MANTHAN

JULY 2025 : WEEK-1

Contents

1. Sarbananda Sonowal Inaugurates India's First Maritime NBFC — Sagarmala Finance Corporation Limited (SMFCL)

- Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW), Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, inaugurated India's first maritime-focused Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC), the Sagarmala Finance Corporation Limited (SMFCL).

- Formerly known as Sagarmala Development Company Limited, the entity has now been officially registered with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as an NBFC as of June 19, 2025, and holds the status of a Mini Ratna Category-I Central Public Sector Enterprise.

- The transformation of SMFCL into a dedicated NBFC marks a significant milestone for India's maritime sector, aligning with the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 and the larger national vision of a Viksit Bharat.

- Shri Sonowal emphasized that SMFCL will address critical financing gaps in the maritime sector and serve as a catalyst for growth by offering customized financial products—ranging from short to long-term funding—for stakeholders such as port authorities, shipping companies, MSMEs, startups, and maritime educational institutions.

- With a broadened mandate, SMFCL will also support strategic and emerging areas including shipbuilding, renewable energy, cruise tourism, and maritime education.
- This move is expected to stimulate innovation, investment, and inclusive development, thereby enhancing India's competitiveness as a global maritime power.
- Minister Shantanu Thakur highlighted the creation of a focused financial ecosystem through SMFCL that will facilitate sustainable and strategic development within the maritime domain.
- By providing sector-specific financial solutions, the corporation will play a crucial role in boosting national logistics efficiency and supporting infrastructure-led growth.
- Overall, SMFCL's launch signifies a paradigm shift in maritime financing, creating a robust institutional framework to fund critical projects and realize India's long-term maritime and economic aspirations.

Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC)

- A Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) is a financial institution that provides certain banking services without meeting the legal definition of a bank. NBFCs are crucial to the Indian financial system, particularly in reaching underserved sectors like small businesses, microfinance, infrastructure, and rural areas.

What is an NBFC?

- A Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) is a company registered under the Companies Act, 2013 (or 1956) and regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) under the RBI Act, 1934, particularly Chapter III-B.
- While NBFCs offer similar financial services as banks (like loans, credit facilities, investments), they cannot accept demand deposits (*e.g.*, savings or current accounts).

Key Functions of NBFCs

- Providing loans and advances
- Investing in shares, stocks, bonds, and debentures
- Leasing, hire-purchase, and asset financing
- Microfinance and rural credit
- Insurance and infrastructure finance
- Venture capital services

Types of NBFCs (based on activities)

Type	Description
Asset Finance Company (AFC)	Finances physical assets for productive/economic activity (vehicles, machinery)
Investment Company (IC)	Main business is acquiring securities
Loan Company (LC)	Provides loans and advances
Infrastructure Finance Company (IFC)	Funds infrastructure projects
Systemically Important Core Investment Company (CIC-ND-SI)	Invests in group companies, not trading their shares
Infrastructure Debt Fund (IDF-NBFC)	Provides long-term debt to infrastructure projects
Micro Finance Institution (NBFC-MFI)	Provides small loans to low-income groups

Factor (NBFC-Factor)	Provides factoring services (financing through receivables)
Housing Finance Company (HFC)	Specializes in home loans (regulated by NHB or RBI)
NBFC-Account Aggregator (AA)	Aggregates and shares user financial data with consent

NBFC Classification Based on Liabilities

Type	Description
Deposit-taking NBFC (NBFC-D)	Can accept public deposits (under strict conditions)
Non-deposit taking NBFC (NBFC-ND)	Cannot accept deposits
Systemically Important NBFCs (NBFC-ND-SI)	NBFCs with assets ≥ ₹500 crore — closely regulated

Key Differences Between NBFCs and Banks

Feature	NBFC	Bank
Regulatory Authority	RBI (limited scope)	RBI (full banking regulation)
Accept Demand Deposits	☐	☐
Part of Payment & Settlement System	☐	☐
Issue Cheques	☐	☐
CRR/SLR Requirement	☐ (but some capital norms apply)	☐
Deposit Insurance (DICGC)	☐	☐

RBI Regulations for NBFCs

- Registration mandatory with minimum net owned funds (₹2 crore for most, ₹5 crore for CICs, etc.)
- Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR): 15% minimum (varies by NBFC type)
- Fair Practices Code and KYC/AML norms
- Asset Classification and Provisioning Norms
- Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) and Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework (for large NBFCs)
- Corporate Governance and Risk Management Guidelines

Importance of NBFCs in India

- Help in financial inclusion by serving sectors neglected by banks
- Boost credit availability to SMEs, entrepreneurs, and rural borrowers
- Promote sector-specific development (*e.g.*, infrastructure, micro-enterprises)
- Diversify the financial ecosystem

Recent Developments

- RBI introduced a Scale-Based Regulation (SBR) framework in 2021:
  - **Base Layer:** Smaller NBFCs
  - **Middle Layer:** Systemically important NBFCs
  - **Upper Layer:** Top ~25 NBFCs under enhanced supervision
  - **Top Layer:** If needed, NBFCs with greater regulatory risk

- Digital Lending Guidelines introduced to curb predatory lending by fintechs and NBFCs
- New NBFCs in specialized areas launched (*e.g.*, Sagarmala Finance Corporation Ltd (SMFCL) — India's first maritime NBFC, 2024)

Challenges Faced by NBFCs

- Liquidity crises (*e.g.*, IL&FS 2018)
- Asset-liability mismatch
- Regulatory arbitrage vs banks
- Dependence on banks for funding
- Governance lapses in some cases

Examples of Prominent NBFCs in India

- Bajaj Finance Ltd
- Muthoot Finance
- LIC Housing Finance
- L&T Finance
- Mahindra Finance
- HDB Financial Services
- Power Finance Corporation (PFC)
- Rural Electrification Corporation (REC)
- A Mini Ratna Category-I Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) is a classification granted by the Government of India to certain public sector enterprises based on their performance, financial strength, and operational autonomy.

Key Features of Mini Ratna Category-I CPSEs

Eligibility Criteria:

- Should have made a profit for the last three consecutive years.
- Should have a positive net worth.
- Should have earned a pre-tax profit of ₹30 crore or more in at least one of the three years.

Administrative Autonomy:

- Granted enhanced financial and operational powers compared to other CPSEs.
- Allowed to make capital expenditure on new projects, modernization, or purchase of equipment without government approval up to ₹500 crore or equal to their net worth, whichever is lower.

Board Powers:

- Can form joint ventures, subsidiaries in India or abroad (with certain limits).
- More freedom in HR policies, recruitment, and decision-making processes.

Supervisory Authority:

- These CPSEs function under the guidance of their respective administrative ministries but enjoy more autonomy than non-Ratna companies.

Examples of Mini Ratna Category-I CPSEs

Here are some well-known Mini Ratna-I CPSEs:

CPSE Name	Sector
RITES Ltd.	Transport consultancy
IRCON International Ltd.	Infrastructure & construction
BSNL (Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited)	Telecommunications
NSIC (National Small Industries Corp.)	MSME support services
RailTel Corporation of India	Telecom infrastructure
Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd.	Shipbuilding & defence
MRPL (Mangalore Refinery & Petrochem.)	Oil & Gas
BECIL (Broadcast Engineering Consultants India Ltd.)	Media and consultancy

Related Categories:

- **Maharatna** – Highest level of autonomy (*e.g.*, ONGC, NTPC)
- **Navratna** – Mid-level autonomy (*e.g.*, BEL, HAL)
- **Mini Ratna Category-II** – Less autonomy than Category-I (lower financial thresholds)

QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following correctly differentiates the newly inaugurated Sagarmala Finance Corporation Limited (SMFCL) from traditional banking institutions in India?
   A. SMFCL, unlike banks, can accept demand deposits from the general public.
   B. SMFCL operates under the Companies Act and is regulated by the RBI but does not offer venture capital services.
   C. SMFCL is a Mini Ratna Category-I CPSE registered as an NBFC and does not accept demand deposits.
   D. SMFCL, as a bank-equivalent body, performs all banking functions including issuing currency and offering savings accounts.

2. The transformation of Sagarmala Development Company Limited into SMFCL aligns with which of the following broader national initiatives?
   A. Atmanirbhar Bharat and BharatNet
   B. Digital India and PM Gati Shakti
   C. Blue Economy Mission and Startup India
   D. Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 and Viksit Bharat

3. With reference to the Non-banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) in India, consider the following statements:
   1. They cannot engage in the acquisition of securities issued by the government.
   2. They cannot accept demand deposits like Savings Account.
   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

4. In terms of sectoral focus, which of the following sets of sectors correctly represents the strategic and emerging areas that Sagarmala Finance Corporation Limited (SMFCL) is mandated to support?

   A. Banking, Retail Trade, Digital Payments

   B. Shipbuilding, Renewable Energy, Maritime Education

   C. Agriculture, Housing, Real Estate

   D. Defense Production, Aviation, Warehousing

5. Which of the following is NOT a condition for a Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) to be granted Mini Ratna Category-I status?

   1. It must have earned a net profit for the last three consecutive years.

   2. It must have a positive net worth.

   3. It must have earned a pre-tax profit of ₹30 crore or more in each of the last three years.

   Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

   A. 1 only

   B. 1 and 3 only

   C. 1 and 2 only

   D. 1, 2 and 3

2. Uttar Pradesh's Salkhan Fossil Park makes it to USESCO tentative list

- Salkhan Fossil Park, also known as Sonbhadra Fossils Park, has recently been added to UNESCO's Tentative List for World Heritage Sites.

- It's an incredible achievement for Uttar Pradesh which is a step towards international recognition of its geological and paleontological attraction.
- Situated in Salkhan village in Sonbhadra district, near Robertsganj, the park is spread across 25 hectares in the Kaimur Range.
- It boasts fossils up to 1.4 billion years old.

Home to Prehistoric Stromatolites and Living Relics of the Mesoproterozoic

- The park offers an insight into the planet's earliest life forms as it is home to stromatolites which are layered sedimentary structures formed by ancient cyanobacteria or blue-green algae.
- These are microorganisms that have been photosynthesized.
- These stromatolites belong to the Mesoproterozoic era (1.6–1.0 billion years ago). These are extremely rare geological formations across the globe.
- Salkhan is much older than sites like Shark Bay in Australia and Yellowstone the USA.

An insight into early life

- Salkhan is an extremely important site for many reasons as it has shattered the beliefs of scientists and geologists.
- For years, geologists thought life existed only from around 570 million years ago.
- However, stromatolites discovered at Salkhan are older than that. These fossils are landmarks offering new perspectives about the Earth's earliest biosphere and oceanic ecosystems.

Opening of the park

- Though geological surveys in the region began as early as the 1930s, the site was officially opened as a fossil park in 2002.
- A major Canadian-led workshop in December 2002 brought 42 scientists from around the globe, including renowned geologist H. J. Hoffman. He called the fossils "beautiful and clear".

Eco-Tourism hub

- The Uttar Pradesh government has actively funded the site.
- The government has approved INR 1.5 crores for visitor amenities.
- It includes nature trails, security, and interpretive centers.
- An MoU with Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences in Lucknow has supported scientific documentation, leading to UNESCO Tentative List submission by June 2025. A dossier for final UNESCO candidacy is being prepared by local authorities which will be prepared by 2026.

Major fossil parks in India

- India has several significant fossil parks that showcase the country's rich prehistoric past, including plant and animal fossils dating back millions of years.
- These parks are important for scientific research, education, and tourism.

1. National Fossil Wood Park, Tiruvakkarai – Tamil Nadu

- **Location:** Villupuram district, Tamil Nadu
- **Significance:** Contains over 200 petrified wood fossils scattered in clusters.
- **Age:** Estimated 20 million years old.
- **Declared:** National Geological Monument by the GSI.
- **Unique Feature:** Fossilized trees from the Mio-Pliocene age.

2. National Fossil Wood Park, Sathanur – Tamil Nadu

- **Location:** Perambalur district, Tamil Nadu
- **Significance:** Features a single, massive petrified tree trunk (~18 meters long).
- **Age:** Over 120 million years.
- **Declared:** National Geological Monument.

3. Shivalik Fossil Park (Saketi) – Himachal Pradesh

- **Location:** Near Saketi, Sirmaur district
- **Significance:** Houses life-size models of vertebrate fossils discovered in the Shivalik Hills.
- **Age:** 2.5 million years.
- **Fossils:** Includes elephant, tortoise, crocodile, and hippopotamus ancestors.

4. Ghughua Fossil Park – Madhya Pradesh

- **Location:** Near Shahpura, Dindori district
- **Significance:** One of the largest fossil parks in Asia.
- **Age:** 65–70 million years.
- **Fossils:** Petrified trees, leaves, and fruits from the Late Cretaceous period.
- **Declared:** National Fossil Park in 1983.

5. Rajmahal Fossil Park – Jharkhand

- **Location:** Near Sahibganj, Rajmahal Hills
- **Significance:** Contains fossilized leaves from the Jurassic period.
- **Age:** 68–145 million years.
- **Fossils:** Ferns, cycads, and other ancient flora.

6. Mandla Plant Fossils National Park – Madhya Pradesh

- **Location:** Mandla district
- **Significance:** Spread over 274,100 square meters.
- **Age:** ~40 to 150 million years.
- **Fossils:** Mostly petrified plants, logs, and woods.

7. Akal Wood Fossil Park – Rajasthan

- **Location:** Near Jaisalmer, in the Thar Desert
- **Significance:** Preserves fossilized wood from the Jurassic age.
- **Age:** ~180 million years.
- **Declared:** National Geological Monument by GSI.

8. Ariyalur Fossil Site – Tamil Nadu

- **Location:** Ariyalur district
- **Significance:** Rich in marine fossils such as ammonites, echinoids, mollusks, and dinosaur eggs.
- **Age:** Late Cretaceous period (~65–70 million years).
- **Fossils:** Some of the oldest dinosaur egg fossils in India.

9. Balasinor Dinosaur Fossil Park (Raiyoli) – Gujarat

- **Location:** Mahisagar district, near Balasinor
- **Significance:** One of the largest dinosaur hatcheries in the world.
- **Age:** 65 million years.
- **Fossils:** Dinosaur bones, eggs; home to the dinosaur species Rajasaurus narmadensis.

What is the Tentative List?

- The Tentative List is an official inventory maintained by UNESCO where member countries (State Parties) register sites—natural, cultural, or mixed—they intend to nominate for inclusion on the World Heritage List in the future
  - A site must appear on this list at least one year before being formally nominated
  - It's reviewed every decade to stay relevant

How Countries Engage

- Countries add potential sites to their Tentative Lists (*e.g.*, India, Bhutan, Ethiopia, Southeast Asia nations)
- These include:
  - Kanger Valley National Park (Chhattisgarh)
  - Mudumal Megalithic Menhirs (Telangana)
  - Ashokan Edict Sites (multi-state)
  - Chausath Yogini Temples (multi-state)
  - Gupta Temples (North India, multi-state)
  - Palace-Fortresses of the Bundelas (Madhya Pradesh + Uttar Pradesh)
- Hirebenakal, a 3,000‑year‑old megalithic site in Karnataka with ~500 rock tombs and cave art, is now on India's Tentative List
- In Australia, the Victorian Goldfields region (six locales including Bendigo, Castlemaine, Great Nuggets) was added to the federal tentative list with hopes of UNESCO nomination by 2026
- Burra and Moonta in South Australia, historic 1840s copper‑mining towns, received Australian tentative listing earlier—not yet international

The Nomination Process

- Tentative List →
- Pre-nomination preparation (detailed dossiers, stakeholder consultations) →
- Formal Nomination (only accepted if listed at least a year prior) →
- UNESCO Evaluation (takes 18+ months after nomination)

Why It Matters

- Helps preserve and protect sites of outstanding universal value.
- Opens up access to technical support, international recognition, and tourism.
- Strengthens national efforts in heritage documentation, conservation, and community engagement.

Key Dates & Counts (as of mid-2025)

- **India:** 62 sites on Tentative List (6 added on Mar 7, 2025)
- **Global:** 189 out of 196 UNESCO member states have submitted tentative lists

Summary

- The Tentative List is a must-have step before any nomination to UNESCO World Heritage status.
- Countries continually update their listings; new properties, like Salkhan Fossil Park and Hirebenakal, reflect active heritage priorities.
- After listing, sites enter a lengthy review—from dossier preparation to UNESCO committee evaluation.

QUESTIONS

6. With reference to Salkhan Fossil Park, recently added to UNESCO's Tentative List, consider the following statements:

   1. It is located in the Vindhya Range of Uttar Pradesh.
   2. It contains stromatolites dating back to the Mesoproterozoic Era.
   3. It is older than the fossil sites of Shark Bay (Australia) and Yellowstone (USA).

   Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

7. Which of the following statements correctly explains the significance of stromatolites found in Salkhan Fossil Park?

   A. They are volcanic rock formations indicating tectonic activity.
   B. They are sedimentary structures formed by ancient fungi.
   C. They are the fossilized remains of early human ancestors.
   D. They are layered structures formed by ancient cyanobacteria.

8. Which of the following fossil parks in India is known for preserving fossilized trees from the Mio-Pliocene age?

   A. Shivalik Fossil Park
   B. Ghughua Fossil Park
   C. Tiruvakkarai Fossil Park
   D. Balasinor Dinosaur Fossil Park

9. Arrange the following fossil parks in chronological order from oldest to youngest, based on the age of the fossils preserved:

1. Akal Wood Fossil Park – Rajasthan

2. Rajmahal Fossil Park – Jharkhand

3. Ghughua Fossil Park – Madhya Pradesh

4. Shivalik Fossil Park – Himachal Pradesh

Select the correct order using the codes given below:

A. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4

B. 2 – 1 – 3 – 4

C. 1 – 3 – 2 – 4

D. 1 – 2 – 4 – 3

10. Consider the following pairs regarding fossil parks and their unique features:

Fossil Park	:	Feature
1. Ghughua Fossil Park	:	Petrified trees from the Late Cretaceous period
2. Ariyalur Fossil Site	:	Rich marine fossils and dinosaur egg fossils
3. Balasinor Dinosaur Fossil Park	:	Fossils of Rajasaurus narmadensis and dinosaur hatchery

Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

A. 1 and 2 only

B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1 and 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

3. UN80 Initiative: What it is – and why it matters to the world

United Nations Organisation

A Bold Response to Global Uncertainty

- In the face of escalating global crises, deepening inequality, and waning public trust in international institutions, the United Nations has launched the UN80 Initiative — an ambitious, system-wide reform process aimed at revitalizing its role in global governance.

- Unveiled in March by Secretary-General António Guterres, this initiative seeks not only to increase operational efficiency but also to reaffirm the relevance and credibility of multilateralism in today's volatile landscape.

Three Strategic Workstreams for Transformation

- The UN80 Initiative is structured around three core workstreams:
  - **Efficiency and Impact:** Aimed at optimizing performance and sharpening the UN's field-level outcomes.
  - **Mandate Implementation Review:** A comprehensive assessment of nearly 4,000 current mandates and tens of thousands accumulated since the UN's founding. This is intended to eliminate redundancy, streamline focus, and modernize mission priorities.
  - **Structural Realignment:** This stream explores deeper institutional reforms, including program redesign and functional restructuring across the entire UN system.

System-Wide Cohesion Through Thematic Clusters

- To execute this reform across the UN's complex architecture, a UN80 Task Force was formed, comprising seven thematic clusters coordinated by senior UN leaders.

- These cover vital areas such as peace and security, humanitarian aid, human rights, development, and research.

- The emphasis is on a system-wide approach — not limited to the Secretariat in New York but involving all UN agencies and global offices.

- Each cluster is tasked with proposing measures to improve coordination, reduce duplication, and realign core functions.

- Early proposals have already been submitted, with broader recommendations expected in the coming months.

Reform Beyond Retrenchment

- Although concerns have emerged about potential budget cuts and staff reductions, UN leaders stress that UN80 is not a downsizing exercise.

- Instead, it aims to achieve mission-driven reform, ensuring that even in financially strained times, the UN remains capable of fulfilling its core responsibilities.

- Financial sustainability and mission effectiveness are seen as interlinked goals.

Why This Matters to People Everywhere

- The ultimate goal of UN80 is to better serve people around the globe.

- From assisting over 130 million displaced persons and feeding 120 million people to vaccinating half the world's children, the UN's reach is vast and indispensable.

- By enhancing internal coherence and responsiveness, the UN80 reforms aim to deliver services more efficiently and equitably, especially in crisis contexts.

Next Steps and Member State Engagement

- Initial proposals from the working group on Secretariat efficiency and the mandate review are expected by July.

- These will inform deeper discussions around restructuring, with proposals to be presented to Member States throughout the year.
- The Secretary-General has already hinted at the possibility of launching an intergovernmental process to institutionalize changes.

Redefining Global Leadership Through Multilateral Reform

- For UN80 to succeed, it must reinforce credibility, capacity, and public trust in multilateral cooperation.
- The initiative aspires to present the UN as a modern, agile, and indispensable platform for global problem-solving.
- As the world confronts compounding crises, the UN80 Initiative may well determine whether the UN can remain a relevant and trusted force in shaping a more stable, just, and sustainable future.

United Nations (UN)

- The United Nations (UN) is an international organization founded on 24 October 1945 after World War II to promote peace, security, and cooperation among nations. It currently has 193 member states.

Main Purposes of the UN (as per the UN Charter)

- Maintain international peace and security
- Promote human rights and fundamental freedoms
- Foster social and economic development
- Promote respect for international law
- Coordinate international cooperation to solve global problems

Principal Organs of the United Nations (as per the UN Charter)

Organ Role   Headquarters

	Organ	Role	Headquarters
1.	General Assembly (UNGA)	Deliberative body of all member states; discusses global issues and makes recommendations.	New York
2.	Security Council (UNSC)	Responsible for maintaining peace and security. Can impose sanctions or authorize use of force.	New York
3.	Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)	Coordinates economic, social, and related work of UN agencies and commissions.	New York
4.	International Court of Justice (ICJ)	Main judicial body; settles disputes between states based on international law.	The Hague, Netherlands
5.	Secretariat	Carries out day-to-day work of the UN; led by the Secretary-General.	New York
6.	Trusteeship Council (currently inactive)	Oversaw administration of trust territories; suspended in 1994.	New York

Detailed Overview of Each Organ

1. General Assembly (UNGA)

- **Members:** All 193 UN members have 1 vote each.

Key Functions:

- Discusses and makes recommendations on peace, security, budget, and international law.
  - Approves UN budget.
  - Elects members to other UN bodies.
  - Adopts declarations (*e.g.*, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948).

2. Security Council (UNSC)

- **Members:** 15 (5 permanent + 10 rotating).
- **Permanent Members (P5):** China, France, Russia, UK, USA (with veto power).
- **Non-permanent Members:** Elected for 2-year terms by the General Assembly.

Key Powers:

- Determine threats to peace and take measures (sanctions, peacekeeping missions, military action).
  - Approve new UN members (with UNGA).
  - Refer cases to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

3. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

- **Members:** 54 elected by UNGA for 3-year terms.
- **Focus Areas:**
  - Sustainable development
  - Human rights
  - Global health and education
  - Works with: WHO, UNESCO, ILO, IMF, World Bank, etc.

4. International Court of Justice (ICJ)

- **Role:** Judicial body that settles legal disputes between states and gives advisory opinions.
- **Judges:** 15 judges elected by UNGA and UNSC for 9-year terms.
- Only states can be parties in disputes, not individuals or corporations.

5. Secretariat

- **Led by:** Secretary-General (currently António Guterres of Portugal, since 2017).
- **Functions:**
  - Implements UN decisions and policies.
  - Provides studies, information, and facilitates UN meetings.
  - Coordinates humanitarian aid, peacekeeping, etc.

6. Trusteeship Council

- **Established to:** Supervise trust territories (former colonies) until they gained independence.
- **Inactive Since:** 1994 (last trust territory: Palau became independent).

Other Important UN Bodies & Programs

Agencies

- UNESCO – Education, science, culture

- WHO – Global health

- UNICEF – Children's welfare

- UNHCR – Refugees

- ILO – Labor and workers' rights

- FAO – Food and agriculture

- WFP – Food assistance

- UNDP – Development

Funds and Programs

- UN Women – Gender equality

- UNEP – Environment

- UNAIDS – HIV/AIDS response

QUESTIONS

11. With reference to the UN80 Initiative, consider the following statements:

    1. It is a downsizing initiative aimed at reducing UN staff and budget expenditures.

    2. It includes a comprehensive review of thousands of existing UN mandates.

    3. It proposes reforms limited only to the UN Secretariat in New York.

    Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

    A. 1 and 2 only

    B. 2 only

    C. 1 and 3 only

    D. 2 and 3 only

12. Which of the following is/are a part of the three strategic workstreams under the UN80 Initiative?

    1. Efficiency and Impact

    2. Mandate Implementation Review

    3. Human Rights Expansion

    4. Structural Realignment

    Select the correct answer using the code below:

    A. 1, 2 and 4 only

    B. 2, 3 and 4 only

    C. 1 and 3 only

    D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

13. Which of the following statements is true about the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)?

    A. It consists of 15 members, including 5 permanent ones with veto power.

    B. It approves the UN budget and elects members to other organs.

    C. It can authorize military action like the Security Council.

    D. It operates under the International Court of Justice.

14. Consider the following regarding the UN Security Council (UNSC):

    1. It has 5 permanent members and 10 non-permanent members elected for 5-year terms.

    2. All members have equal voting rights, but permanent members enjoy veto power.

    3. It can authorize economic sanctions and military intervention.

    Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

    A. 1 and 2 only

    B. 2 and 3 only

    C. 3 only

    D. 2 only

4. Centre approves South Asia unit of International Potato Centre at Agra

- The Union Cabinet has approved the establishment of the South Asia Regional Centre of the Peru-based International Potato Center (CIP) in Singna, Agra district, Uttar Pradesh.

- Known as CIP-South Asia Regional Centre (CSARC), the centre aims to boost food and nutrition security, farmers' income, and employment generation by enhancing the productivity and value chain of potato and sweetpotato crops.

- It will serve not only Indian states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal, which are key potato-producing regions, but also other South Asian countries.

- The centre is a collaborative effort, with a total investment of ₹171 crore—₹111 crore from India and ₹60 crore from CIP.

- The Uttar Pradesh government has provided 10 hectares of land for the project.

- This decision follows months of deliberation and correspondence, including a request from Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and a visit to Peru by an Agriculture Ministry delegation led by Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi.

- CSARC will focus on developing high-yielding, nutrient-rich, and climate-resilient varieties of potato and sweetpotato.

- It aims to transform the sector through world-class research and innovation, especially in areas like post-harvest management, value addition, and supply chain efficiency.

- India, the world's second-largest producer and consumer of potatoes after China, produced 51.3 million tonnes of potatoes in 2020. China produced 78.24 million tonnes, and together both countries account for over a third of the global output of 359.07 million tonnes.

- Among Indian states, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal led production with 15 million tonnes each in 2020-21, followed by Bihar (9 million tonnes), Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Punjab.

- Currently, tuber crop research in India is managed by two centres under ICAR: the Central Potato Research Institute (CPRI) in Shimla for potato and the Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (CTCRI) in Thiruvananthapuram for sweetpotato.

- The new CSARC will complement their efforts by bringing international expertise.

- CSARC becomes the second international agricultural research centre in India, following the establishment of the International Rice Research Institute-South Asia Regional Centre (IRRI-SARC) in Varanasi in 2017.

- Similar to China's regional CIP centre in Yanqing, Beijing, CSARC is expected to play a pivotal role in advancing South Asia's tuber crop sector.

What is the CIP

- Headquartered at Lima in Peru, the CIP was founded in 1971 as a research-for-development organisation with a focus on potato, sweet potato and Andean roots and tubers.

- The India centre will not only serve domestic farmers, but those in other South Asian countries as well.

QUESTIONS

15. With reference to the International Potato Center (CIP), consider the following statements:

    1. It is headquartered in Lima, Peru.

    2. It focuses on research related to potato, sweet potato, and other Andean roots and tubers.

    3. Its South Asia Regional Centre in India will be located in Bihar.

    Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
    A. 1 and 2 only
    B. 2 and 3 only
    C. 1 and 3 only
    D. 1, 2 and 3

16. CSARC is India's second international agricultural research centre. The first was:
    A. Central Tuber Crops Research Institute, Thiruvananthapuram
    B. International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT), Karnal
    C. International Rice Research Institute–South Asia Regional Centre, Varanasi
    D. Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Delhi

17. Which of the following crops will be the primary focus of the CIP–South Asia Regional Centre (CSARC)?

    A. Potato and Tomato

    B. Potato and Sweet Potato

    C. Cassava and Sweet Potato

    D. Potato and Onion

5. China-Led Trilateral Diplomacy in South Asia

- China recently hosted its first trilateral meeting with Pakistan and Bangladesh in Kunming, following a similar engagement with Afghanistan in May.

- These meetings reflect Beijing's growing regional activism to advance its interests, particularly by reinforcing Pakistan's role in South Asia and countering India's growing influence.

- Through such trilateral forums, China aims to project itself as a central diplomatic power while simultaneously unsettling India's regional position.

Strategic Roots in the 1962 War

- The China-Pakistan strategic alignment dates back to the 1962 Sino-India war. Post-war, Beijing viewed Islamabad as a reliable ally to keep India preoccupied with regional threats, preventing it from challenging China's security interests.

- In return, Pakistan has benefitted from extensive Chinese economic and military assistance.

- By 2024, Pakistan owed China over $29 billion and sourced over 80% of its arms from Beijing.

- China's shielding of Pakistan-backed terrorists at international forums further underscores this deep-rooted support.

Operation Sindoor and Renewed Military Collaboration

- The camaraderie was evident during India's Operation Sindoor in May 2025, launched in response to a Pakistan-sponsored terror attack in Pahalgam.

- China criticized India's actions and supported Pakistan's demand for an investigation.

- Pakistan's use of Chinese-made drones, missiles, fighter jets, and surveillance systems during the confrontation signaled the operational depth of their defense cooperation.

- In the aftermath, both nations reaffirmed their "iron-clad friendship," setting the stage for further trilateral diplomacy.

Resurfacing Strategy: The "Plus-One" Model

- China and Pakistan's strategy of leveraging third countries to isolate India is not new.

- As early as 1965, Pakistan explored aligning with East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), China, and Nepal to cut India off from the Siliguri Corridor.

- This concept has resurfaced amid India's increasingly assertive military and diplomatic posture. India has robustly responded to Pakistan's provocations in Uri (2016), Pulwama (2019), and Pahalgam (2025), and challenged Chinese intrusions in Doklam and Galwan, demonstrating strategic maturity and military preparedness.

India's Diplomatic Outreach and Regional Realignment

- India's growing economic power and strategic diplomacy have undermined Pakistan's regional influence.

- New Delhi has responded with harsh measures such as suspending the Indus Waters Treaty, halting trade, and targeting key Pakistani military infrastructure.

- Meanwhile, India's pragmatic engagement with South Asian nations has checked Chinese expansion.

- Despite earlier anti-India posturing, Maldives' President Muizzu turned to India for economic aid.

- Nepal's BRI engagements with China remain stalled, and Sri Lanka's new president prioritized ties with India. Even with tensions, India allowed the continuation of trilateral energy cooperation with Nepal and Bangladesh.

China's Regional Gamble and India's Redlines

- China's push for trilaterals with Afghanistan and Bangladesh follows changes in their governments, which were once strong Indian allies.

- China and Pakistan are now trying to draw these countries into their sphere to spread cross-border terrorism and create new regional fault lines.

- This serves to keep India distracted while advancing BRI projects.

- However, the region's complex politics and India's firm redlines are significant hurdles.

Major regional partnerships in South Asia

1. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

- **Members:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

- **Established:** 1985 (Dhaka), Secretariat in Kathmandu

- **Purpose:** Promote regional cooperation in economic and social development.

- **Key Issues:** Political tensions, especially between India and Pakistan, have stalled progress.
- **Key Areas:** Agriculture, education, energy, environment, health, poverty alleviation, science and technology.

2. Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

- **Members:** Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand
- **Established:** 1997
- **Focus Areas:** Trade, connectivity, energy, counter-terrorism, environment, agriculture.
- **Significance:** Bridges South and Southeast Asia; considered more active than SAARC.

3. Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

- **Members:** Includes India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives (from South Asia), and other coastal states of the Indian Ocean
- **Established:** 1997
- **Focus:** Maritime security, trade and investment facilitation, disaster risk management, blue economy.
- **Importance:** Regional maritime cooperation with global partners like Australia and South Africa.

4. BBIN Initiative (Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal)

- **Focus:** Sub-regional cooperation in transport, energy, trade, and water resources.
- **Key Project:** BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) — to ease cross-border movement of vehicles and goods.
- **Status:** Bhutan has not ratified MVA, slowing implementation.

5. India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA)

- **Signed:** 1998, operational since 2000
- **Focus:** Trade in goods and services
- **Importance:** Significant bilateral trade promotion agreement in South Asia.

6. India-Nepal, India-Bangladesh, and India-Bhutan Power Cooperation Agreements

- **Purpose:** Regional grid integration, hydropower trade, energy security.
- **Recent Development:** India-Bangladesh power exchange and Indian investments in Nepal/Bhutan hydroelectric projects.

7. SASEC (South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation)

- **Members:** Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka
- **Facilitated by:** Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- **Focus:** Infrastructure, energy, trade facilitation, tourism.
- **Key Projects:** Road corridors, energy grids, trade facilitation in the Bay of Bengal region.

8. Colombo Security Conclave

- **Members:** India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius (observer: Bangladesh, Seychelles)

- **Established:** 2011, revived post-2020

- **Focus:** Maritime security, counter-terrorism, cyber security, humanitarian assistance.

- **Strategic Importance:** Security architecture in the Indian Ocean region.

QUESTIONS

18. With reference to China's recent trilateral diplomacy in South Asia, consider the following statements:

    1. China hosted its first trilateral meeting with Pakistan and Bangladesh in Kunming in 2025.

    2. These trilateral engagements aim to counterbalance India's growing influence in the region.

    3. China's trilateral diplomacy excludes military cooperation with regional allies.

    Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

    A. 1 and 2 only

    B. 2 and 3 only

    C. 1 only

    D. 1, 2 and 3

19. The "Plus-One" strategy, recently seen in the China-Pakistan diplomacy model, originally emerged during which of the following periods?

    A. Sino-Indian War of 1962

    B. Indo-Pakistan War of 1971

    C. Indo-Pakistan War of 1965

    D. Kargil Conflict of 1999

20. Operation Sindoor, seen in 2025, was launched by India in response to:

    A. Chinese intrusion in Galwan Valley

    B. A terror attack in Uri

    C. A Pakistan-sponsored terror attack in Pahalgam

    D. A Chinese naval blockade near Andaman Sea

6. India Energy Stack (IES): A Digital Transformation of the Power Sector

- The India Energy Stack (IES) is a groundbreaking initiative by the Ministry of Power aimed at digitally transforming the country's fragmented electricity ecosystem.

- Modeled on the success of India's previous Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) projects like Aadhaar and UPI, the IES seeks to unify various stakeholders in the power sector under a common digital framework.

- The task force, led by Nandan Nilekani as Chief Mentor and chaired by Ram Sevak Sharma, is entrusted with designing and implementing this long-term vision.

Need for a DPI-style Intervention

- Electricity in India is governed concurrently by the Union and state governments, leading to a fragmented digital landscape in the power sector.

- According to the concept brief by FSR Global, this results in "isolated digital islands" and operational inefficiencies that hinder the country's ability to meet its growing energy demands.

The four main challenges the IES aims to address are:

- Lack of Unique Identifiers – for consumers, assets, and stakeholders.

- Data Silos – absence of harmonised, real-time data impairs decision-making.

- Limited Scalability – innovators face hurdles due to dependence on proprietary platforms.

- No Interoperability – systems do not communicate across regions or with other utilities.

- These issues mirror those India faced in the identity and financial sectors before Aadhaar and UPI, suggesting a DPI can bring similar transformative results in energy.

Vision and Possibilities of the India Energy Stack

- The IES proposes to digitally integrate every layer of the power sector — from producers and distribution companies to consumers and regulators — enabling unprecedented levels of coordination and efficiency.

Key outcomes expected include:

- **Peer-to-Peer (P2P) Trading** – Consumers and prosumers can trade surplus energy or buy from others.

- **Demand Response Programs** – Aggregated consumer demand data can help balance grid loads in real-time.

- **Decentralised Energy Management** – Prosumer-driven energy generation and consumption becomes viable and efficient.

- **Carbon Offset Tracking** – Transparent, real-time performance data can assist in compliance and verification of carbon goals.

- A pivotal component of the IES will be the Utility Intelligence Platform (UIP) — the core application layer that will support services like energy fintech, virtual power plants, and automated grid management. UIP will ensure integrity in data, processes, and settlements across the ecosystem.

Governance and Implementation Roadmap

- The IES is being steered by a 17-member task force, including key figures from previous DPI successes:
  - Nandan Nilekani – Chief Mentor, Infosys co-founder, and Aadhaar architect.
  - Ram Sevak Sharma – Chair, former UIDAI DG.
  - Pramod Verma – Chief Architect, also from Aadhaar.

- REC Ltd. will act as the nodal agency, and five expert working groups (on technology, distribution, system operations, generation, policy, and markets) will support the initiative.

- A 12-month Proof of Concept (PoC) will be launched to validate IES's foundational components through real-world case studies. Long-term deployment will depend on factors such as:
  - Cooperation from state utilities
  - Adoption of smart meters and digital systems
  - Success of trial implementations

QUESTIONS

21. With reference to the India Energy Stack (IES), consider the following statements:

    1. It is an initiative launched by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.

    2. It aims to unify the fragmented electricity sector using a digital public infrastructure model.

    3. Nandan Nilekani serves as the Chief Mentor of the IES task force.

    Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

    A. 1 and 2 only

    B. 2 and 3 only

    C. 1 and 3 only

    D. 1, 2 and 3

22. What is the main function of the Utility Intelligence Platform (UIP) under the India Energy Stack?

    A. Managing fossil fuel imports

    B. Providing subsidies to rural consumers

    C. Supporting core services like automated grid management and energy fintech

    D. Procuring power from private companies

23. India Energy Stack is expected to bring which of the following benefits?

    1. Enable peer-to-peer (P2P) trading of energy among consumers and prosumers

    2. Facilitate real-time demand response for grid balancing

    3. Track carbon offsets in real time

    4. Eliminate the need for power regulators

    Select the correct answer using the code below:

    A. 1 and 2 only

    B. 1, 2 and 3 only

    C. 2, 3 and 4 only

    D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

7. Kerala University's archaeological excavation unearths 5,300-year-old Early Harappan settlement in Gujarat

- Archaeologists from the University of Kerala have unearthed a 5,300-year-old settlement near Lakhapar village in western Kachchh, Gujarat.

- The excavation has revealed an Early Harappan habitation site, located near the now-quiet Gandi river, once a perennial water source, spanning nearly three hectares on either side of the Gaduli-Lakhapar road.

- The site was first identified in 2022 by a team led by Abhayan G.S. and Rajesh S.V. from the Department of Archaeology, Kerala University.

- The collaborative project, involving both international and national institutions, builds upon the team's earlier work at the nearby Early Harappan necropolis of Juna Khatiya, just 1.5 km away, where they had documented 197 burials over three field seasons since 2019.

Lakhapar Excavation

1. Critical Context and Cultural Significance

- The recent discoveries at Lakhapar, located in the arid region of Kachchh, Gujarat, provide essential habitation context to previously known Early Harappan burial sites in the region.

- This offers evidence of a dynamic and interconnected cultural landscape, bridging the gap between settlement and burial practices in Early Harappan Gujarat.

2. Structural Evidence of Settlement

Excavations revealed:

- Structural remnants such as walls constructed from local sandstone and shale, indicating well-planned architecture and long-term habitation.
- These findings support the interpretation of a developed and organized settlement that was more than a transient occupation.

3. Pottery and Ceramic Traditions

- One of the most striking aspects of the excavation is the diverse pottery assemblage, which includes:
- Early and Classical Harappan ceramics dating back to around 3300 BCE.
- The extremely rare Pre-Prabhas Ware, previously found at only three sites across Gujarat, now identified at Lakhapar.

Significance:

- The presence of Pre-Prabhas Ware suggests a culturally unique group within the broader Harappan civilization and potentially a new cultural or ritual subgroup within the Early Harappan population.

4. The Burial Site and Ritual Significance

A human burial was discovered near the settlement:

- The skeleton was poorly preserved, placed directly in a pit without any visible architecture or grave markers.
- Remarkably, the burial was accompanied by Pre-Prabhas Ware pottery—the first known burial with this rare ceramic type.

Interpretation:

- This could point to a previously undocumented ritual practice or a distinct social group within the Early Harappan community.

5. Artefacts and Material Culture

- The excavation yielded a rich collection of artefacts, including:
- Semiprecious stone beads made from carnelian, agate, amazonite, and steatite.
- Shell ornaments, copper objects, terracotta artefacts, and lithic tools.
- Rohri chert blades, indicating trade or interaction with the Sindh region.

Cultural Insight:

- These artefacts point to regional and long-distance trade, technological expertise, and cultural sophistication.

6. Subsistence and Economy

- The discovery of animal remains and aquatic resources provides insight into the community's livelihood:
- Cattle, sheep, goat bones, as well as fish bones and edible shell fragments, highlight a mixed economy of animal husbandry and aquatic resource exploitation.
- Samples have been taken for archaeobotanical analysis to study plant usage and diet patterns.

7. A Unique Contribution to Harappan Archaeology

- According to Dr. Rajesh, Lakhapar fills a crucial gap in Harappan archaeology:

- While other Early Harappan burial sites (*e.g.*, Dhaneti) have been found in Gujarat, corresponding settlements were lacking.

- Lakhapar is the first site to provide a clear settlement context alongside burial evidence, offering a rare and holistic view into both the living practices and mortuary rituals of the Early Harappan people in the region.

Major Harappan (Indus Valley Civilization) sites in Gujarat

- Gujarat is home to several major Harappan (Indus Valley Civilization) sites, showcasing the southern extent of the civilization and its maritime and trade connections.

1. Dholavira

- **Location:** Khadir Bet Island, Great Rann of Kachchh, Kutch District.
- **Significance:**
  - One of the five largest Harappan cities.
  - UNESCO World Heritage Site (2021).
  - Known for advanced water conservation systems, reservoirs, and unique town planning.
  - Presence of the world's earliest signboard (Indus script on a wooden board).

2. Lothal

- **Location:** Near Saragwala village, Ahmedabad District.
- **Significance:**
  - Famous for having one of the earliest known dockyards in the world.
  - Center for bead-making, semi-precious stone working, and maritime trade.
  - Evidence of a well-planned city with grid layout, drainage, and warehouses.

3. Surkotada

- **Location:** Near Bhuj, Kutch District.
- **Significance:**
  - Fortified settlement with a citadel and residential areas.
  - Important for evidence of horse remains (debated among archaeologists).
  - Showcases Harappan cultural continuity into the late phase.

4. Rangpur

- **Location:** Surendranagar District, near Limbdi.
- **Significance:**
  - Important for studying the Late Harappan phase.
  - Associated with agriculture, especially rice and millet.
  - Evidence of regional cultural variations.

5. Gola Dhoro (Bagasra)

- **Location:** Near the Gulf of Kachchh, Bhuj region.
- **Significance:**
  - Small fortified site with craft production and seal manufacturing.
  - Rare Harappan military-style architecture and evidence of external trade.

6. Shikarpur

- **Location:** Near Bhachau, Kutch.
- **Significance:**
  - Rich in Harappan artifacts, including pottery, bangles, and beads.
  - Significant for studying regional interactions and burial practices.

7. Kuntasi

- **Location:** Rajkot District.
- **Significance:**
  - Identified as a Harappan port.
  - Evidence of trade with Mesopotamia.
  - Associated with semi-urban occupation and craft specialization.

8. Nagwada

- **Location:** Surendranagar District.
- **Significance:**
  - Important rural Harappan site.
  - Evidence of habitation and copper tools.
  - Studied for its role in hinterland economy.

QUESTIONS

24. With reference to the archaeological site of Lakhapar in Gujarat, recently excavated by Kerala University, consider the following statements:

    1. It is an Early Harappan habitation site located near the Gandi river in Kachchh district.

    2. The site revealed Pre-Prabhas Ware pottery, a rare ceramic tradition.

    3. It is the first Early Harappan site in Gujarat with both settlement and burial evidence.

    Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

    A. 1 and 2 only

    B. 2 and 3 only

    C. 1 and 3 only

    D. 1, 2 and 3

25. The presence of Pre-Prabhas Ware pottery at the Lakhapar site is significant because:

    A. It indicates the arrival of Aryan culture in Gujarat.

    B. It confirms Mesolithic human occupation.

    C. It points to a culturally distinct group within the broader Harappan population.

    D. It represents the influence of South Indian Neolithic traditions.
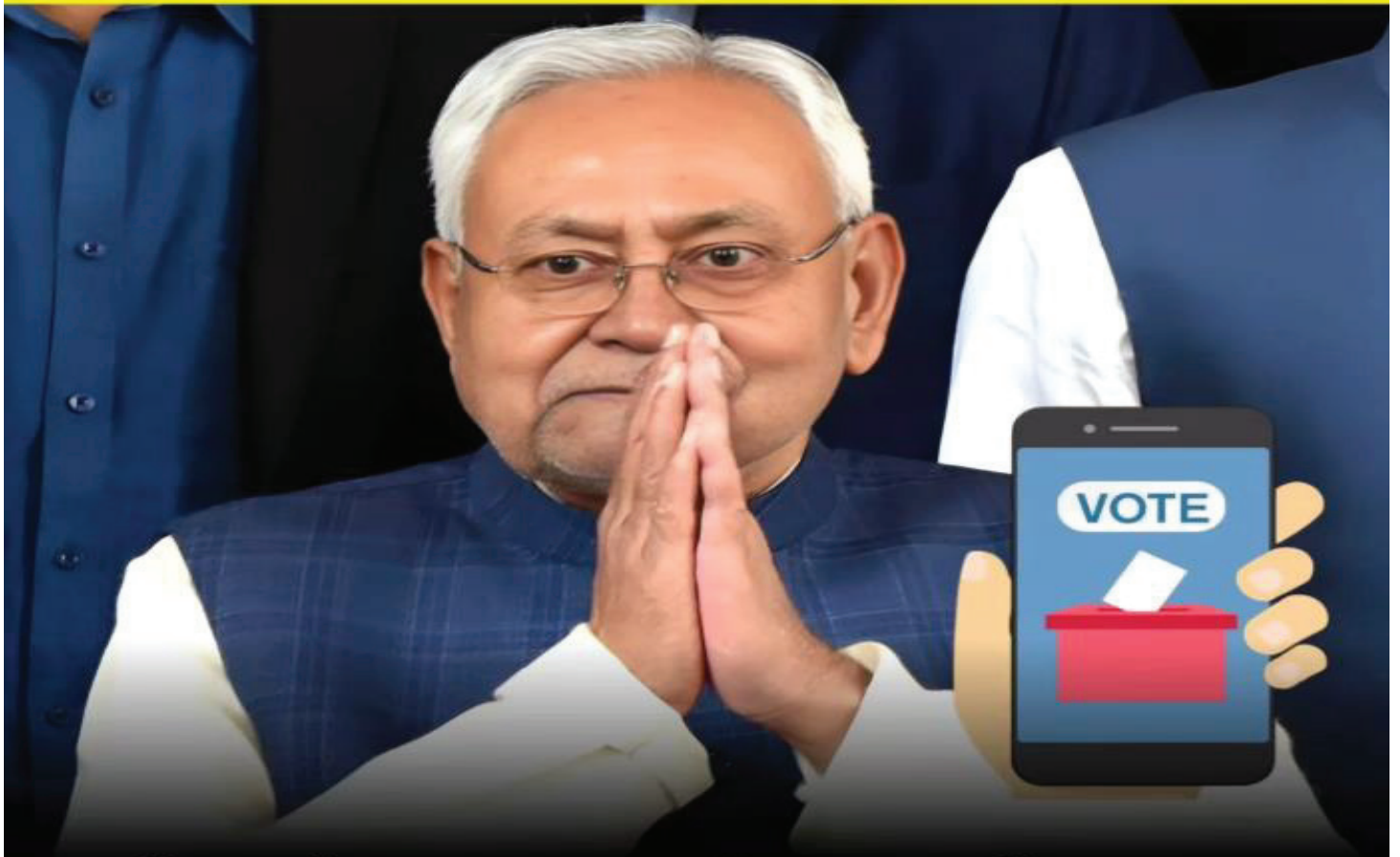
26. Consider the following pairs:

Site		Key Feature
1. Juna Khatiya	:	Early Harappan necropolis with 197 burials
2. Dholavira	:	Mature Harappan urban settlement with water reservoirs
3. Lakhapar	:	Early Harappan habitation with Pre-Prabhas Ware burial
4. Kalibangan	:	Ploughed agricultural field with fire altars

    Which of the pairs are correctly matched?

    A. 1, 2 and 3 only

    B. 1 and 3 only

    C. 1, 2, 3 and 4

    D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

8. Bihar becomes first State to vote using mobile phones during municipal polls

FIRST IN INDIA!

"Bihar becomes first Indian state to allow voting via mobile app" - State Election Commissioner

(The Android-based e-voting system will be implemented on June 28)

- Bihar became the first State in India where voters exercised their franchise through mobile phones.
- The voting was part of the municipal bypolls and election in six Nagar Panchayats in the State.
- The districts where the polls were held include Patna, Buxar, Rohtas and East Champaran.
- While voting continued through the usual method of electronic voting machines at all the polling booths, some voters were able to cast their vote from home through a mobile phone app.

- The facility was made available for senior citizens, the disabled and pregnant women who may find it difficult to visit the booths.
- Polling was held across 489 booths for 538 candidates. People were also able to use the State Election Commission website to vote.
- Only two registered voters are allowed to log in using one mobile number and verification of each voter is done by entering the voter identity number.
- The other security measures put in place use features such as blockchain technology, face-matching and scanning.

Elections in India

- India is the world's largest democracy, with over 970 million eligible voters (2024 Lok Sabha).
- Elections held at three levels:
  - Lok Sabha (national)
  - State Assemblies
  - Local Bodies (Panchayats, Municipalities)
- Conducted by the Election Commission of India (ECI) under the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and Article 324–329 of the Constitution.

Types of Elections:

- **General Elections** – Every 5 years for Lok Sabha (543 seats)
- **State Assembly Elections** – For 28 states and 8 UT
- **Rajya Sabha Elections** – Indirect elections via state legislatures
- **By-elections** – To fill vacant seats
- **Election Commission of India (ECI)**
- **Constitutional Body**
- **Formed:** 25 January 1950 (celebrated as National Voters' Day)
- **Constitutional provision:** Article 324
- **Composition:** 1 Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) + 2 Election Commissioners

Functions:

- Conducting free and fair elections
- Preparing electoral rolls
- Code of Conduct enforcement
- Voter education and awareness

Recent Changes (as of 2024–25):

Appointment Rules Change:

- New CEC and Other Election Commissioners Act, 2023 changed the appointment process.
- A 3-member panel (PM, Union Minister, Leader of Opposition) now recommends appointments.
- Replaces the earlier sole discretion of the President/Government.

Recent Developments in India's Polling System (2020–2025)

1. Remote Voting via Blockchain (Pilot Phase)

- Developed by IIT Madras and ECI for migrant voters.
- Ensures secure, verifiable, and auditable remote voting.
- Yet to be formally rolled out.

2. Voter Turnout App

- Real-time data on polling percentage released via ECI's Voter Turnout App.

3. cVIGIL App

- Citizens can report violations of the Model Code of Conduct in real time.
- Geotagging and quick redressal.

4. Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) + VVPAT

- Mandatory use of Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) with EVMs for transparency.
- Random matching of 5 VVPATs per constituency.

5. Unified Electoral Roll Database

- Integration of voter databases across states and Aadhaar linking (voluntary but promoted).
- Enables "One Nation, One Voter ID" movement.

6. Accessibility & Inclusivity

- Braille-enabled EVMs, ramps, wheelchairs, and sign language volunteers at booths.
- Special arrangements for elderly (85+), persons with disabilities, and COVID-affected voters via postal ballots.

Elections Around the World

1. USA

- Presidential elections every 4 years.
- Electoral College system – not direct popular vote.
- Voter ID laws vary by state; mail-in voting is significant.

2. UK

- Parliamentary democracy.
- Elections every 5 years for the House of Commons.
- Uses First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) voting system.

3. France

- Two-round system for Presidential elections.
- Voters return for a second round if no candidate wins a majority.

4. Germany

- Mixed-member proportional representation.
- Bundestag has both directly elected and party list seats.

5. China

- One-party state – elections are held within the Communist Party framework, not open multi-party elections.

6. Brazil

- Electronic voting system is fully digitized since 2000.
- Highly regarded for speed and efficiency.

7. Russia

- Presidential and parliamentary elections exist.
- Criticized for lack of fair competition and suppression of dissent.

QUESTIONS

27. With reference to the recent electoral development in Bihar, consider the following statements:

1. Bihar is the first Indian state to allow mobile phone-based voting during municipal elections.
2. The facility was available for all voters across all polling booths.
3. The system used security technologies like blockchain and facial recognition for verification.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

28. Which of the following features distinguish India's EVM system from the voting systems used in the USA and the UK?

1. Mandatory use of VVPAT along with EVMs
2. First-Past-The-Post voting system
3. Electoral College method for national elections

Select the correct answer:

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

29. Regarding the Election Commission of India (ECI), which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. It was established in 1950 and derives authority from Article 324 of the Constitution.
2. The appointment of Election Commissioners is now done solely by the President of India.
3. The ECI enforces the Model Code of Conduct during elections.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

A. 1 and 3 only

B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1 and 2 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

9. Cabinet approves National Sports Policy 2025

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi approved the the National Sports Policy (NSP) 2025, a landmark initiative aimed at reshaping the country's sporting landscape and empowering citizens through sports.

- The new policy supersedes the existing National Sports Policy, 2001, and lays out a visionary and strategic roadmap to establish India as a global sporting powerhouse and a strong contender for excellence at international sporting events, including the 2036 Olympic Games.

- The NSP 2025 is the outcome of extensive consultations involving Central Ministries, NITI Aayog, State Governments, National Sports Federations (NSFs), athletes, domain experts, and public stakeholders.

- **The policy is anchored on five key pillars.**

1. Excellence on the Global Stage

This pillar aims to:

- Strengthen sports programs from the grassroots to elite levels, including mechanisms for early identification and nurturing of talent.

- Promote the establishment of competitive leagues and competitions, and develop sports infrastructure in both rural and urban areas.
- Build world-class systems for training, coaching, and holistic athlete support.
- Enhance the capacity and governance of National Sports Federations.
- Encourage the adoption of sports science, sports science, medicine, and technology to boost athletic performance.
- Train and develop sports personnel, including coaches, technical officials, and support staff.

2. Sports for Economic Development

NSP 2025 recognizes the economic potential of sports and seeks to:

- Promote sports tourism and attract major international events to India.
- Strengthen the sports manufacturing ecosystem, and promote startups and entrepreneurship in the sector.
- Encourage private sector participation through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and innovative funding initiatives.

3. Sports for Social Development

- The policy emphasizes the role of sports in driving social inclusion by:
- Promoting participation among women, economically weaker sections, tribal communities, and persons with disabilities through focused programs.
- Revitalizing and promoting indigenous and traditional games.
- Positioning sports as a viable career option by integrating it into education, encouraging volunteering, and facilitating dual-career pathways.
- Engaging the Indian diaspora through sports.

4. Sports as a People's Movement

To make sports a national movement, the policy aims to:

- Drive mass participation and a culture of fitness through nationwide campaigns and community-based events.
- Launch fitness indices for schools, colleges, and workplaces etc.
- Enhance universal access to sports facilities.

5. Integration with Education (NEP 2020)

In alignment with the National Education Policy 2020, the NSP 2025 proposes to:

- Integrate sports into school curricula.
- Equip educators and physical education teachers with specialized training to promote sports education and awareness.

6. Strategic Framework

To realise its objectives, the NSP 2025 lays down a comprehensive implementation strategy encompassing:

- **Governance:** Establish a robust regulatory framework for sports governance, including legal framework.

- **Private Sector Funding & support:** Develop innovative financing mechanisms and engage private sector participation through PPPs and CSR.
- **Technology & Innovation:** Leverage emerging technologies, including AI and data analytics, for performance tracking, research, and program implementation.
- **National Monitoring Framework:** Create a national framework with well-defined benchmarks, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and time-bound targets.
- **Model Policy for States:** The NSP 2025 will serve as a model for States and Union Territories, encouraging them to revise or formulate their own policies in alignment with national objectives.
- **Whole-of-Government Approach:** The policy calls for integration of sports promotion into the activities, schemes, and programs of all Ministries and Departments to achieve a holistic impact.

QUESTIONS

30. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the National Sports Policy 2025?

1. It replaces the National Sports Policy of 2011.

2. It aims to align the promotion of sports with the objectives of the National Education Policy 2020.

3. One of its goals is to make India a strong contender for the 2036 Olympic Games.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

A. 1 and 2 only

B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1 and 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

31. Consider the following components of the NSP 2025:

1. Fitness indices for educational institutions and workplaces

2. Inclusion of indigenous games in the national curriculum

3. Support for dual career pathways in sports

4. Integration of sports into the rural employment guarantee scheme (MGNREGA)

Which of the above are mentioned as features of NSP 2025?

A. 1, 2 and 3 only

B. 1 and 4 only

C. 2, 3 and 4 only

D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

32. The "Whole-of-Government" approach mentioned in the National Sports Policy 2025 refers to:

    A. Central Government implementing all sports programs without state involvement

    B. Sports-related decision-making by the Ministry of Defence

    C. Coordinated efforts across Ministries and Departments to promote sports

    D. Establishing a new Ministry of Sports and Education

10. The Gaden Phodrang Trust that Dalai Lama said will find his reincarnation

- The 14th Dalai Lama has affirmed that the institution of the Dalai Lama will continue, declaring that only the Gaden Phodrang Trust holds the authority to recognize his future reincarnation.

- He emphasized that no outside entity has the right to interfere in this spiritual process.

- This statement, made shortly before his 90th birthday, reinforces a similar declaration from 2011, which assigned the responsibility of recognizing a future Dalai Lama to the Gaden Phodrang Trust if the continuation of the lineage is deemed necessary.

- The move aims to safeguard the integrity and autonomy of the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual tradition.

What is the Gaden Phodrang Trust, and what is its mandate?

Meaning of the name

- The term Gaden Phodrang refers to the residential quarters of the Dalai Lama lineage from the second Dalai Lama onward at Drepung Monastery in Lhasa.

- After the Potala Palace was built (by a decree of the fifth Dalai Lama), the Dalai Lamas moved away from these quarters, and stayed at Potala Palace in winter and Norbulingka (built by the seventh Dalai Lama about 100 years after Potala) in summer. This tradition was followed until the 14th Dalai Lama's escape from Lhasa to India in March 1959.

One of three institutions

- The Gaden Phodrang Trust is one of three institutions closely associated with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

- According to Penpa Tsering, the Sikyong (President) of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), the three officially registered institutions are: the Gaden Phodrang Trust, based in India; the Dalai Lama Trust, also a non-profit; and the Gaden Phodrang Foundation, registered in Zurich.

- The Gaden Phodrang Trust was established in 2011 in Dharamshala, India, and operates directly from the office of the Dalai Lama. Its primary objective is to recognize the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, a process deeply rooted in Tibetan Buddhist tradition.

- The trust is headed by the Dalai Lama himself and managed by Prof Samdhong Rinpoche, a senior monk, former Kalon Tripa (equivalent to the head of the Tibetan government-in-exile), and one of the Dalai Lama's closest confidants. Other aides of the spiritual leader also serve as members of the trust.

- The trust plays a critical role in ensuring this continuity and upholding the spiritual legacy of the Dalai Lama.

Gaden Phodrang Foundation

- The foundation is a tax-exempt Swiss nonprofit with its registered office in Zurich, and is supervised by the Swiss Federal Department of Home Affairs. It is funded by charitable contributions made by the founder and the public.

- The Dalai Lama is the founder and president of the foundation, and Tseten Samdup Chhoekyapa (India), Kelsang Gyaltsen (Switzerland), and Jamphel Lhundup (India), are its co-vice presidents.

- The foundation says on its website that its aim is to maintain and support the tradition and institution of the Dalai Lama, and to promote basic human values, mutual understanding among religions, peace and non-violence, and protection of the environment.

- While it works to preserve Tibetan culture and support the Tibetan people, the foundation also helps others in need, regardless of nationality or religion.

- It seeks to promote better understanding between science and religion, supports efforts to provide access to knowledge from Buddhist science and philosophy, and funds a wide range of publications and translations.

The Dalai Lama Trust

- The Dalai Lama Trust is a non-profit charitable organisation founded by the 14th Dalai Lama in 2009. It is headquartered in New Delhi but works with a range of partners internationally, too.

- The purpose of the trust is to support the welfare of the Tibetan people and to promote human values, interfaith harmony, and world peace, which have been key elements of the Dalai Lama's lifelong mission.
- The objectives of the trust are to support Tibetan students and scholars and fund schools and educational institutions, particularly those that preserve Tibetan culture and language, and to encourage secular ethics and compassion through global programs and initiatives.

Dalai Lama

- The Dalai Lama is a title given to the spiritual leader of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism, the newest and most dominant of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism.
- The Dalai Lama is considered the reincarnation of Avalokiteśvara (Chenrezig in Tibetan), the bodhisattva of compassion. The position has both religious and historically significant political roles in Tibet.

Origins of the Dalai Lama Title

- The title "Dalai Lama" means "Ocean of Wisdom."
- It was first bestowed by the Mongolian ruler Altan Khan in 1578 on Sonam Gyatso, the third in the line of reincarnations, retroactively making his two predecessors the 1st and 2nd Dalai Lamas.

Line of Dalai Lamas

- **Gendun Drub (1391–1474) –** Considered posthumously as the 1st Dalai Lama.
- **Gendun Gyatso (1475–1542) –** 2nd Dalai Lama.
- **Sonam Gyatso (1543–1588) –** The first to be called "Dalai Lama" during his lifetime.
- **Tenzin Gyatso (born 1935) –** The 14th and current Dalai Lama, recognized in 1940.

Political Role in Tibet

- Starting in the 17th century, under the 5th Dalai Lama, the Dalai Lamas became not only spiritual but also political rulers of Tibet.
- The Potala Palace in Lhasa became the seat of both religious and temporal power.
- This theocratic government continued until 1959, when the current Dalai Lama fled Tibet following a failed uprising against Chinese rule.

Exile and Modern Role

- The 14th Dalai Lama has lived in exile in India since 1959, where he established a government-in-exile in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh.
- He has been a global advocate for nonviolence, compassion, Tibetan autonomy, and interfaith harmony.
- In 1989, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his peaceful resistance against Chinese oppression.

Reincarnation Controversy

- Traditionally, the Dalai Lama reincarnates after death.
- The 14th Dalai Lama has suggested he may be the last, or that the next incarnation may not be found in Tibet, challenging Chinese attempts to control the process.
- China claims the right to approve the next Dalai Lama, creating a geopolitical and spiritual standoff.

Tibetan Buddhism in India

- Tibetan Buddhism in India has a deep, multifaceted presence rooted both in ancient historical connections and in more recent political developments.

Historical Background

- **Ancient Ties:** Indian Buddhism is the foundation of Tibetan Buddhism. Indian masters such as Nāgārjuna, Śāntideva, and Atiśa played a major role in shaping the Tibetan Buddhist canon. Much of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and practice is based on classical Indian texts, many of which were translated into Tibetan during the 7th to 13th centuries.

- **Transmission to Tibet:** Tibetan Buddhism began to flourish from the 7th century CE, heavily influenced by Indian Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna traditions. Nalanda and Vikramashila universities in India were major centers for this transmission.

Modern Presence in India

1. Tibetan Exile and the Dalai Lama

- In 1959, after the Chinese occupation of Tibet, Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, fled to India following the Tibetan uprising.

- India granted asylum to him and thousands of Tibetan refugees.

- The Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) established a government-in-exile in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh.

2. Monasteries and Settlements

- There are major Tibetan settlements and monastic centers in several Indian states:
  - **Dharamshala (Himachal Pradesh)** – Headquarters of the Dalai Lama and CTA. Notable sites:
    - Namgyal Monastery
    - Tsuglagkhang Complex
  - **Bylakuppe (Karnataka)** – One of the largest Tibetan settlements, home to:
    - Sera Monastery
    - Tashi Lhunpo Monastery
  - **Tawang (Arunachal Pradesh)** – Birthplace of the 6th Dalai Lama, with historic ties to Tibetan Buddhism.
  - Tawang Monastery is the largest in India and second largest in the world after the Potala Palace.

- **Dehradun and Clement Town (Uttarakhand)** – Seat of the Mindrolling Monastery (Nyingma tradition).
- **Bodh Gaya (Bihar)** – A sacred site for all Buddhists; Tibetan temples and monasteries are present here, representing all major Tibetan schools.
- **Tibetan Buddhist Schools Active in India**
  - **Gelug** – The largest and most politically active, led by the Dalai Lama.
  - **Nyingma** – The oldest school, known for Dzogchen teachings.
  - **Kagyu** – Known for Mahamudra meditation practices.
  - **Sakya** – Scholarly and esoteric teachings.
- All these traditions have re-established their lineages and monasteries in India.

Influence and Global Outreach

- India has become a global hub for those studying Tibetan Buddhism.
- Thousands of Western and Asian students visit Indian monasteries for retreats, teachings, and ordination.
- Indian universities like CIHTS (Sarnath) and LTWA (Dharamshala) promote academic and traditional Buddhist studies.

Key Contributions to Indian Society

- **Preservation of Tibetan Culture:** India has played a crucial role in preserving Tibetan language, art, and religious practices.
- **Education and Social Services:** Tibetan settlements run schools, clinics, and cultural centers.
- **Spiritual Tourism:** Destinations like Dharamshala and Bodh Gaya have become global spiritual hubs.

QUESTIONS

33. The term "Gaden Phodrang" originally refers to_____.
    A. The winter palace of the Dalai Lama in Tibet
    B. A monastery founded by the first Dalai Lama
    C. The residential quarters of Dalai Lamas at Drepung Monastery
    D. The name of the Tibetan Parliament in exile

34. With reference to the Gaden Phodrang Trust, consider the following statements:
    1. It was established in India in 2011 to oversee the reincarnation process of the Dalai Lama.
    2. It operates directly under the Government of India.
    3. It is managed by senior monks and close aides of the Dalai Lama.

    Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
    A. 1 and 2 only
    B. 1 and 3 only
    C. 2 and 3 only
    D. 1, 2 and 3

35. Which of the following statements is/are correct about Tibetan Buddhism in India?

1. The Tawang Monastery in Arunachal Pradesh is the largest in India and second-largest in the world.

2. Nalanda and Vikramashila universities were key centers that influenced Tibetan Buddhism.

3. Tibetan Buddhism is rooted in the Theravāda tradition of Indian Buddhism.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

A. 1 and 2 only

B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1 and 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

ANSWER KEY AND EXPLANATION

1. C SMFCL is India's first maritime-focused NBFC, registered under the Companies Act and regulated by the RBI under Chapter III-B of the RBI Act, 1934. Unlike traditional banks, NBFCs cannot accept demand deposits (e.g., savings and current accounts). SMFCL has been granted the status of a Mini Ratna Category-I Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE). Option A is incorrect because NBFCs (including SMFCL) cannot accept demand deposits. Option B is wrong as SMFCL has a broad mandate, including support for venture capital and maritime innovation. Option D is factually incorrect — only RBI issues currency, and SMFCL cannot offer savings accounts.

2. D The conversion of Sagarmala Development Company Ltd into SMFCL directly supports the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 and the long-term national development vision of Viksit Bharat. These initiatives aim to boost India's maritime capabilities and economic growth through infrastructure-led, sector-specific financing. While Blue Economy and Startup India are related themes, they are not explicitly mentioned as the core alignment goals in this transformation.

3. B "They (NBFCs) cannot engage in the acquisition of securities issued by the government." NBFCs can and do invest in a variety of securities, including government-issued securities. In fact, many NBFCs (especially those classified as NBFC-Investment and Credit Companies) are involved in activities such as: Buying/selling government bonds, Investing in debt and capital markets. Hence, NBFCs are allowed to acquire government securities as part of their investment activity. Statement 2: "They cannot accept demand deposits like Savings Account." One of the key distinctions between banks and NBFCs is that: NBFCs cannot accept demand deposits (i.e., deposits withdrawable on demand, like savings accounts or current accounts). They can, however, accept term deposits if registered and authorized as NBFC–Deposit Taking (NBFC-D), subject to RBI norms.

4. B SMFCL has been given a broad and focused mandate to support strategic and emerging maritime sectors such as: Shipbuilding, Renewable Energy, Cruise Tourism and Maritime Education. These areas are directly mentioned in the launch brief as priorities for sector-specific financial support. Options A, C, and D include sectors outside the maritime domain or not under SMFCL's stated objectives.

5. C To become a Mini Ratna Category-I CPSE, a company must: Have made a net profit for the last 3 years. Have a positive net worth. Have earned pre-tax profit of ₹30 crore or more in at least one of the last 3 years. Option C is incorrect because it wrongly states "in each of the last three years" instead of "at least one" of them.

6. B **Statement 1 is incorrect:** Salkhan Fossil Park is located in the Kaimur Range, not the Vindhya Range.
Statement 2 is correct: It has stromatolites dating back 1.4 billion years, belonging to the Mesoproterozoic Era (1.6–1.0 billion years ago).
Statement 3 is correct: It is older than Australia's Shark Bay and the USA's Yellowstone fossil sites.

7. D Stromatolites are layered sedimentary formations created by the activity of cyanobacteria (blue-green algae). These microorganisms performed photosynthesis and contributed to Earth's early oxygen production. They are crucial for understanding early life on Earth.

8. C The Tiruvakkarai fossil park in Tamil Nadu contains over 200 petrified wood fossils from the Mio-Pliocene epoch (~20 million years old). It has been declared a National Geological Monument by the Geological Survey of India (GSI).

9. A Akal Wood Fossil Park: ~180 million years (oldest), Rajmahal Fossil Park: 68–145 million years, Ghughua Fossil Park: 65–70 million years and Shivalik Fossil Park: ~2.5 million years (youngest)

10. D All three pairs are correctly matched: Ghughua: Known for petrified trees and plant fossils from the Late Cretaceous. Ariyalur: Has marine fossils and dinosaur egg fossils from ~65–70 million years ago. Balasinor: Famous for dinosaur fossils, especially Rajasaurus narmadensis, and considered one of the world's largest hatcheries.

11. B **Statement 1 is incorrect:** UN80 is not a downsizing initiative; it is aimed at mission-driven reform, not just cutting budgets or staff.
Statement 2 is correct: The Mandate Implementation Review under UN80 is reviewing nearly 4,000 mandates to streamline UN focus.
Statement 3 is incorrect: The initiative is system-wide, involving all UN agencies and global offices, not just the Secretariat.

12. A The three official workstreams under UN80 are: Efficiency and Impact, Mandate Implementation Review and Structural Realignment. Human Rights Expansion is a thematic area in UN work but not a separate workstream under UN80.

13. B **UNGA:** Comprises all 193 UN member states, each with one vote. It approves the UN budget, elects members to other UN bodies, and adopts declarations. Option A describes the UNSC, not UNGA. Option C is incorrect — only the UNSC can authorize use of force. Option D is wrong — ICJ is an independent principal organ, not a supervisory body over the UNGA.

14. C **Statement 1 is incorrect:** Non-permanent members are elected for 2-year terms, not 5.
Statement 2 is partially incorrect: All 15 members vote, but only permanent members (P5) — China, France, Russia, UK, USA — have veto power. So voting rights are not equal in effect.
Statement 3 is correct: UNSC can authorize sanctions and military interventions under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

15. A **Statement 1 is correct:** The International Potato Center (CIP) is headquartered in Lima, Peru.
Statement 2 is correct: It focuses on potato, sweet potato, and Andean roots and tubers.
Statement 3 is incorrect: The newly approved South Asia Regional Centre will be located in Singna, Agra district, Uttar Pradesh, not in Bihar.

16. C The International Rice Research Institute – South Asia Regional Centre (IRRI–SARC) was established in Varanasi in 2017, making it the first international agricultural research centre in India. CSARC in Agra is the second such international centre.

17. B The CSARC is being set up to focus on research and innovation in potato and sweet potato crops. It aims to boost productivity, climate resilience, and nutritional value of these two tuber crops.

18. A **Statement 1 is correct:** China hosted the first trilateral meeting with Pakistan and Bangladesh in Kunming in 2025.
Statement 2 is correct: These moves are part of a broader strategy to dilute India's influence and enhance China's diplomatic presence.
Statement 3 is incorrect: Military cooperation is a significant part of this strategy — e.g., Pakistan used Chinese drones and fighter jets during Operation Sindoor.

19. **C** The "Plus-One" strategy refers to China and Pakistan aligning with a third country to encircle or isolate India. It was first explored during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war, involving possible alliances with East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), China, and Nepal to threaten the Siliguri Corridor.

20. **C** Operation Sindoor was an Indian military response to a terror attack in Pahalgam (Jammu & Kashmir) in May 2025, reportedly backed by Pakistan. The operation saw significant confrontation involving Pakistan's use of Chinese weapons, triggering strong reactions from both China and Pakistan.

21. **B** **Statement 1 is incorrect:** The Ministry of Power, not MNRE, has launched the India Energy Stack (IES) initiative.

    Statement 2 is correct: IES is modeled after India's successful Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) like Aadhaar and UPI and aims to digitally unify the power sector.

    Statement 3 is correct: Nandan Nilekani is the Chief Mentor of the task force steering the IES project.

22. **C** The UIP (Utility Intelligence Platform) is the core application layer of the India Energy Stack. It will enable services such as: Energy fintech, Virtual power plants, and Automated grid management. It ensures data and process integrity across the electricity value chain.

23. **D** **Statements 1, 2, and 3 are correct:** IES enables P2P energy trading, demand response programs, and real-time carbon offset tracking.

    Statement 4 is incorrect: Power regulators will continue to play a vital role in oversight and policy; IES is a technological platform, not a replacement for regulation.

24. **D** All statements are correct: The site is an Early Harappan habitation near the now-defunct Gandi River. It is notable for uncovering the rare Pre-Prabhas Ware. Lakhapar is the first site in Gujarat to provide both settlement and burial context for the Early Harappan period.

25. **C** The Pre-Prabhas Ware is an extremely rare ceramic tradition seen at only a few sites. Its association with a burial suggests a distinct ritual or cultural subgroup within the Early Harappan community.

26. **D** Juna Khatiya – Early Harappan cemetery, Dholavira – Urban water management, Lakhapar – New excavation with rare burial + settlement evidence and Kalibangan-Ploughed agricultural field with fire altars.

27. **A** Bihar indeed became the first Indian state to allow mobile voting in select municipal bypolls. Statement 2 is incorrect: Only senior citizens, pregnant women, and persons with disabilities were allowed to vote using the mobile app, not all voters. The system included blockchain and face-matching for security.

28. **A** India uses EVMs with VVPATs for transparency. FPTP system is also used, similar to the UK. Electoral College is a feature of the US Presidential elections, not India.

29. **A** **Statement 1 is correct:** ECI was formed on 25 January 1950, under Article 324.

    Statement 2 is incorrect: As per the 2023 Act, a panel (PM, LoP, Union Minister) now recommends appointments.

    Statement 3 is correct: ECI enforces the Model Code of Conduct.

30. **B** **Statement 1 is incorrect:** NSP 2025 replaces the National Sports Policy 2001, not 2011.

Statement 2 is correct: The policy aligns with NEP 2020, integrating sports into education.

Statement 3 is correct: A key goal is to make India a global sporting powerhouse and a strong contender for the 2036 Olympic Games.

31. **A** Fitness indices, integration of indigenous games, and dual-career pathways are explicitly covered. Statement 4 is incorrect: The policy does not mention linking sports to MGNREGA.

32. **C** The "Whole-of-Government" approach ensures integration of sports promotion across all Ministries and Departments, not just the Sports Ministry.

33. **C** The term "Gaden Phodrang" referred to the residence of the Dalai Lama lineage from the second Dalai Lama onward, located at Drepung Monastery, before the shift to Potala Palace.

34. **B** **Statement 1 is correct:** The Gaden Phodrang Trust was established in Dharamshala in 2011, specifically to manage the spiritual affairs of the Dalai Lama, including his reincarnation process.

Statement 2 is incorrect: The Trust is independent and not run by the Government of India.

Statement 3 is correct: It is headed by the Dalai Lama and managed by Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche and other senior monks.

35. **A** **Statement 1 is correct:** Tawang Monastery is the largest in India and second-largest globally after the Potala Palace.

Statement 2 is correct: Ancient Indian universities like Nalanda and Vikramashila deeply influenced Tibetan Buddhist thought and scripture.

Statement 3 is incorrect: Tibetan Buddhism is rooted in Mahayāna and Vajrayāna, not Theravāda.