
- Join the Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA) — both spearheaded by India.
- Air Service Agreement concluded to explore direct flights, enhancing business and cultural exchanges.

Two MoUs signed:

- Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture cooperation.
- Employment rights for dependents of diplomatic staff.

Aimed at:

- Deepening economic, environmental, and developmental partnerships.
- Strengthening India's commitment to Africa's growth through the India–Africa Forum Summit framework.

Angola

- **Official Name:** Republic of Angola (República de Angola)
- **Capital:** Luanda
- **Official Language:** Portuguese
- **Population:** About 35 million (as of 2025 estimates)
- **Currency:** Kwanza (AOA)

- **Government:** Unitary presidential republic
- **Current President (2025):** João Lourenço

Geography

- **Borders:** Namibia (south), Zambia (east), Democratic Republic of the Congo (north and northeast), and the Atlantic Ocean (west).
- Angola also includes the Cabinda exclave, which is separated from the rest of the country by a strip of DRC territory.
- The country has diverse landscapes—coastal plains, savannas, highlands, and tropical rainforests.
 - **Colonial Era:** Angola was a Portuguese colony for over 400 years.
 - **Independence:** Achieved on November 11, 1975.
 - **Civil War:** A long civil war (1975–2002) followed independence, mainly between the MPLA (current ruling party) and UNITA.
 - **Postwar Era:** Since 2002, Angola has been rebuilding and modernizing rapidly, though challenges remain.

Economy

- Rich in oil and diamonds, which drive much of its economy.
- Other key sectors: agriculture, construction, and telecommunications.
- Despite natural wealth, income inequality and poverty are still significant issues.

Botswana

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| • Capital: Gaborone | • Population: About 2.7 million (as of 2025) |
| • Official Language: English | • Currency: Botswana pula (BWP) |
| • National Language: Setswana | • Government: Parliamentary republic |

Geography

- Borders Namibia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and a small section with Zambia.
- Much of the country is covered by the Kalahari Desert.
- The Okavango Delta, one of the world's largest inland deltas, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a top safari destination.

Wildlife & Tourism

- Botswana is famous for its conservation efforts and low-impact, high-quality tourism model. Popular areas include:
 - **Chobe National Park** – known for huge elephant herds.
 - **Moremi Game Reserve** – part of the Okavango Delta ecosystem.
 - **Makgadikgadi Pans** – vast salt flats visible from space.

Economy

- One of Africa's most stable and prosperous economies.
- Major industries: diamond mining, tourism, beef, and financial services.
- The government has partnered with De Beers to manage diamond mining through Debswana.
- Gained independence from Britain in 1966.
- Known for good governance and low corruption compared to regional averages.

Okavango Delta

- The Okavango Delta is one of the world's most extraordinary natural wonders — a vast, inland river delta located in northern Botswana, in southern Africa.
- The Okavango Delta is formed where the Okavango River (originating in Angola's highlands) fans out across the Kalahari Desert.
- Unlike most river deltas, it doesn't empty into the sea. Instead, its waters spread over a flat, arid basin, creating a lush, seasonal wetland.
- The size of the delta fluctuates dramatically with the seasons — from about 6,000 km² in the dry season to over 15,000 km² when flooded (usually between June and August).



Wildlife & Ecology

- It's a UNESCO World Heritage Site (designated in 2014) due to its exceptional biodiversity and unique ecosystem.
- The Delta supports huge populations of wildlife, including:
- Elephants, buffalo, hippos, lions, leopards, wild dogs, and antelope.
- Over 400 bird species, making it a paradise for birdwatchers.
- Seasonal floods sustain both permanent and migratory animal populations, creating one of Africa's best safari destinations.

QUESTIONS

6. Consider the following statements:

1. Under the new India–Botswana pact, all eight cheetahs will be released directly into Kuno National Park without any quarantine.
2. Botswana is the second African country, after Namibia, from which India is receiving cheetahs under Project Cheetah.
3. As of 2025, the total number of cheetahs in India, including cubs born here, is more than 25.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

7. Consider the following statements:

1. India will supply antiretroviral (ARV) medicines to Botswana as part of the bilateral health cooperation.
2. The MoU with Botswana focuses on strengthening collaboration in pharmaceuticals and generic drug production.
3. India and Botswana are celebrating 75 years of diplomatic relations in 2026.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

8. Consider the following statements regarding **Project Cheetah**:

1. Project Cheetah aims to reintroduce African cheetahs as a replacement for the extinct Asiatic cheetah in India.
2. The project involves the world's first inter-continental translocation of a wild carnivore species.
3. Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh is the only site identified for cheetah relocation.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

9. Consider the following statements about the history and extinction of cheetahs in India:

1. The cheetah was officially declared extinct in India in 1952 by the Government of India.
2. Historical accounts suggest that the last recorded Asiatic cheetahs in India were killed by Maharaja Ramanuj Pratap Singh Deo in 1947.
3. India originally received cheetahs for reintroduction only from South Africa.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

10. Consider the following statements:

1. Lions do not have a particular breeding season.
2. Unlike most other big cats, cheetahs do not roar.
3. Unlike male lions, male leopards do not proclaim their territory by scent marking.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

3. World's first Solar Hydrogen Park

Project Overview

- **Location:** Wallonia, Belgium
- **Concept:** World's first solar hydrogen park integrating hydrogen-producing solar modules with a traditional solar PV system.

Capacity:

- 50 kW of Solhyd hydrogen-producing solar modules
- 2 MW of traditional solar panels with battery storage
 - **Timeline:** Expected to begin operation next year and run for five years.

Project Partners & Roles

- **Ether Energy (Brussels):** Project owner and operator
- **Solhyd:** Supplier and maintainer of hydrogen-producing modules
- **Sun Build:** Designer and builder of the solar-plus-storage system
- **Nippon Gases:** Responsible for hydrogen post-processing, storage, and distribution

Technology & Innovation

- **Origin:** Developed over a decade at KU Leuven University.
- **Design:** Modular hydrogen-producing solar panels that generate hydrogen directly from sunlight and air, without:
 - Liquid water
 - Rare materials
 - Heavy grid connection
- **Performance:**
 - **Produces** \approx 250 liters of hydrogen/day per module
 - **Peak efficiency:** 15%
- **Future Expansion Plans**
 - Gradual increase in the share of Solhyd hydrogen modules in future installations.
- **Targets:**
 - 2 MW of Solhyd modules by 2028
 - Broader deployment across Europe and sun-rich global regions.

Strategic Benefits

- Enables dual energy output — electricity + green hydrogen.
- Creates new revenue streams for solar parks.
- Helps reduce grid congestion and mitigate negative electricity price impacts.
- Positions Belgium as a pioneer in scalable green hydrogen production.

Solar PV system

- A Solar PV (Photovoltaic) system converts sunlight directly into electricity using solar panels made of semiconductor materials (typically silicon). These systems can power anything from small devices to entire buildings.



Main Components

Solar Panels (PV Modules)

- Contain photovoltaic cells that convert sunlight into DC (Direct Current) electricity.
- Output depends on sunlight intensity, panel efficiency, and angle of installation.

Inverter

- Converts DC electricity from panels into AC (Alternating Current) — the type used by most home appliances.

Types:

- String inverter (centralized for all panels)
- Microinverter (one per panel for optimized performance)
- Hybrid inverter (handles both solar and battery input)

Mounting Structure

- Holds panels at the optimal angle and orientation (usually facing south in the Northern Hemisphere).

Battery Storage (optional)

- Stores excess energy for use at night or during grid outages.
- Typically lithium-ion or lead-acid batteries.
- Charge Controller (for battery systems)
- Regulates voltage and current from the panels to the battery to prevent overcharging.

Monitoring System

- Tracks system performance and energy generation in real time.

Types of Solar PV Systems

| Type | Description | Connection |
|------|-------------|------------|
|------|-------------|------------|

| | | |
|-----------|--|--------------------|
| Grid-tied | Most common; connected to the utility grid. Surplus energy is exported to the grid (net metering). | Grid-connected |
| Off-grid | Fully independent; uses batteries for energy storage. Ideal for remote areas. | No grid connection |
| Hybrid | Combines grid connection and battery backup; can operate during outages. | Grid + Battery |

Benefits

- Reduces electricity bills.
- Low maintenance and long lifespan (25–30 years).
- Environmentally friendly — no greenhouse gas emissions during operation.
- Increases property value.
- Eligible for government incentives and tax credits (varies by region).

QUESTIONS

11. Consider the following statements about the **World's First Solar Hydrogen Park**:

1. The Solhyd modules used in the project produce hydrogen directly from sunlight and air without the use of liquid water.
2. Nippon Gases is responsible for the design and construction of the solar-plus-storage system.
3. Each hydrogen-producing solar module can generate around 250 litres of hydrogen per day.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

12. With reference to **Solar Photovoltaic (PV) systems**, consider the following statements:

1. A hybrid inverter can manage both solar panel input and battery storage input.
2. A charge controller is required in all grid-connected solar PV systems to prevent overcharging of batteries.
3. Microinverters are installed for each individual solar panel to improve performance under shading.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

13. Consider the following statements:

1. The International Solar Alliance was launched at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2015.
2. The Alliance includes all the member countries of the United Nations.

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

14. The world's first solar hydrogen park is being built in _____.

- A. India
- B. China
- C. USA
- D. Belgium

4. Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF): A New Global Fund for Forest Conservation

Launch & Context:

- The Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF) was launched on November 6, 2025, during the COP30 Climate Summit in Belém, Brazil.
- Announced by Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who called it an "unprecedented initiative" giving Global South countries a leading role in forest conservation.



Purpose & Objective:

- Aims to conserve tropical forests by financially rewarding developing countries that preserve old-growth forests.
- Designed as a permanent, self-financing investment fund promoting long-term forest protection.

Funding Structure:

- **Target:** Raise \$125 billion in total.
 - \$25 billion from wealthy governments and philanthropists.
 - \$100 billion from private investors.
 - Returns will be distributed annually to up to 74 tropical forest countries.
 - Payments based on satellite data tracking forest cover, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Current Contributions (announced):

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| • Brazil: \$1 billion | • Norway: \$3 billion (over 10 years) |
| • Indonesia: \$1 billion | • Netherlands: \$5 million |
| • Colombia: \$250 million | • Portugal: €1 million |

Rationale:

- Seeks to reverse the economic incentive that favors deforestation for agriculture or logging.
- Aims to assign real financial value to ecosystem services such as carbon storage, biodiversity, and climate regulation.
- Marina Silva, Brazil's Environment Minister, called it a "turning point" in recognizing forest value.

Market Vulnerability:

- Fund returns depend on financial market performance, making payouts unstable during crises (e.g., COVID-19 or 2008 crash).

Undermining Climate Finance Obligations:

- As TFFF operates outside the UNFCCC framework, critics argue it could weaken developed nations' legal responsibilities to provide public climate finance.

- Liane Schalatek, a climate finance expert, warned it may undermine the Paris Agreement's financial mechanisms.

Overall Significance:

- The TFFF represents a novel global financing model for conservation — shifting from aid-based to investment-based incentives.
- However, its success depends on market stability, transparency, and fair governance between developed and developing nations.

30th Conference of the Parties

- The 30th Conference of the Parties under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will be held in Belém, in the State of Pará, Brazil.
- **Dates:** 10 – 21 November 2025 (with leaders' summit/associated events around 6–9 November).
- **Host country:** Brazil. This is a strategic choice given Brazil's location in the Amazon region and its role in global forest/land-use/climate discussions.

Major focus areas / agenda priorities

- Limiting global warming to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels — keeping the “1.5 °C goal” alive as a central objective.
 - **Adaptation and resilience:** The host emphasises that adaptation is not optional, especially for vulnerable countries.
 - **Climate finance:** Particularly scaling up funding for mitigation and adaptation in developing countries. For example, the “Baku to Belém Roadmap to USD 1.3 trillion” is referenced.
 - **Forests & nature:** Given the Amazon context, sustainable land-use, protecting tropical forests, biodiversity, indigenous rights are expected to be high on the agenda.



Significance / Why it matters

- Hosting in Belém is symbolic: placing the summit in the heart of the Amazon underscores nature's role in the climate system.
- This COP is positioned as a moment of “delivery” rather than just ambition — moving from pledges to implementation.
- It is critical for developing countries and the Global South, whose adaptation and finance needs have often been under-served in previous COPs.

Host preparations & logistical highlights

- Brazil has invested significantly in infrastructure, venue transformation, city upgrades in preparation for COP30 in Belém.
- The conference site will be divided into zones: e.g., the “Blue Zone” for official negotiations and the “Green Zone” for civil society, companies and other stakeholders.
- Accommodation/logistical issues: because Belém is less used to hosting very large international gatherings of this scale, challenges (e.g., rooms, costs, transport) are already being flagged.

Challenges & key tensions

- **Ensuring sufficient ambition AND implementation:** many previous COPs have ended with high-level statements but limited concrete results.
- **Financing gap:** meeting the massive funding needs for adaptation, mitigation, forests remains a key bottleneck.
- **Balancing development and environmental commitments:** host country and others face trade-offs (economic growth, infrastructure, rights of local/indigenous communities).
- **Inclusivity:** ensuring that smaller and less wealthy countries, civil society, indigenous peoples have voice and access.
- **External pressures:** The spotlight on the Amazon means higher scrutiny of Brazil's domestic land-use, deforestation, fossil-fuel policies.

For India / Asia context (relevance)

- India is a major player in climate change discourse: its ambitions, development path, and adaptation needs will feature in negotiations.
- The finance and adaptation themes are especially relevant for many countries in Asia facing climate vulnerability.
- Outcomes from COP30 (e.g., commitments on forests, nature, adaptation finance) will influence global policy and bilateral cooperation, including with India.

QUESTIONS

15. Consider the following statements about the Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF):

1. It was launched at COP30 in Belém, Brazil, to financially reward countries that conserve old-growth tropical forests.
2. The fund aims to raise \$125 billion entirely from private sector investors.
3. Payments to participating countries will be based on satellite-monitored forest cover data.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

16. With reference to the funding structure of the Tropical Forest Forever Facility, consider the following statements:

1. Norway has committed \$3 billion over 10 years to the fund.
2. Brazil and Indonesia have each pledged \$1 billion.
3. The TFFF operates under the UNFCCC climate finance framework.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

17. Consider the following statements:

Statement–I: The soil in tropical rain forests is rich in nutrients.

Statement–II: The high temperature and moisture of tropical rain forests cause dead organic matter in the soil to decompose quickly.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- A. Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I
 - B. Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I
 - C. Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect
 - D. Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct
18. If a tropical rain forest is removed, it does not regenerate quickly as compared to a tropical deciduous forest. This is because —
- A. the soil of rain forest is deficient in nutrients
 - B. propagules of the trees in a rain forest have poor viability
 - C. the rain forest species are slow-growing
 - D. exotic species invade the fertile soil of rain forest
19. Which of the following statements about tropical rainforests are correct?
- 1. The soils of tropical rainforests are quite infertile.
 - 2. The vegetation is evergreen, enabling photosynthesis to take place year-round.
 - 3. They have been described as “deserts covered by trees.”
 - 4. They are the most productive land-based ecosystem.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

5. Khangchendzonga National Park Rated “Good” by IUCN, Only Indian Site with Positive Status

- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recently rated Khangchendzonga National Park as “good” in its latest global review of natural World Heritage sites.
- It is the only Indian park to receive this rating, while other important areas like the Western Ghats and Sundarbans are facing serious concerns.

- Khangchendzonga, officially known as the Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve, is India's first "mixed" UNESCO World Heritage Site, recognised in 2016 for its combination of natural beauty and cultural importance.
- Covering 1,784 square kilometres, it stretches from misty subtropical forests at lower altitudes to the icy summit of Mount Khangchendzonga at 8,586 metres, the world's third-highest peak.
- The park contains 280 glaciers, more than 70 glacial lakes, and a rich diversity of wildlife, including snow leopards, clouded leopards, red pandas, blue sheep, Himalayan tahr, and over 550 bird species, such as the impeyan pheasant and satyr tragopan.
- The park is also closely tied to the local culture.
- For the Lepcha people, it is Mayel Lyang, a hidden paradise given by their gods.
- Tibetan Buddhists consider it a sacred valley, or beyul, and ancient monasteries like Tholung preserve spiritual traditions that coexist with modern conservation practices.
- The larger Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve, expanded in 2018, links core protected areas with buffer zones where villagers practice sustainable farming and harvesting.
- This approach shows that nature and communities can thrive together.
- The park's success comes from careful planning, community involvement, and its remote location, which keeps human activity low. Rangers work closely with local people, and cross-border cooperation with Nepal's Kanchenjunga Conservation Area helps prevent poaching.
- Even natural disasters, like last year's glacial lake outburst flood, were managed quickly through hazard mapping and preventive measures.



Mount Khangchendzonga

- **Elevation:** 8,586 meters (28,169 ft.) ft).
- **Significance:** It is the third-highest peak in the world and the highest in India.
- **Cultural Importance:** The mountain is revered as a sacred deity by the local people. Its name translates to "the five repositories or ledges of the great snows".

Khangchendzonga National Park and Biosphere Reserve

- **Location:** Situated in North and West Sikkim districts, bordering Nepal and China.
- **Biodiversity:** It is located within a global biodiversity hotspot and contains an impressive variety of flora and fauna.
- **Ecosystems:** The Park exhibits one of the widest altitudinal ranges of any protected area, with ecosystems varying from sub-tropical to alpine.
- **Wildlife:** Key species include the snow leopard, red panda, Himalayan black bear, and nearly half of India's bird diversity.

Natural World Heritage Site

- A Natural World Heritage Site is a place recognized by UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) for its outstanding natural value to humanity.
- These sites are part of the World Heritage List, which also includes Cultural and Mixed sites.

Definition

- According to UNESCO, a Natural World Heritage Site is designated based on natural features such as:
 - Exceptional natural beauty
 - Geological and ecological significance
 - Ongoing ecological and biological processes
 - Importance for biodiversity conservation (including habitats of threatened species)

Criteria for Selection (Natural Sites)

- **A natural site must meet at least one of these four UNESCO criteria:**
 - Exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance.
 - Outstanding examples of Earth's geological history or landform development.
 - Examples of significant ecological and biological processes.
 - Contains important natural habitats for biodiversity conservation.

UNESCO Adopts Global Standards on Neurotechnology

UNESCO Action:

- Adopted the first global ethical standards for neurotechnology – technologies that interact with the brain and nervous system.
- Aims to bring order to what experts describe as a “wild west” field.

Purpose of the Standards:

- To protect human rights and mental privacy as neurotechnology advances rapidly.
- Establishes the concept of “neural data” as a new, sensitive category of information.
- Provides 100+ recommendations on data protection, consent, and potential misuse.

Motivation for Regulation:

- AI advancements now allow vast decoding and interpretation of brain data.
- Growth of consumer neurotech devices (e.g., brain-reading earbuds, eye-tracking glasses).
- Concerns over potential manipulation or subliminal marketing, even during dreams.

Key Ethical Concerns:

- Risks to mental privacy, autonomy, and freedom of thought.
- Need for informed consent and transparency in use.
- Prevention of misuse by companies or governments.

Statements from UNESCO Leaders:

- **Dafna Feinholz (Chief of Bioethics):** Emphasized public awareness, informed choice, and the need for oversight.
- **Audrey Azoulay (Director General):** Said the standards aim to “enshrine the inviolability of the human mind.”

Global Context and Regulation Efforts:

- Massive investments in neurotech (e.g., Sam Altman's Merge Labs, Elon Musk's Neuralink, Meta's AI wristband).

Growing policy movement:

- World Economic Forum urged a privacy-oriented framework.
- U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer’s Mind Act and state laws (since 2024) protect “neural data.”

Historical and Technical Background:

- Neurotech roots date back over a century (EEG in 1924, brain-computer interfaces in 1970s).
- Modern surge driven by AI’s ability to analyze and decode brainwaves.

Potential Benefits:

- AI-powered neurotech could revolutionize medical treatments for conditions like Parkinson’s disease and ALS.

QUESTIONS

20. Consider the following statements regarding Khangchendzonga National Park:

1. It is India’s only “Mixed” UNESCO World Heritage Site.
2. It contains both subtropical forests and alpine ecosystems.
3. It has been rated as “Good” by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

21. With reference to UNESCO’s criteria for Natural World Heritage Sites, consider the following:

1. Sites must exhibit outstanding ecological processes.
2. Sites must contain important natural habitats for in-situ biodiversity conservation.
3. Sites must showcase evidence of early human civilization.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

22. Consider the following statements regarding UNESCO’s global standards on neurotechnology:

1. The standards introduce the concept of “neural data” as a sensitive category of information.
2. The standards aim to regulate consumer neurotechnology devices such as brain-reading earbuds.
3. The standards have legally binding enforcement mechanisms for all UN member states.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

23. Consider the following statements:

1. The IUCN World Heritage Outlook evaluates Natural World Heritage Sites based on conservation prospects.
2. The Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve includes both core protected areas and buffer zones with community-managed landscapes.
3. The Lepcha people consider Khangchendzonga a sacred valley known as *beyul*.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

24. In 2016, Khangchendzonga National Park (KNP) was inscribed as India's first "Mixed World Heritage Site" on the UNESCO World Heritage List. It is located in:

- A. Assam
B. West Bengal
C. Uttarakhand
D. Sikkim

6. Supreme Court Orders on Stray Dogs

Latest Order (November 7, 2025)

- **Directive:** All States & UTs must remove stray dogs from:
 - Educational institutions
 - Hospitals
 - Sports complexes
 - Bus stands & depots
 - Railway stations

Action Required:

- Stray dogs to be taken to designated shelters after sterilisation and vaccination under Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules.
- **No re-release:** Dogs must not be returned to the same locations.

Responsibility:

- Municipal bodies to carry out removal operations.
- Each institution (school, hospital, etc.) must appoint a nodal officer for cleanliness and preventing dog entry.



Background & Previous Supreme Court Orders

1. August 11, 2024 – “No-Release” Mandate

- Triggered by suo motu action after report “City Hounded by Strays, Kids Pay Price.”

Bench:

- **Justices J. B. Pardiwala & R. Mahadevan.**
 - Ordered immediate pickup of stray dogs in Delhi–NCR.
 - Dogs not to be released back on streets — a departure from ABC Rules (2023).
- **Justification:** Protect public safety, especially children & elderly from dog bites/rabies.

Mandates:

- Establish shelters for 5,000 dogs within 6–8 weeks.
- Ensure humane shelter conditions.
- Strict action against anyone obstructing the process.

2. August 22, 2024 – Regulated Management

Bench:

- **Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta & N. V. Anjaria.**
 - Shifted policy to align with ABC Rules, 2023.
 - Dogs to be returned to their localities after sterilisation, deworming, and vaccination.

Exceptions:

- Dogs infected with or suspected of rabies, or aggressive dogs, must be kept in shelters — not released.

Feeding Regulations:

- Street feeding banned.
- Municipalities to set up designated feeding zones in each ward.
- Feeding outside these areas to attract legal action.
- **Scope expanded:** Directions made applicable pan-India, not just Delhi–NCR.
- All similar High Court cases to be transferred to SC for uniform monitoring.

What Still Applies from August 11 Order

- Municipalities must create dog shelters and pounds.
- These shelters will house aggressive or rabid dogs permanently.
- Public obstruction of authorities will attract strict penalties.

Essence of Current Legal Position

- Stray dogs must be removed from sensitive public premises.
- They should be sterilised, vaccinated, and sheltered, not released back in those specific areas.
- Municipal bodies and designated officers bear legal responsibility for enforcement and humane treatment.
- The Supreme Court aims to balance public safety and animal welfare under regulated, nationwide implementation.

Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023 (ABC Rules, 2023) in India

- The Rules were notified by the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying on 10 March 2023 (G.S.R. 193(E)).
- They supersede the earlier Animal Birth Control (Dog) Rules, 2001.
- The Rules are made under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.
- They were introduced in the context of concerns in India over stray/"community" dogs, dog bites, and rabies – and after direction from courts regarding stray-dog population management.

Objective / Purpose

- The general aim is to provide guidelines for the sterilisation (birth-control) and immunisation (vaccination) of stray dogs through the ABC Programme, to humanely control stray-dog population and reduce rabies and human-dog conflict.
- It also seeks to ensure that animal-welfare aspects (i.e., cruelty prevention, proper conditions) are addressed in managing stray dogs.

Key Features

- Local bodies (municipalities, municipal corporations, panchayats) are responsible for carrying out ABC programmes (sterilisation + vaccination) of stray dogs.
- The ABC programme must be carried out by an organisation recognised by the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) or under local authority supervision.
- The Rules prohibit random relocation of dogs; the emphasis is on sterilise-vaccinate-release in the same area.
- There must be monitoring committees (local/district/state) to oversee implementation, and track infrastructure, records (for example, of surgeries, vaccination, post-operative care) including CCTV / documentation.
- Cruelty during capture, surgery, maintenance must be prevented; certain standards for centres (ABC centres) must be met.

Some Issues / Criticisms

- Despite the Rules, there have been reports of increasing dog-bite cases and challenges in implementation.
- Some courts have criticised the Rules: For instance, the Supreme Court of India called the Rules "absurd" in a stray-dog-menace case because they mandate return of sterilised dogs to the same area (thus not removing the risk).
- Activists argue certain fresh court orders (for example removal of stray dogs) conflict with the ABC Rules' requirement of release in original location.

QUESTIONS

25. Consider the following statements regarding the Supreme Court's 2025 order on stray dogs:

1. Stray dogs must be removed from all educational institutions, hospitals, and transport hubs and kept in designated shelters.
2. Under the 2025 order, dogs sterilised under the ABC Rules must be released back to the same location.
3. Every institution such as schools and hospitals must appoint a nodal officer to prevent stray dog entry.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

26. With reference to the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2023, consider the following:

1. The ABC Rules, 2023, were issued under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.
2. The Rules mandate that all sterilised dogs must be mandatorily relocated to government shelters.
3. The Rules supersede the earlier ABC (Dog) Rules, 2001.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

27. Consider the following statements regarding the Supreme Court's orders on management of stray dogs (2024–2025):

1. The Court has banned street feeding except at designated feeding points set by municipalities.
2. Aggressive or rabies-suspected dogs must be permanently kept in shelters.
3. All High Court cases on stray dogs were transferred to the Supreme Court for uniform monitoring.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

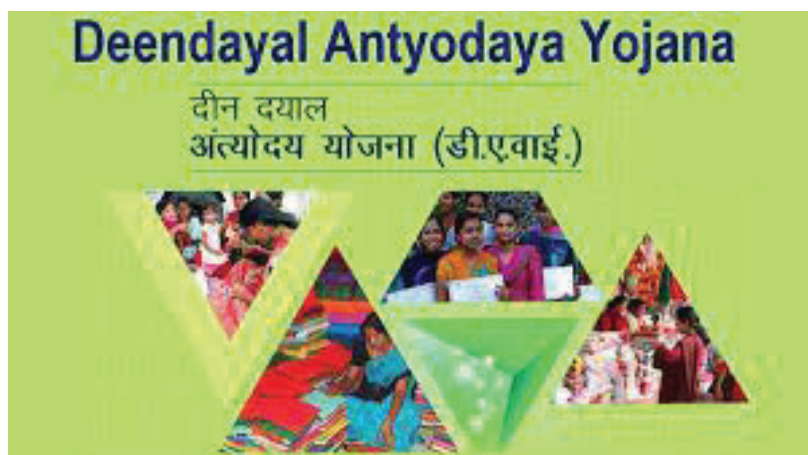
7. Ethiopia to Adopt India's Flagship Initiative for Poverty Alleviation

Purpose of Visit

- A high-level Ethiopian government delegation completed a week-long learning and exposure visit to India to understand the implementation strategies of the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), India's flagship program for poverty alleviation and women's economic empowerment.

Focus Areas:

- The visit emphasized implementation design, community participation, institutional structures, and women-led livelihood models under NRLM.



Application to Ethiopian Context:

- Delegates expressed intent to adapt NRLM's lessons to Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) and invited collaboration with Indian partners for further innovation.

World Bank's Role:

- Representatives reaffirmed their commitment to supporting women's livelihood transformation in Ethiopia, stressing strong government leadership, enabling policies, and private sector engagement.

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission

- The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) is a flagship program of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, aimed at poverty alleviation and social empowerment of rural poor households.
- It was launched in 2011 and is a continuation and scaling up of the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY).
- **Objective:** To reduce poverty through promotion of sustainable livelihoods, capacity building, and self-employment opportunities for rural households, especially women.

Key Objectives

- Organize rural poor into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for collective action.
- Increase household income through sustainable livelihood interventions.
- Provide skill development and financial inclusion for rural communities.
- Empower women and marginalized communities socially and economically.
- Build community institutions to support the poor in accessing government services.

Target Group

- Rural poor, particularly women, SC/ST communities, landless laborers, and other marginalized groups.
- Households below the poverty line.

Core Components

Social Mobilization

- Formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Village Organizations (VOs).
- Empowerment through collective decision-making.

Financial Inclusion

- SHGs linked with banks for savings and credit.
- Access to microfinance and government schemes.

Skill Development

- Training for livelihood activities like agriculture, livestock, handicrafts, small businesses.

Livelihood Promotion

- Support for agriculture, micro-enterprises, and non-farm livelihoods.
- Formation of producer groups and market linkages.

Capacity Building

- Strengthening local institutions for sustainable self-governance.

Implementation Structure

- **National Level:** Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)
- **State Level:** State Rural Livelihoods Missions (SRLMs)
- **District Level:** District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs)
- **Village Level:** SHGs, Village Organizations (VOs), and Cluster Level Federations (CLFs)

Funding

- Centrally sponsored scheme with shared funding between Central and State Governments (usually 60:40).
- Funding is primarily for capacity building, SHG promotion, skill development, and livelihood support.

Key Features

- Focuses on women empowerment (majority of SHG members are women).
- Provides interest-free loans, skill training, and marketing support.
- Encourages community-led planning and participatory development.

Achievements

- Millions of rural households have been mobilized into SHGs.
- Enhanced financial literacy and access to banking for rural women.
- Significant increase in rural income and employment opportunities.
- Promotion of sustainable livelihoods in agriculture, dairy, handicrafts, and other sectors.

QUESTIONS

28. Consider the following statements regarding the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM):

1. It aims to reduce rural poverty by organizing the poor into Self-Help Groups (SHGs).
2. It was launched by restructuring the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY).
3. It is fully funded by the Central Government with no contribution from the States.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

29. Ethiopia's recent delegation visit to India focused on adopting learnings from which of the following flagship government programmes?

1. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana
2. DAY-NRLM
3. National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
4. National Urban Livelihoods Mission

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

30. With reference to India–Ethiopia cooperation on poverty alleviation, consider the following statements:
1. Ethiopia plans to adopt lessons from DAY-NRLM into its Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP).
 2. The World Bank is supporting Ethiopia in expanding women-centred livelihood models.
 3. NRLM functions only at National and State levels, with no institutional structures at the village level.

How many statements given above are correct?

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

31. Consider the following countries:

1. Eritrea
2. Djibouti
3. Sudan
4. Uganda

Which of the above share a land border with Ethiopia?

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

8. 70th birthday celebrations of the fourth king of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the father of the incumbent king, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck

Early Ascension & Leadership

- Became the 4th King of Bhutan (Druk Gyalpo) at age 16 in 1972 after his father's demise.
- Prior experience as Chairman of the Planning Commission (1971) gave him governance exposure and insight into India-Bhutan cooperation.

Visionary Governance

- Ruled Bhutan for 34 years, balancing tradition with development.
- Converted Bhutan from a hereditary monarchy to a constitutional monarchy, paving the way for democracy by 2008.

Strengthening India-Bhutan Ties

- Maintained close relations with Indian leaders from Indira Gandhi to Manmohan Singh.
- Pegged Bhutanese currency (Ngultrum) to Indian rupee to stabilize trade and economy.

- Actively involved in hydro-power cooperation, including Chukha, Kurichhu, and Tala projects, benefiting both nations.

Global Engagement:

- Expanded Bhutan's diplomatic presence globally, forging ties with countries like Bangladesh, Japan, South Korea, and Canada.
- Initiated border negotiations with China in 1984 and engaged in SAARC founding processes in 1985.



Security Leadership:

- Led Bhutan's first military operation ("Operation All Clear") in 2003-04 to flush out militants using Bhutanese territory as safe havens.
- Coordinated closely with India, showcasing Bhutan's commitment to regional security.

Guiding Hand in Modern Treaties:

- Negotiated the 2007 India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty, replacing the 1949 treaty clause on Indian guidance in Bhutan's external affairs with a mutual cooperation framework.
- Continues to provide strategic counsel to the current king and Bhutanese government, strengthening India-Bhutan relations.

Legacy & Recognition:

- Celebrated for wisdom, simplicity, courage, and selfless service.
- Played a pivotal role in modernizing Bhutan, fostering democracy, and enhancing bilateral ties with India.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visit to Bhutan key takeaway

- India and Bhutan inaugurated the 1,020 MW Punatsangchhu - II Hydroelectric Project, marking a significant boost to Bhutan's hydropower capacity.
- Prime Minister Modi, along with the King of Bhutan and the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, inaugurated the Kālacakra or 'Wheel of Time' Empowerment ceremony.
- India extended a concessional line of credit of approx. Rs. 4,000 crore (≈US\$450 million) to Bhutan for energy and infrastructure projects.
 - **Connectivity & infrastructure:** Agreement to establish an Immigration Check-Post at Hatisar (to facilitate cross-border travel/investment via Gelephu), plus emphasis on new rail links between India and Bhutan.
 - **Cooperation in technology/fintech/education:** For example, rollout of Phase II of India's UPI payments for Bhutanese travellers, increased ties in STEM/space, health and medicine MoUs.
 - **Cultural/spiritual ties reinforced:** The visit coincided with the 70th birthday of Bhutan's former king and the Global Peace Prayer Festival; the sacred Piprahwa Relics of Lord Buddha from India were part of the events, highlighting shared heritage.

- **Broad support for Bhutan's development plan:** India reaffirmed support for Bhutan's 13th Five-Year Plan and committed the aid package for development, infrastructure and community projects.

Significance & broader implications

- The energy cooperation (hydro projects + credit line) underscores how Bhutan remains a key partner in regional renewable-energy and power-export strategy for India.
- Connectivity (rail, immigration posts) signals deeper integration of Bhutan's economy and infrastructure with India's north-eastern region, aligning with India's "Neighbourhood First" / "Act East" policies.
- The fintech/education/technology angle shows a shift toward a more diversified partnership—not just traditional aid and hydropower, but also digital economy, youth & skills.
- The cultural/spiritual dimension helps reinforce soft-power and people-to-people ties, beyond purely transactional diplomacy.
- For Bhutan, the announcements solidify a reliable partnership with India: development aid, infrastructure, and economic diversification. For India it means strengthening influence in a strategic Himalayan neighbour in a time of rising regional competition.



Gelephu Mindfulness City (GMC)

1. What it is

- GMC is a major urban-development project in Gelephu, southern Bhutan.
- It is to be a Special Administrative Region (SAR), with its own executive, legislative and judicial powers, aiming for greater regulatory flexibility.
- The project is inspired by Bhutan's national philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) rather than purely maximal economic growth.

2. Size, Location & Scope

- The area is huge: estimates vary, but around 1,000 sq km to 2,500 sq km have been cited.
- It is located in Gelephu, a flatland/town in southern Bhutan, close to the India border, offering connectivity potential.
- The ambition is to create a new city with multiple zones (neighbourhoods), integrated with nature, sustainable mobility, cultural-heritage elements.

3. Key Focus Areas / Clusters

- The project aims to pivot Bhutan's economy and urban development around certain clusters:
- Renewable energy (hydro, solar, wind) and sustainability infrastructure.
- **Connectivity:** improved transport (airport, road/rail links) to India & beyond.
- **Skills and human capital:** education, health, wellness, agri-tech, green tech.
- **Culture, mindfulness, environment:** preserving Bhutanese values while enabling economic growth.

4. Infrastructure Highlights

- A new international airport is part of the plan (to complement Bhutan's existing air connectivity) in or around Gelephu.
- The urban design is being done by renowned firms (e.g., Bjarke Ingels Group – “BIG”) with eco-design, green corridors, low-rise architecture.
- Emphasis on natural landscape integration: rivers, forest corridors, biodiversity protection.

5. Economic & Strategic Importance

- The project is expected to generate jobs, attract investment (including foreign direct investment), and stimulate sectors beyond traditional ones.
- **Strategic for Bhutan:** helps diversify the economy, offer younger Bhutanese more opportunities locally (rather than emigrate).
- Also strategic for regional connectivity: given Gelephu's border location, the project links Bhutan with India/South Asia corridors.

6. Sustainability & Social Considerations

- The city is designed to be carbon-neutral, or very low carbon, emphasising clean industries, pedestrian and cycling friendly mobility.
- It intends to preserve local culture, integrate Bhutanese architectural styles, use local materials, and protect wildlife/forests.
- There are also concerns and notes about how it will affect local communities, land use, governance and realisation timelines (more on that below).

7. Timeline & Current Status

- The planning phase is well underway; design work is being done.
- Actual major construction and full realisation will take many years: the size and ambition mean this is a long-term project.
- As with many mega-projects: some features (airport, transport links) are being advanced, but full functionality is yet to come.

QUESTIONS

32. Consider the following statements regarding the Fourth King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck:

1. He initiated the transition of Bhutan from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy.
2. He launched Bhutan's first military operation against insurgent groups operating from Bhutanese territory.
3. He ended the pegging of the Bhutanese Ngultrum with the Indian Rupee.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

33. With reference to India–Bhutan cooperation during PM Modi's recent Bhutan visit, consider the following statements:

1. The Punatsangchhu-II Hydroelectric Project was inaugurated jointly by the leaders of both nations.

2. India has extended a concessional line of credit to Bhutan for energy and infrastructure projects.
3. The visit included the inauguration of new rail links between India and Bhutan.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

34. With reference to the Gelephu Mindfulness City (GMC) project, consider the following statements:

1. GMC is designed as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) within Bhutan with its own legislative and executive powers.
2. The project is located in northern Bhutan, close to the Tibetan border.
3. GMC is inspired by Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (GNH) philosophy and aims for sustainable, nature-integrated development.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

9. India Ends Operations at Ayni Airbase in Tajikistan



- Ayni Airbase (also known as Farkhor Airbase) was India's only full-fledged overseas military base, located near Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

- Originally built in the Soviet era, it was renovated and upgraded by India under a 2002 bilateral agreement with Tajikistan.
- The base provided strategic access to Central Asia, with proximity to the Wakhan Corridor, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), and China's Xinjiang province.
- India spent ~\$80 million to upgrade the facility — including a 3,200-metre runway, hangars, fuel depots, and air traffic control facilities.

India's Deployment & Operations

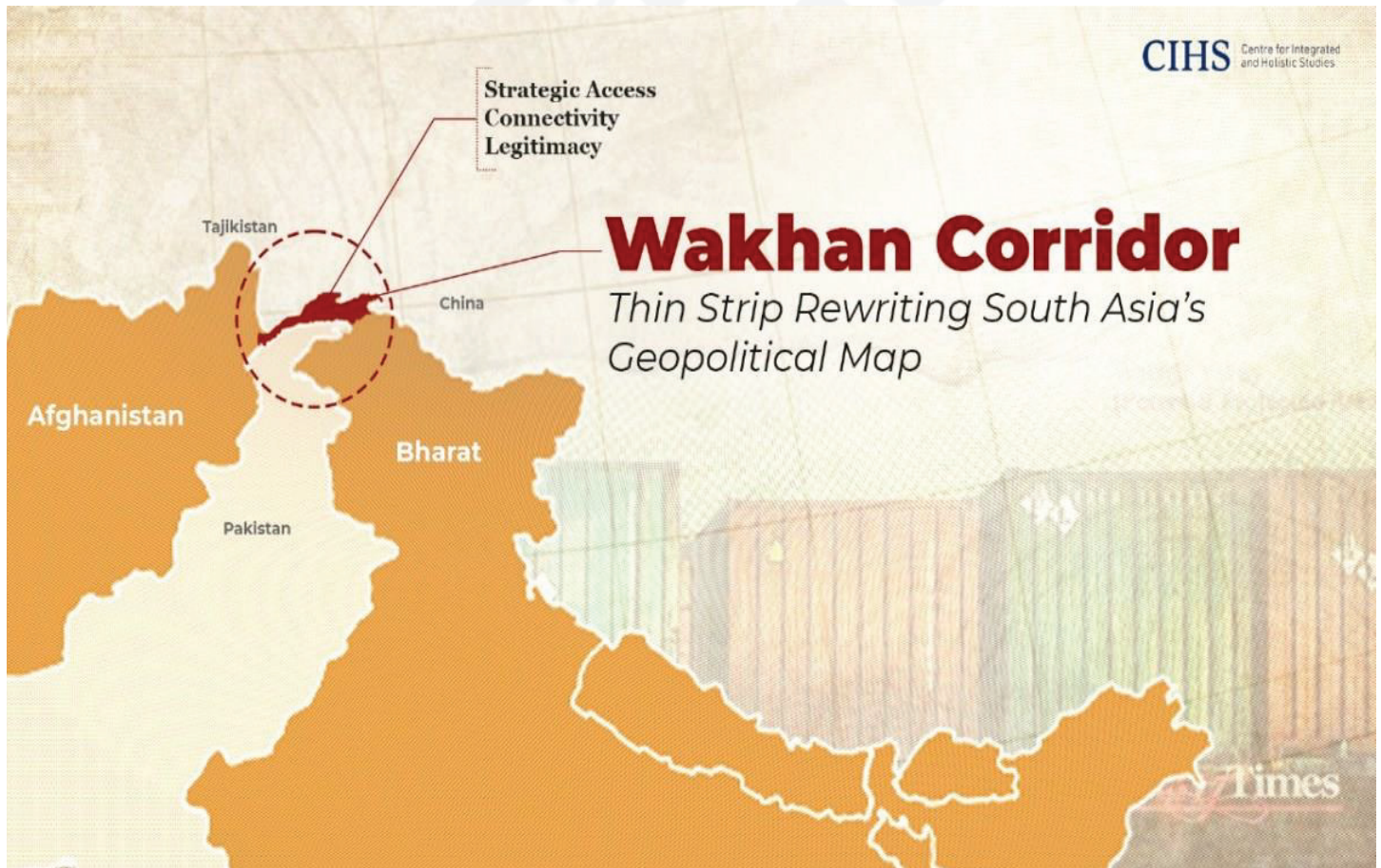
- Hosted around 200 Indian Army and Air Force personnel, along with Sukhoi-30 MKI jets at its peak.
- Played a key role during India's support for the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan against the Taliban.
- Used during evacuation operations after the Taliban took control of Kabul in August 2021.

Withdrawal and Reasons

- India began quietly withdrawing personnel and equipment in 2022, after the bilateral agreement expired.
- Officially, the base was “handed over to Tajikistan” after the conclusion of the arrangement.
- Tajikistan's reluctance to renew the lease was reportedly due to pressure from Russia and China.
- The withdrawal remained undisclosed until late 2025, when reports surfaced publicly.

Strategic Impact on India

- The closure marks the loss of India's only overseas base, reducing its military reach in Central Asia.
- Ayni offered India a vantage point over key regions — Afghanistan, Xinjiang, and PoK.
- The move represents a setback for India's regional influence, limiting intelligence and security access in Central Asia.



India's Current Overseas Presence

No other operational overseas military base at present.

- **Mauritius (Agaléga Islands):** In 2024, India and Mauritius inaugurated a new airstrip and jetty — expanding India's naval reach in the western Indian Ocean and near Africa's east coast.
- **Bhutan:** Indian Military Training Team (IMTRAT) continues to train the Royal Bhutan Army and Bodyguard.
- **Past temporary bases:** Used facilities in Bangladesh (1971 war) and Sri Lanka (IPKF mission).

Global Context

- **China:** Has an official overseas base in Djibouti; reports suggest another base under construction in Tajikistan.
- **United States:** Maintains 100+ overseas bases, including Camp Humphreys (South Korea), Al Udeid (Qatar), and bases across Germany and Japan.

Wakhan Corridor

- The Wakhan Corridor is a narrow strip of territory in northeastern Afghanistan, stretching between Tajikistan to the north, Pakistan to the south, and China to the east.
- It's one of the most remote and isolated regions in the world — a high-altitude valley surrounded by towering peaks of the Pamir and Hindu Kush mountain ranges.

Geography

- **Length:** About 350 km (220 miles)
- **Width:** Between 13–65 km (8–40 miles)
- **Elevation:** Mostly above 3,000 meters (9,800 ft)
- The Wakhan River and Panj River run through it, eventually joining to form the Amu Darya.

History

- The corridor was created in the late 19th century during the “Great Game” between the British Empire and Tsarist Russia as a buffer zone between their territories (British India and Russian Central Asia).
- It became part of Afghanistan under an agreement in 1893.
- Historically, it was part of the Silk Road, linking Central Asia with China via the Wakhjir Pass.

People

- The inhabitants are mostly Wakhi (a Persian-speaking people) and Kyrgyz (a Turkic nomadic group).
- The population is small — estimated at 12,000–15,000 — and largely dependent on pastoralism and subsistence agriculture.
- The region remains culturally distinct and economically isolated.

Access and Modern Status

- There are no modern roads connecting the corridor to the rest of Afghanistan.
- The Wakhjir Pass (4,923 m / 16,152 ft) connects Afghanistan to China's Xinjiang region, but it's closed to regular traffic and not an official border crossing.
- It's one of the few areas in Afghanistan that has remained peaceful during recent conflicts.

Environment

- The corridor is part of the Wakhan National Park, established in 2014, protecting snow leopards, Marco Polo sheep, ibex, and other rare wildlife.
- The harsh climate and high altitude make it a fragile ecosystem but also one of stunning natural beauty.

QUESTIONS

35. Consider the following statements regarding the Ayni Airbase:

1. It was India's only fully operational overseas military base before its closure.
2. The base is located close to the Wakhan Corridor of Afghanistan.
3. India upgraded the airbase in the early 2000s, including its runway and hangars.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

36. The Wakhan Corridor, often mentioned in geopolitics, connects Afghanistan to which of the following countries?

1. China
2. Tajikistan
3. Pakistan

How many of the above are correct?

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

37. With reference to India's overseas military presence, consider the following statements:

1. India currently operates a permanent overseas naval facility in the Agaléga Islands of Mauritius.
2. The Indian Military Training Team (IMTRAT) operates in Bhutan.
3. India previously maintained temporary operational bases in both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

38. India is one of the founding members of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a multimodal transportation corridor, which will connect—

- A. India to Central Asia to Europe via Iran
- B. India to Central Asia via China
- C. India to South-East Asia through Bangladesh and Myanmar
- D. India to Europe through Azerbaijan

- 39.** What is the importance of developing Chabahar Port by India?
- A. India's trade with African countries will enormously increase.
 - B. India's relations with oil-producing Arab countries will be strengthened.
 - C. India will not depend on Pakistan for access to Afghanistan and Central Asia.
 - D. Pakistan will facilitate and protect the installation of a gas pipeline between Iraq and India.

40. Consider the following countries:

- 1. Kazakhstan
- 2. Uzbekistan
- 3. Turkmenistan
- 4. Tajikistan
- 5. Kyrgyzstan
- 6. Mongolia

How many of the above are traditionally considered part of Central Asia *and* are completely landlocked?

- A. Only four
- B. Only five
- C. All six
- D. Only three



ANSWER KEY AND EXPLANATION

1. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct** – David Szalay won in 2025 for *Flesh*.
- **Statement 2 is correct** – She is the first Indian woman to win the Booker (1997).
- **Statement 3 is incorrect** – *Tomb of Sand* was originally written in **Hindi**, not English.

2. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct** – This is the Booker Prize's selection criterion.
- **Statement 2 is correct** – The £50,000 is shared by author and translator.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect** – 2005 marks the **start of the International Prize**, not the Booker Prize.

3. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct** – Since 2015, it awards a single translated book annually.
- **Statement 2 is correct** – Earlier (2005–2015), it was for a body of work.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect** – Aravind Adiga won the **Booker Prize**, not the International Booker.

4. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct** – *Midnight's Children* won in 1981.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect** – Naipaul won for *In a Free State*, not *A Bend in the River*.
- **Statement 3 is correct** – Kiran Desai won in 2006.

5. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct** – Exact prize structure of the Booker Prize.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect** – The £50,000 is shared equally between author and translator.
- **Statement 3 is correct** – Both novels and short stories are eligible.

6. B Only two

- **Statement 1 — Incorrect:** Five of the eight Botswana cheetahs will first be kept in a **quarantine facility at Mokolodi Reserve**, not directly released in India.
- **Statement 2 — Correct:** India first brought cheetahs from **Namibia (2022)**, then **South Africa (2023)**, and now **Botswana**, making Botswana the **second African source country** after Namibia (because South Africa's import was a continuation agreement).
- **Statement 3 — Correct:** India currently has **27 cheetahs**, including **16 born in India**, i.e., more than 25.

7. B Only two

- **Statement 1 — Correct:** India agreed to supply **ARV medicines** to Botswana **on request**.
- **Statement 2 — Correct:** The health MoU includes **pharmaceutical collaboration**, especially **generic medicines**.
- **Statement 3 — Incorrect:** India and Botswana will mark **60 years** of diplomatic ties in **2026**, not 75 years.

8. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct.** Asiatic cheetah is functionally extinct; African cheetahs are being reintroduced.
- **Statement 2 is correct.** It is the world's first inter-continental wild carnivore translocation project.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect.** While Kuno is the first site, **it is not the only site**; Gandhisagar Wildlife Sanctuary and others are also under consideration.

9. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct.** Government of India declared cheetahs extinct in 1952.
- **Statement 2 is correct.** The widely accepted account is the 1947 hunting of the last three Asiatic cheetahs.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect.** India received **8 cheetahs from Namibia and 12 from South Africa**, not only from South Africa.

10. A 1 and 2 only

- **Statement 1 is correct.**
- Lions do **not** have a fixed breeding season. Female lions are **polyestrous** and can come into heat several times a year. Breeding occurs year-round, depending on pride stability and food availability.
- **Statement 2 is correct.**
- Cheetahs are unique among big cats—they **cannot roar** because their hyoid bone is rigid. Instead, they make sounds such as **chirps, purrs, growls, and meows**, which differentiates them sharply from other roaring cats like lions, tigers, and leopards.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect.**
- Male leopards **do** proclaim and defend territory using **scent marking**, just like male lions. Both species use **urine spraying, scraping, and vocalizations** to mark territorial boundaries. Therefore, the statement incorrectly suggests that leopards do not scent mark.

11. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct.**
Solhyd modules generate hydrogen *directly from sunlight and air* without requiring liquid water or rare materials.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect.**
Sun Build — not Nippon Gases — is responsible for designing and building the solar-plus-storage system. Nippon Gases handles hydrogen post-processing, storage, and distribution.
- **Statement 3 is correct.**
Each Solhyd module produces **approximately 250 litres of hydrogen per day**.

12. B Only two

- **Statement 1 is correct.**
Hybrid inverters can handle inputs from solar PV panels and batteries simultaneously.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect.**
Charge controllers are needed **only when batteries are used** (off-grid/hybrid systems).
Pure grid-tied systems **do not** require charge controllers.

- **Statement 3 is correct.**

Microinverters are panel-level inverters that improve performance, especially under shading or variable sunlight.

13. A 1 only

- **Statement 1 is correct.**

The International Solar Alliance (ISA) was jointly launched by India and France at the **UNFCCC Paris Climate Conference (COP21) in 2015** to promote solar energy and reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

- **Statement 2 is incorrect.**

ISA is **not** an alliance of all UN member countries. It is a **treaty-based international organisation open only to countries between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn** (although later amended to allow all UN members to join voluntarily—yet not all have joined).

- Therefore, it does **not** include all UN member states.

14. D Belgium

The world's first solar hydrogen park is being constructed near **Namur in Wallonia, Belgium**. This park will integrate **hydrogen-producing solar modules** developed by Solhyd that generate **green hydrogen directly from sunlight and moisture in the air**, without the need for liquid water. It is scheduled to open in **2026**, making Belgium the first country to operationalize this innovative renewable-energy model.

15. B Only two

- **Statement 1 – Correct.**

TFFF was launched at **COP30 (2025)** in Belém and its purpose is to reward protection of tropical old-growth forests.

- **Statement 2 – Incorrect.**

Funding target = **\$125 billion**, but

- \$25 billion → wealthy governments & philanthropists
- \$100 billion → private investors
- → So, not entirely private sector.

- **Statement 3 – Correct.**

Payments will be given based on **satellite-tracked forest cover**, ensuring transparency. Hence, **2 statements are correct.**

16. B Only two

- **Statement 1 – Correct.**

Norway announced a **\$3 billion commitment over a decade.**

- **Statement 2 – Correct.**

Both **Brazil** and **Indonesia** pledged **\$1 billion each.**

- **Statement 3 – Incorrect.**

TFFF operates **outside the UNFCCC framework**, which is why critics warn it may undermine formal climate finance obligations.

17. **D** Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct

- **Statement-I is incorrect** because **tropical rainforest soils are actually nutrient-poor**, not nutrient-rich.
- Heavy rainfall leads to **leaching**, washing nutrients deep below the root zone. Most nutrients are stored in vegetation, not in soil.
- **Statement-II is correct** because the **hot and humid climate accelerates decomposition** of leaf litter and organic material.
- Microbial activity is extremely high, causing dead matter to break down very quickly.
- However, because nutrients are rapidly absorbed by plants or leached away, **the soil does not remain nutrient-rich**, making Statement-I false.

18. **A** the soil of rain forest is deficient in nutrients

Tropical rainforests have **nutrient-poor, heavily leached soils** because high rainfall washes nutrients deep below the root zone. Most nutrients are stored in biomass—not in the soil. When the forest is cleared, the thin nutrient layer is lost quickly, preventing rapid regeneration. Deciduous forests, by contrast, have comparatively richer soils, allowing faster regrowth after disturbance.

19. **D** 1, 2, 3 and 4

- **Statement 1 is correct.**

Tropical rainforest soils (oxisols and ultisols) are highly leached due to heavy rainfall, resulting in low nutrient content. Most nutrients are stored in the biomass, not the soil.

- **Statement 2 is correct.**

Rainforests have evergreen vegetation because of high year-round temperature and rainfall, allowing continuous photosynthesis.

- **Statement 3 is correct.**

Ecologists sometimes describe tropical rainforests as “deserts covered by trees” because despite lush vegetation, the underlying soil is extremely nutrient-poor—similar to desert soils.

- **Statement 4 is correct.**

Tropical rainforests are the most productive terrestrial ecosystem due to high warmth, sunlight, and moisture, leading to rapid biomass turnover.

20. **C** All three

- **Statement 1 is correct:** Khangchendzonga is India’s **first and only Mixed (natural + cultural) World Heritage Site**.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** The park spans **1,784 sq km** from **subtropical forests to alpine and glacial zones**.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** It is the **only Indian site rated “Good”** in IUCN’s 2025 assessment.

21. **B** Only two

- **Statements 1 and 2 are correct:** These correspond to **criteria (ix) and (x)** for selecting natural sites.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect:** Evidence of early human civilization is a **cultural** criterion, not a natural one.

22. B Only two

- **Statements 1 and 2 are correct:** UNESCO's standards classify **neural data** = **highly sensitive**, and regulate consumer neurotech due to privacy concerns.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect:** UNESCO's ethical frameworks are **not legally binding**; they guide member states, not compel them.

23. A 1 and 2 only

- **Statement 1 is correct:** IUCN's World Heritage Outlook rates sites as **Good / Significant Concern / Critical**, based on conservation.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** The **Biosphere Reserve** includes **core, buffer, and transition zones**, integrating communities.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect:**
 - *Beyul* is a **Tibetan Buddhist** concept.
 - The **Lepchas** call the sacred land *Mayel Lyang*, not *beyul*.

24. D Sikkim

- In 2016, Khangchendzonga National Park (KNP), Sikkim has been inscribed as India's first "Mixed World Heritage Site" on UNESCO World Heritage List, by fulfilling the nomination criteria under both natural and cultural heritage.

25. B Only two

- **Statement 1 — Correct.** The 2025 SC order requires complete removal of stray dogs from sensitive public premises and placing them in shelters.
- **Statement 2 — Incorrect.** The 2025 order explicitly says **no re-release** in these sensitive areas, even after sterilisation.
- **Statement 3 — Correct.** The Court mandated nodal officers in each institution to maintain cleanliness and prevent dog entry.

26. B Only two

- **Statement 1 — Correct.** ABC Rules 2023 are framed under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.
- **Statement 2 — Incorrect.** Rules require **returning dogs to the same locality** after sterilisation/vaccination—NOT permanent relocation.
- **Statement 3 — Correct.** They formally replace the ABC (Dog) Rules, 2001.

27. C All three

- **Statement 1 — Correct.** The August 22, 2024 order banned street feeding except at municipal feeding zones.
- **Statement 2 — Correct.** Aggressive/rabid dogs must be kept in shelters permanently.
- **Statement 3 — Correct.** SC directed transfer of all similar HC cases to ensure uniform pan-India implementation.

28. B Only two

- **Statements 1 and 2 are correct.** DAY-NRLM promotes SHG-based mobilisation and is an upgraded form of SGSY (2009–10).
- **Statement 3 is incorrect.** DAY-NRLM is a *centrally sponsored* scheme with shared funding (usually 60:40 between Centre and States).

29. A Only one

- Ethiopia's visit was **specifically to study DAY-NRLM** for women-led livelihood and SHG models.
- Other schemes (1, 3, 4) were **not part of this cooperation effort**.

30. B Only two

- **Statements 1 and 2 are correct.** Ethiopia intends to integrate NRLM lessons into PSNP; the World Bank supports this effort.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect.** NRLM has strong *village-level institutions* — SHGs, Village Organisations, Cluster Level Federations.

31. A 1, 2 and 3 only

- Ethiopia is a **landlocked country in the Horn of Africa** and shares borders with **Eritrea (north), Djibouti (northeast), Somalia (east), Kenya (south), South Sudan (west), and Sudan (northwest)**. It does **not** share a border with Uganda.

32. B Only two

- **Statement 1 – Correct.**
The Fourth King led Bhutan's transition to a constitutional monarchy, culminating in the 2008 Constitution.
- **Statement 2 – Correct.**
He led **Operation All Clear (2003-04)** to remove Indian insurgent groups operating from Bhutan.
- **Statement 3 – Incorrect.**
He *maintained* the peg of the Ngultrum to the Indian Rupee; he did **not** end it.

33. B Only two

- **Statement 1 – Correct.**
The 1,020 MW Punatsangchhu-II project was inaugurated by PM Modi, the King of Bhutan, and the Fourth King.
- **Statement 2 – Correct.**
India announced a concessional line of credit of about Rs. 4,000 crore for energy and infrastructure.
- **Statement 3 – Incorrect.**
Rail links were discussed and emphasised, **but not inaugurated**. Only proposals were advanced.

34. B Only two

- **Statement 1 – Correct.**
GMC will function as an SAR with regulatory flexibility.
- **Statement 2 – Incorrect.**
GMC is located in **southern** Bhutan, near the **India border**, not the Tibetan border.

- **Statement 3 – Correct.**

The project is fully aligned with the **Gross National Happiness** philosophy and emphasises sustainable, mindful urban development.

35. C All three

- **Statement 1 – Correct:** Ayni (Farkhor) was India's only functional overseas airbase.
- **Statement 2 – Correct:** It lies near Dushanbe, not far from the Wakhan Corridor, making it strategically important.
- **Statement 3 – Correct:** India upgraded it post-2002, spending about \$80 million on runway, ATC, and support infrastructure.

36. B Only two

- The Wakhan Corridor **touches China** at the Wakhjir Pass → **Correct**
- The corridor **borders Tajikistan** to the north → **Correct**
- It **does NOT touch Pakistan directly**; between Afghanistan and Pakistan lies the narrow Afghan–Pakistan border but the corridor does not connect to Pakistan → **Incorrect**

Hence, **two** are correct.

37. C All three

- **Statement 1 – Correct:** India–Mauritius 2024 infrastructure (airstrip + jetty) serves as a deployed operational facility increasing India's maritime reach.
- **Statement 2 – Correct:** IMTRAT trains Bhutan's Royal Army and Royal Bodyguard.
- **Statement 3 – Correct:** India used facilities in Bangladesh (1971 war) and Sri Lanka (IPKF mission) → **Correct**. All three statements are correct.

38. A India to Central Asia to Europe via Iran

- The **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** is a **7,200 km-long multimodal transport network** (road, rail, and sea) designed to connect:
 - **India → Iran → Central Asia → Russia → Europe**
- **Key features:**
 - **India ships goods to Iran's port of Bandar Abbas or Chabahar.**
 - From Iran, goods move by **rail/road to the Caspian Sea**, then onward through **Azerbaijan/Russia** to northern Europe.
 - Primary purpose: **reduce transport time and cost**, and bypass traditional routes through the Suez Canal. Hence, **Option [A]** is the only correct and complete description.

39. C India will not depend on Pakistan for access to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

- The **correct significance** of developing *Chabahar Port* is that it provides **India direct access to Afghanistan and Central Asia without using Pakistani territory**.
- Pakistan does **not** allow India transit access to Afghanistan, so Chabahar becomes strategically crucial.

○ Now, evaluate each option:

▪ **Option (a)** – Incorrect.

Chabahar may indirectly help Indian trade routes, but it is **not primarily meant for trade with Africa**. Indian ports on the west coast already handle African trade.

▪ **Option (b)** – Incorrect.

The port is located in **Iran**, not in Arab countries. So it does not significantly strengthen ties with Arab Gulf states.

▪ **Option (c)** – Correct.

Chabahar allows India to reach Afghanistan and Central Asia via **Iran**, bypassing Pakistan entirely. This is the main strategic importance.

▪ **Option (d)** – Incorrect.

Pakistan is not involved, nor will it protect any Iraq-India gas pipeline. This statement is factually baseless.

40. B Only five

○ Central Asia is traditionally defined as a region consisting of **five landlocked countries**:

▪ **Kazakhstan** – landlocked

▪ **Kyrgyzstan** – landlocked

▪ **Tajikistan** – landlocked

▪ **Turkmenistan** – landlocked

▪ **Uzbekistan** – **doubly landlocked** (surrounded only by landlocked states)

○ All five are completely landlocked and form the classical definition of **Central Asia**. **Mongolia**, although landlocked, is **not** traditionally included in Central Asia; it is considered part of **East Asia**. Thus, **only the first five countries** listed belong to Central Asia and are fully landlocked. So, the correct count = **five** → **Option (b)**.