

MANTHAN

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1. President visits UNESCO World Heritage Site Dholavira

- President of India Smt. Droupadi Murmu, visited the UNESCO World Heritage Site Dholavira in Gujarat.
- The site is located on the arid island of Khadir in Kachchh district.
- President expressed great appreciation for the meticulous conservation efforts carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India to preserve the heritage of the Harappan Civilization despite the site being located at a remote location.
- Accompanied with Governor of Gujarat and other dignitaries, the President was deeply impressed by the sheer size and scale of Dholavira, noting that it would take at least three to four days to fully explore and understand the iconic site.
- She expressed her admiration for the technological advancements of the Harappans, noting that in several aspects, they were more advanced than the present era.
- Dholavira, is one of the most significant and well-preserved archaeological sites in the subcontinent, showcasing architectural and engineering brilliance of the Harappan people.
- It showcases advanced town planning skills with sophisticated water conservation system, well-structured reservoirs, urban settlements etc.
- With its inscription in the UNESCO World Heritage Site List in 2021, Dholavira has gained international recognition attracting scholars, archaeologists and history enthusiasts from around the world.
- The President's visit to Dholavira reiterates the importance of creating awareness of its historical treasures and preserving India's ancient heritage to the people.
- The ancient site of Dholavira was excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India during 1990-2005 under the supervision of Dr. Ravindra Singh Bisht and yielded habitation in seven cultural phases from 3000-1500 BCE, adding new facets in the understanding of the Harappan Civilization and its relation with other Bronze age civilizations during the 3rd Millennium BCE.

Harappan Civilization

- The Harappan Civilization, also known as the Indus Valley Civilization, was one of the world's earliest urban cultures and remains a subject of extensive research and fascination.

Overview

- The Harappan Civilization flourished around 2600 to 1900 BCE in the fertile plains of the Indus River basin, covering parts of modern-day Pakistan and northwest India.
- It is renowned for its advanced urban planning, sophisticated infrastructure, and widespread trade networks, making it one of the most significant ancient civilizations.

Geography and Chronology

- **Location:** Major urban centers like Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro, Dholavira, and Rakhigarhi are spread across the Indus River basin.
- **Time Period:** The mature phase of the civilization is generally dated from about 2600 to 1900 BCE, though early settlements predate this period.

- **Environment:** The region's fertile soil and reliable water supply from the Indus and its tributaries enabled the development of intensive agriculture, which supported large, dense populations.

Urban Planning and Infrastructure

- **City Layout:** Harappan cities were meticulously planned with grid-like street patterns, well-organized residential and public spaces, and fortified areas that likely served administrative or religious functions.
- **Engineering:** The civilization is noted for its remarkable engineering feats, including advanced drainage systems, standardized fired-brick construction, and sophisticated water management practices.
- **Public Facilities:** Many urban centers featured communal baths, granaries, and large public buildings, suggesting a high level of civic organization and concern for public hygiene and welfare.

Society and Culture

- **Social Structure:** While much remains unknown due to the undeciphered script, the uniformity in urban design and housing suggests a relatively egalitarian society with effective administrative oversight.
- **Crafts and Industry:** The Harappans excelled in a range of crafts such as bead-making, pottery, metallurgy, and textile production. Their expertise in these areas not only supported local needs but also fed into an extensive trade network.
- **Trade and Interaction:** Evidence of long-distance trade with regions like Mesopotamia indicates that the Harappans were active participants in ancient global trade networks, exchanging goods such as cotton, spices, and precious materials.

The Harappan Script

- **Undeciphered Writing:** One of the most intriguing aspects of the Harappan Civilization is its script, which remains undeciphered. Thousands of inscriptions—often found on seals and pottery—hint at administrative, religious, or trade-related uses, but their exact meaning continues to elude modern scholars.
- **Seals and Symbols:** The seals often bear animal motifs and geometric designs, suggesting a complex system of symbolism that may have been integral to commerce and governance.

Decline and Legacy

- **Decline:** Around 1900 BCE, the civilization began to decline. Various theories have been proposed, including climatic shifts, changes in river courses, and possible social or economic upheavals. However, the precise reasons for the collapse remain a matter of debate.
- **Legacy:** Despite its decline, the Harappan Civilization left an enduring legacy in South Asia. Its achievements in urban planning, architecture, and engineering have provided valuable insights into the capabilities of early complex societies and continue to influence modern archaeological and historical research.

Bronze Age

- The Bronze Age (roughly 3300–1200 BCE, though dates vary regionally) marks a transformative period in human history when societies began to use bronze—a durable alloy of copper and tin—for tools, weapons, and art.
- This era saw the rise of some of the world's earliest urban civilizations, characterized by technological innovation, complex social structures, and expansive trade networks.

Key Bronze Age Civilizations

Mesopotamia

- Home to the Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians, and others, Mesopotamia is often considered the cradle of civilization. Here, early writing systems like cuneiform emerged, alongside monumental architecture (such as ziggurats) and early legal codes.

Ancient Egypt

- The Egyptian civilization flourished along the Nile, with the construction of pyramids, the development of hieroglyphic writing, and sophisticated agricultural practices. Its dynastic periods contributed to the lasting legacy of Egyptian art, religion, and governance.

Indus Valley Civilization (Harappan Civilization)

- Located in present-day Pakistan and northwest India, this civilization is renowned for its well-planned urban centers, advanced drainage and sanitation systems, and standardized weights and measures.

Aegean Civilizations

- **Minoans:** Centered on the island of Crete, the Minoans are noted for their elaborate palace complexes (like Knossos), vibrant frescoes, and extensive maritime trade.
- **Mycenaeans:** In mainland Greece, the Mycenaeans built fortified centers and contributed to early Greek culture and mythology, setting the stage for later Classical developments.

Hittite Empire

- Based in Anatolia (modern-day Turkey), the Hittites are known for their military innovations, sophisticated legal systems, and early use of iron alongside bronze technologies.

Chinese Bronze Age Civilizations

- During the Shang dynasty (c. 1600–1046 BCE) and early Zhou period, China saw remarkable advancements in bronze casting. Ritual bronze vessels and weapons were central to their culture and ceremonies, laying the groundwork for later Chinese writing and state formation.

Innovations and Cultural Developments

Metallurgy and Technology

- The widespread use of bronze revolutionized tool and weapon manufacturing, leading to more efficient agriculture, improved warfare strategies, and innovative art forms.

Urbanization and Social Complexity

- These civilizations developed some of the earliest cities with structured layouts, specialized labor, and complex governmental systems, reflecting emerging social hierarchies and economic diversification.

Writing and Record-Keeping

- The advent of writing systems—cuneiform in Mesopotamia, hieroglyphs in Egypt, and early Chinese characters—enabled record-keeping, administration, and the codification of laws, which were essential for managing growing urban populations.

Trade and Cultural Exchange

- Extensive trade networks not only distributed raw materials like tin and copper but also facilitated cultural exchanges, spreading ideas, religious practices, and technological innovations across vast regions.

Transition and Legacy

- The Bronze Age eventually gave way to the Iron Age as technological innovations and shifts in trade patterns encouraged the adoption of iron—a material that was often more accessible and eventually more durable.
- The Late Bronze Age collapse (around 1200 BCE) in the Eastern Mediterranean, marked by widespread societal disruptions, paved the way for new political structures and cultural transformations.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

1. Which of the following statements about Dholavira's significance and excavation history is the most accurate based on the information provided?
 - A. Dholavira, though recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2005, was excavated only after India's independence by Dr. R. S. Bisht under the Archaeological Survey of India.
 - B. Dholavira, excavated between 1990–2005 under Dr. Ravindra Singh Bisht, revealed a continuous Harappan settlement in seven cultural phases, offering insights into Harappan relations with other Bronze Age civilizations.
 - C. The site of Dholavira, excavated by British archaeologists before Indian independence, is the earliest known Harappan site, dating back to 4000 BCE, and demonstrates no architectural planning.
 - D. Dholavira, located on the mainland of Gujarat, was inscribed as a UNESCO site due to its links with Mesopotamian trade alone, and its significance lies primarily in its maritime connections.
2. Based on the President's remarks and the known features of Dholavira, which of the following best reflects the unique technological and cultural achievements of the Harappan civilization as showcased at Dholavira?
 - A. The Harappan civilization's primary achievement at Dholavira was its monumental stone sculptures and written inscriptions that rivaled Mesopotamian cuneiform tablets, demonstrating artistic superiority over urban planning.
 - B. Dholavira illustrates the Harappan civilization's advanced understanding of urban planning, especially in water management systems, with evidence suggesting technological sophistication in hydraulic engineering exceeding some modern capabilities.
 - C. The site reflects Harappan emphasis solely on religious architecture, as evidenced by the discovery of large temples and idol worship centers dominating the city's landscape.
 - D. Dholavira's significance lies in its being the first Harappan site discovered in mainland India, offering evidence of an entirely agricultural economy without urban features like reservoirs or planned streets.

2. Shri Jayant Chaudhary launches Swavalambini, a Women Entrepreneurship Programme

- Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), in collaboration with NITI Aayog, launched Swavalambini— a Women Entrepreneurship Programme at Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut, taking a significant step towards strengthening women entrepreneurship in India.
- This initiative empowers female students in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by providing them with the necessary entrepreneurial mindset, resources, and mentorship to successfully build and scale their ventures.
- Minister of State (I/C) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and MoS for Education Shri Jayant Chaudhary during his address, said “The Swavalambini Women Entrepreneurship

Programme is an initiative aimed at empowering young women with the skills and confidence needed to establish their own businesses.

- We want to move beyond programmes that enlist women as beneficiaries of the schemes, we want to move to women-led development initiatives and this is our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's conceptualisation as well.
- Women's participation is crucial for India's progress. Imagine the limitless possibilities if we break barriers and provide women with the right resources, training, and financial support, we can unlock their true potential.
- Women's empowerment is not just an economic necessity but a social transformation.
- When a woman is empowered, she uplifts her family, her community, and the entire nation.”
- Shri Jayant Chaudhary also added, “The Government of India has consistently focused on providing equal opportunities to youth of India through the National Education Policy which has given them the vision to learn and excel in their careers.
- We look forward to introducing a curriculum with AI related courses in schools and colleges, to create awareness and upskill the youth of our country”
- Under the aegis of MSDE and implemented by the National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD) and in joint partnership with NITI Ayog, Swavalambini aims to establish a structured and stage-wise entrepreneurial journey for young women.
- The programme will take participants through various stages, including awareness-building, skill development, mentorship, and funding support. By promoting and recognising promising women-led ventures, the initiative seeks to set a benchmark for the future of women entrepreneurship in India.
- Following its successful introduction across several HEIs in the Eastern region, including IIT Bhubaneswar and Utkal University in Odisha; North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong; Kiang Nangbah Government College, Jowai and Ri Bhoi College in Meghalaya; Mizoram University; Government Champhai College, Champhai and Lunglei Government College in Mizoram; Handique Girls' College, Guwahati; Dispur College and Gauhati University in Assam, among others, Swavalambini is now being expanded to other regions of the country.
- The event also marked the virtual launch of Swavalambini in Banaras Hindu University (BHU), University of Hyderabad, and Maulana Azad National Urdu University, thereby extending the reach of this initiative across different regions of the country.
- The programme introduces a structured, multi-stage training approach to help young women transition from ideation to successful enterprise creation.
- It begins with an Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme (EAP), a two-day workshop designed to introduce around 600 female students to fundamental entrepreneurial concepts, market opportunities, and essential business skills.
- This is followed by the Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP), a 40-hour training initiative for 300 selected students.
- The EDP covers critical aspects of business development, finance access, market linkages, compliance, and legal support.
- Additionally, a six-month mentorship and handholding support system has been incorporated to help participants transform their ideas into sustainable business ventures.
- To ensure long-term impact, the programme also includes a Faculty Development Programme (FDP), where faculty members from participating HEIs undergo a five-day training session.

- This initiative equips educators with the necessary skills to mentor and guide aspiring women entrepreneurs within their institutions.
- Furthermore, Swavalambini will recognise and reward successful women entrepreneurs emerging from the programme through the Award to Rewards Initiative, inspiring future participants.
- The programme will leverage workshops, seed funding, and structured mentoring to support the growth of women-led enterprises.
- By advocating an ecosystem that nurtures women entrepreneurs, Swavalambini is poised to create a significant impact in North India and beyond.
- The initiative aspires to see at least 10% of the EDP-trained participants establish successful enterprises, contributing to the larger vision of a self-reliant, women-led entrepreneurial landscape in India.
- With the launch in Meerut, Varanasi and Telangana and the successful implementation in the East, the programme continues to empower women as business leaders, innovators, and change makers.
- Through structured training, mentorship, and policy support, Swavalambini is set to redefine the future of women entrepreneurship in the country.

TWO MOU SIGNING

- Marking the occasion, the National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD) has signed two MoUs with the Skills Development Network (SDN), an Indian Trust registered under the Foreign Contribution (Regulations) Act, 2010 and implementing partner of Wadhvani Foundation in India; and with Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut, to enhance entrepreneurial skills, develop curricula, and promote self-employment through training, workshops, and incubation support, thereby strengthening entrepreneurship education and ecosystem development for economic growth.

WEF2025 REPORT LAUNCH

- Shri Jayant Chaudhary, also launched a report on his participation at the World Economic Forum 2025—"LEADING WITH VISION FOR SKILLS AND INNOVATION."
- The booklet highlights India's transformative advancements in skill development and innovation, reinforcing the nation's commitment to equipping its workforce with future-ready capabilities.
- The report outlines key insights shared across roundtables and panel discussions held at WEF2025 on emerging job trends, industry collaborations, and India's role in shaping the global skilling agenda.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

- Which of the following most accurately reflects the multi-layered approach of the Swavalambini Women Entrepreneurship Programme as launched by MSDE and NITI Aayog, and distinguishes it from conventional women's schemes?
 - The programme is solely a one-time financial assistance scheme focused on providing immediate seed funding to women entrepreneurs from rural areas.
 - Swavalambini focuses on creating a structured, stage-wise entrepreneurial journey, including awareness, training, mentorship, faculty development, and rewards, distinguishing itself from mere beneficiary-based schemes to a women-led development initiative.
 - The programme focuses exclusively on high-tech startup incubations, aiming to produce globally competitive women-led enterprises without offering basic entrepreneurship education.
 - It aims to promote self-employment only in traditional handicrafts and home-based businesses, without considering technology integration or modern market linkages.

4. Which of the following combinations of institutions directly involved in Swavalambini's launch and expansion efforts is correct, as per the details provided?
- A. NITI Aayog, Wadhvani Foundation, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, IIT Kanpur
 - B. Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), NITI Aayog, National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD), Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Skills Development Network (SDN)
 - C. NIESBUD, Ministry of Women and Child Development, UGC, Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad
 - D. MSDE, NIESBUD, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

3. India's Wildlife Conservation Milestones

- Every year on March 3rd, the world celebrates United Nations World Wildlife Day (WWD) to honour the vital role of wild animals and plants in our lives and the planet's health.
- This day is a reminder of the need to protect and preserve biodiversity for future generations.
- The theme for WWD 2025 is "Wildlife Conservation Finance: Investing in People and Planet."
- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Gir National Park in Gujarat today to chair the 7th meeting of the National Board for Wildlife.
- The Board reviewed the Government's key wildlife conservation efforts, including the expansion of protected areas and flagship programs like Project Tiger, Project Elephant, and Project Snow Leopard.
- Discussions also covered initiatives for the conservation of dolphins and Asiatic lions, along with the establishment of the International Big Cats Alliance.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at Gir National Park

- India is one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, even though it covers only 2.4% of the Earth's land. It is home to 7-8% of all known species, including over 45,000 types of plants and 91,000 types of animals.
- The country's varied landscapes and climate have created different ecosystems like forests, wetlands, grasslands, deserts, and coastal and marine habitats.
- These ecosystems support rich biodiversity and benefit people in many ways.
- India also has 4 of the world's 34 major biodiversity hotspots—the Himalayas, the Western Ghats, the Northeast region, and the Nicobar Islands—making it an important region for global conservation.
- The Government of India, primarily through the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), has instituted a comprehensive framework of policies, legislative measures, and initiatives aimed at conserving and protecting this natural heritage.

Budgetary Allocations

- In the Union Budget 2025-26, the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change has been allocated ₹3,412.82 crores, which is 9% higher than the 2024-25 revised estimates of Rs. 3125.96 crores.
- ₹3,276.82 crore (96%) is for revenue expenditure, which has increased by 8%.

- ₹136 crore (4%) is for capital expenditure, which has risen by 46% from 93.25 crore from 2024-25 revised estimates.
- For 2025-26, the central government has allocated ₹450 crore for the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats under its centrally sponsored scheme. Additionally, ₹290 crore (64% of the total allocation) has been earmarked for Project Tiger and Elephant, reflecting an 18% increase from the 2024-25 revised estimates.

National Wildlife Database Cell

- The National Wildlife Database Centre of Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has been developing a National Wildlife Information System (NWIS) on the Protected Areas of the country. As of 27th November, 2023 India has a network of 1014 Protected Areas including 106 National Parks, 573 Wildlife Sanctuaries, 115 Conservation Reserves and 220 Community Reserves covering a total of 1,75,169.42 km² of geographical area of the country which is approximately 5.32%.
- The National Wildlife Database Centre (NWDC) is providing information on the conservation status of animal species, biogeographic regions, administrative units, habitat types and the network of protected areas in India, in a variety of formats and also providing an extensive bibliographic support for wildlife research.

1. Legislative and Policy Framework

- **National Wildlife Action Plan (2017-2031):** This strategic plan emphasizes landscape-level conservation, community involvement, and the integration of climate change considerations into wildlife management.
- **National Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan:** The National Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan (2021-26) (HWC-NAP) aims to systematically reduce human-wildlife conflict (HWC) while ensuring wildlife conservation, ecosystem protection, and sustainable development. Developed through a four-year consultative process under the Indo-German Project on HWC Mitigation, it integrates scientific, policy, and community-driven approaches to balance human well-being with wildlife protection.

2. Species-Specific Conservation Initiatives – Success Stories

2.1 Project Dolphin: Key Developments and Conservation Efforts

- Launched on 15th August 2020, Project Dolphin aims to conserve both marine and riverine dolphins, along with associated cetaceans, through habitat protection, scientific research, and community awareness. In 2022-23, ₹241.73 lakhs and in 2023-24, ₹248.18 lakhs were allocated under the CSS: Development of Wildlife Habitats for conservation activities. Key dolphin hotspots have been identified in Assam, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, and Lakshadweep, with focused efforts on species protection, habitat improvement, monitoring, patrolling, and awareness programs. A Comprehensive Action Plan (2022-2047) has been finalized and shared with relevant Ministries for execution.

Policy & Governance Enhancements

- The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 was amended in December 2022, empowering the Indian Coast Guard with enforcement powers and recognizing Gangetic & Indus River Dolphins as distinct species under Schedule I.
- The Project Dolphin Steering Committee was reconstituted, with the first committee meeting held on 6th September 2023, where the first edition of the Project Dolphin Newsletter was launched.
- States have been urged to align with International Whaling Commission regulations, appointing Dolphin and Whaling Commissioners for conservation efforts.

Scientific Research & International Engagement

- Population estimation of riverine dolphins has been completed, with the report under finalization.
- A meeting on Irrawaddy dolphins was conducted in Odisha with the Minister of Environment, Forest & Climate Change in attendance.
- India participated in discussions on the Global Declaration for River Dolphins (23-24 October 2023, Bogotá, Colombia), reinforcing its commitment to global dolphin conservation.
- **Chambal River Conservation Zone:** A 200 km stretch in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh has been recommended for designation as a Dolphin Conservation Zone for targeted protection efforts.
- **India's First-Ever Ganges River Dolphin Tagging:** A Historic Conservation Milestone
- On 18th December 2024, India achieved a groundbreaking milestone by successfully satellite-tagging the first-ever Ganges River Dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*) in Assam under Project Dolphin. Led by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in collaboration with the Assam Forest Department and Aaranyak, and funded by the National CAMPA Authority (MoEFCC), this initiative marks a global first in dolphin conservation.
- With 90% of the global population found in India, knowledge gaps on their movement and ecology have hindered conservation efforts.
- This initiative will study their habitat use, migration patterns, and environmental stressors, aiding better conservation strategies.

Technology & Future Steps

- Advanced lightweight satellite tags compatible with Argos satellite systems enable tracking despite dolphins' minimal surfacing time.
- Plans are underway to expand tagging across other states, creating a comprehensive conservation roadmap.

2.2 50 Years of Project Tiger

- Project Tiger, initiated in 1973, has been India's flagship conservation initiative, successfully completing 50 years in 2023. Focused on tiger conservation through dedicated reserves and strict protection measures, it has played a crucial role in reviving tiger populations. Marking this milestone, the Prime Minister inaugurated a commemorative event in Mysuru, Karnataka, on April 9, 2023.
- As per the 5th cycle of All India Tiger Estimation 2022, India now hosts over 70% of the world's wild tiger population, reaffirming its leadership in global tiger conservation.
- India has reaffirmed its position as a global leader in tiger conservation, with the tiger population rising to 3,682 (range 3,167-3,925) as per the All India Tiger Estimation 2022, marking a steady increase from 2,967 in 2018 and 2,226 in 2014. The population is growing at 6.1% per annum in consistently sampled areas.
- To commemorate 50 years of Project Tiger, the Prime Minister released key reports, including the 'Amrit Kaal Ka Vision for Tiger Conservation', the 5th cycle of Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) of Tiger Reserves, and the official summary of All India Tiger Estimation 2022. A commemorative coin was also issued.

Major Conservation Efforts

Tiger Reserve Expansion & Management

- India now has 54 tiger reserves, covering over 78,000 sq. km (2.30% of the country's geographical area), with Rani Durgavati Tiger Reserve (Madhya Pradesh) being the latest addition.
- MEE 2022 assessed 51 reserves, ranking 12 as 'Excellent', 21 as 'Very Good', 13 as 'Good', and 5 as 'Fair'.

Reintroduction of Tigers in Extinct Areas

- Tigers have been reintroduced in Rajaji (Uttarakhand), Madhav (Madhya Pradesh), Mukundra Hills (Rajasthan), and Ramgarh Vishdhari (Rajasthan) Tiger Reserves, with plans for Buxa Tiger Reserve next.

Global Conservation Recognition & Collaboration

- 23 Indian tiger reserves are now CA|TS-accredited, ensuring global best practices in conservation, with six new reserves receiving accreditation this year.
- Pench and Satpura Tiger Reserves received the prestigious Tx2 Award for doubling their tiger populations.
- India signed MoUs with Cambodia for tiger reintroduction and held bilateral discussions with Bangladesh for transboundary conservation in the Sundarbans.

2.3 International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) Becomes a Treaty-Based Organization

- The International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) officially became a treaty-based intergovernmental organization on January 23, 2025, with Nicaragua, Eswatini, India, Somalia, and Liberia ratifying the agreement. With 27 countries onboard, IBCA aims to drive global big cat conservation through cross-border collaboration.

About IBCA

- Launched by PM Narendra Modi on April 9, 2023, during the 50 Years of Project Tiger event.
- Union Cabinet approved its establishment in February 2024, with headquarters in India.
- Founded by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) under MoEFCC on March 12, 2024.
- Focuses on the conservation of seven big cat species: Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar, and Puma.

Key Objectives & Impact

- Enhances global collaboration among governments, conservationists, and NGOs.
- Establishes a central fund and technical hub for research and conservation efforts.
- Strengthens habitat protection, anti-poaching strategies, and wildlife law enforcement.
- Combats illegal wildlife trade and promotes sustainable conservation practices.
- Integrates climate change mitigation into conservation strategies.
- With IBCA's legal status now formalized, it marks a historic milestone in global big cat conservation, fostering stronger international cooperation to protect these apex predators and their ecosystems.
- In collaboration with Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, the IBCA organized an executive course on capacity building for wildlife and conservation practitioners, bringing together officials from 27 countries, underscoring the shared global commitment to wildlife conservation and sustainable development.

2.4 Project Cheetah

- Project Cheetah is a landmark wildlife conservation initiative launched on September 17, 2022 aimed at reintroducing cheetahs to India after their extinction in the late 1940s and early 1950s. As the world's first intercontinental large wild carnivore translocation project, it operates under the umbrella of Project Tiger and aligns with the Cheetah Action Plan to restore and conserve the species. Efforts are underway to expand suitable habitats, ensuring long-term survival and ecological balance in India's grassland ecosystems.

Key Achievements:

- **Transcontinental Relocation:** In September 2022, eight cheetahs from Namibia were translocated to Kuno National Park, followed by twelve cheetahs from South Africa in February 2023.
- **Successful Adaptation:** The majority of these cheetahs have adapted well to their new environment, exhibiting natural behaviours such as hunting, territory establishment, and mating. Notably, a female cheetah gave birth to cubs on Indian soil after 75 years, with one surviving cub reported to be six months old and showing normal growth patterns as of September 2023.
- On 3rd January, 2024 three cubs were born to Namibian Cheetah Aasha at the Kuno National Park.
- **Community Engagement:** The project has actively involved local communities, providing direct and indirect employment opportunities. Over 350 'Cheetah Mitras' (Cheetah Friends) from surrounding villages have been engaged to educate the public on cheetah behaviour and human-wildlife conflict mitigation, fostering peaceful coexistence.

2.5 Project Elephant

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

Key Achievements and Initiatives

- **Growing Elephant Population:** India's wild elephant population has increased from 26,786 (2018 census) to 29,964 in 2022, reinforcing the country's successful conservation efforts.
- **Expanding Protected Areas:** India has 33 Elephant Reserves across 14 states, covering a vast 80,777 km², ensuring elephants have safe migratory corridors and protected habitats.
- **Integrated Wildlife Protection:** Elephant Reserves are often overlapping with Tiger Reserves, Wildlife Sanctuaries, and Reserved Forests, ensuring comprehensive protection under multiple forest and wildlife laws.
- **Financial Investment in Conservation:** Under the 15th Finance Commission cycle, the Government has approved a total outlay of ₹2,602.98 crores for wildlife conservation, with ₹236.58 crores specifically allocated for Project Elephant to strengthen conservation measures and reduce human-elephant conflicts.

2.6 Conservation of the Asiatic Lion in India

- The Asiatic lion (*Panthera leo persica*), once teetering on the brink of extinction, has witnessed a remarkable resurgence in India, primarily within Gir National Park and its surrounding landscapes in Gujarat.
- This conservation success is attributed to dedicated efforts by the Government of India, the Gujarat State Government, and local communities.

Key Initiatives

Project Lion:

- Launched as a flagship initiative, Project Lion focuses on:
 - Landscape ecology-based conservation, ensuring sustainable lion habitats.
 - Habitat restoration and securing additional areas for lions.
 - Community participation, creating livelihood opportunities for local residents.
 - Disease management, establishing India as a global hub for big cat health research and treatment.

Significance and Achievements

1. Population Recovery:

- Through rigorous conservation efforts, the Asiatic lion population has shown a consistent upward trend:
 - 2010: 411 lions
 - 2015: 523 lions
 - 2020: 674 lions

Increased Conservation Funding:

- The Gujarat Government has steadily increased its financial commitment to lion conservation, ₹155.53 crore in 2023-24.

International Recognition:

- Due to India's conservation initiatives, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) reclassified the Asiatic lion from "Critically Endangered" to 'Endangered' in 2008, acknowledging the success of India's efforts.

2.7 Conserving the One-Horned Rhinoceros in India

- The Government of India has implemented several strategic initiatives to conserve and protect the one-horned rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*), leading to significant achievements in their population recovery and habitat preservation,

Key Conservation Initiatives:

- **National Conservation Strategy for the Indian One-Horned Rhinoceros (2019):** Launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in 2019, this strategy aims to repopulate rhinoceros populations in areas where they previously existed by augmenting existing conservation efforts through scientific and administrative measures.
- **Indian Rhino Vision (IRV) 2020:** This program focuses on increasing the rhino population and expanding their distribution by translocating individuals to suitable habitats, thereby enhancing genetic diversity and reducing the risk of localized threats.

Impact and Achievements:

- **Population Growth:** As of 2022, Kaziranga National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is home to 2,613 greater one-horned rhinoceroses, reflecting effective conservation efforts.
- **Global Significance:** Assam's rhino population accounts for approximately 68% of the world's greater one-horned rhinoceroses, underscoring the state's pivotal role in global conservation.
- **Community Engagement:** Initiatives such as World Rhino Day celebrations in Kaziranga National Park involve local communities and raise public awareness about rhino conservation, fostering a collective sense of responsibility towards protecting this iconic species.

3. Habitat and Ecosystem Conservation

- **Digitization of Flora, Fauna and herbarium records:** In 2024, the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) and Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has carried out the digitization of 16500 specimens with 45000 images of the Type and Non-Type of Indian Faunal specimens. ZSI has completed faunal documentation from 27 States and Union Territories as well as all of the 10 Biogeographic Zones across the country. Data of 6124 springs in 11 IHR States and 1 UT (J&K) has been geo-tagged spatially online on the HIMAL Geo portal.
- **Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes (MISHTI):** Launched on World Environment Day 2024, MISHTI focuses on the restoration of mangroves to bolster coastal sustainability. Approximately 22,561 hectares of degraded mangroves have been restored across 13 states and union territories.
- **National Mission for Green India (GIM):** As part of the National Action Plan on Climate Change, GIM was launched in February, 2014 aiming to protect, restore, and enhance India's forest cover, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- **Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (IDWH):** This centrally sponsored scheme provides financial and technical assistance to state and union territory governments for wildlife conservation activities. The scheme encompasses the development of wildlife habitats, Project Tiger, and Project Elephant, with a total outlay of ₹2,602.98 crores for the 15th Finance Commission cycle.

4. Research and Monitoring

- **Advanced Research Facilities:** In December 2024, the MoEFCC inaugurated a Next Generation DNA Sequencing facility at the Wildlife Institute of India in Dehradun.
- This facility enhances research capabilities in wildlife genetics, aiding in the development of effective conservation strategies.

5. Community Involvement and Awareness

- **'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' Campaign:** Launched on World Environment Day 2024, this initiative encourages individuals to plant trees in honour of their mothers and Mother Earth. By December 2024, over 102 crore trees had been planted under this campaign, with a target of 140 crore trees by March 2025.
- **World Wildlife Day Celebrations:** The 2024 World Wildlife Day, themed "Connecting People and Planet: Exploring Digital Innovation in Wildlife Conservation," was celebrated at Okhla Bird Sanctuary.
- The event featured eco-trails, poster-making competitions, and interactive sessions to raise awareness about wildlife conservation.

6. Conservation of Marine Species

- **National Marine Turtle Action Plan:** Released by the MoEFCC, this plan focuses on the conservation of marine turtles and their habitats along the Indian coastline.
- **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2019:** This regulation emphasizes the conservation of ecologically sensitive areas such as mangroves, coral reefs, and turtle nesting grounds, ensuring their protection from unregulated developmental activities.

7. Combating Wildlife Crime

- **Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB):** Established to combat organized wildlife crime, the WCCB coordinates enforcement actions, gathers intelligence, and assists in international efforts to curb illegal wildlife trade.
- Between 2019 and 2023, the WCCB conducted 166 joint operations in the North Eastern Region, leading to the arrest of 375 wildlife offenders.

Key Announcements by the Government of India on World Wildlife Day 2025

- Release of India's first-ever riverine dolphin estimation report, covering 28 rivers across eight states. Encouragement of local community participation in dolphin conservation.
- Foundation stone laid for the National Referral Centre for Wildlife at Junagadh to enhance coordination in wildlife health management.
- Establishment of a Centre of Excellence at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) – SACON, Coimbatore to tackle human-wildlife conflict.
- Deployment of Rapid Response Teams with advanced tracking technology, surveillance systems, and AI-driven intrusion detection.
- Collaboration between Forest Survey of India, Dehradun, and BISAG-N to enhance forest fire prediction, detection, prevention, and control using space technology.
- Integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) for wildlife conservation and conflict mitigation.
- New sites identified for cheetah reintroduction, including Gandhisagar Sanctuary (Madhya Pradesh) and Banni Grasslands (Gujarat).
- Announcement of a Tiger Conservation Scheme focused on protecting tigers and co-predators outside traditional tiger reserves.
- Launch of a dedicated Project on Gharials to address their dwindling population.
- Announcement of a National Great Indian Bustard Conservation Action Plan to upscale conservation efforts.
- Documentation and research on India's traditional forest and wildlife conservation practices using AI.
- Expansion of India's engagement with the United Nations Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) for enhanced international cooperation.

Conclusion

- India's unwavering commitment to wildlife conservation, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, is reflected in a series of transformative initiatives that blend tradition with cutting-edge technology.
- From strengthening flagship programs like Project Tiger and Project Elephant to pioneering new conservation efforts for species such as the gharial and the Great Indian Bustard, the Government has adopted a holistic and science-driven approach.
- The integration of artificial intelligence, geospatial mapping, and community-led conservation underscores India's global leadership in biodiversity preservation.
- The remarkable resurgence of endangered species, strengthened legal frameworks, and a strategic integration of technology underscore the Government of India's proactive approach to environmental stewardship.
- Moreover, India's collaboration with international organizations, multilateral bodies, and conservation partners has reinforced its leadership in addressing global biodiversity challenges.
- By fostering cross-border cooperation, leveraging scientific innovation, and ensuring community participation, India continues to drive a holistic and inclusive conservation agenda.
- As we mark World Wildlife Day 2025, the nation reaffirms its resolve to protect and restore ecosystems, ensuring a sustainable and resilient future for generations to come.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

5. Which of the following best reflects the comprehensive and multi-tiered approach of India's wildlife conservation strategy as discussed during the 7th meeting of the National Board for Wildlife, chaired by the Prime Minister at Gir National Park?
 - A. A strategy focusing only on species-specific conservation programs such as Project Tiger and Project Elephant, without integrating habitat or landscape-level planning.
 - B. A multi-pronged conservation approach encompassing expansion of protected areas, species-specific flagship programs like Project Snow Leopard and Project Tiger, newer alliances like the International Big Cats Alliance, and ecosystem-specific strategies including wetlands and marine biodiversity, while also ensuring financial and policy support from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
 - C. A singular emphasis on eco-tourism initiatives to raise funds for wildlife conservation in biodiversity hotspots, while avoiding governmental budgetary allocations to reduce fiscal burden.
 - D. A conservation model that exclusively relies on community reserves, gradually phasing out national parks and wildlife sanctuaries to promote decentralized biodiversity management without central oversight.
6. Based on the 2025-26 budgetary allocations and India's existing wildlife network data, which of the following statements is the most accurate and comprehensive about India's contemporary wildlife conservation landscape and fiscal priorities?
 - A. Despite having over 1,000 protected areas, India's budget for wildlife conservation has been stagnant, with minimal focus on flagship programs like Project Tiger, and no significant allocation increases in recent years.
 - B. India's wildlife conservation strategy reflects both expansion and intensification, with over 1,014 protected areas covering 5.32% of its land, and a notable 9% increase in the Environment Ministry's budget for 2025-26, alongside focused allocations like ₹450 crore for Integrated Wildlife Habitats Development and ₹290 crore for Projects Tiger and Elephant, indicating a balance of habitat and species-specific conservation.
 - C. India's wildlife conservation is focused only on preserving its four biodiversity hotspots without budgetary focus on other regions, and the network of protected areas has remained unchanged since 2000.
 - D. The primary focus of India's wildlife conservation is on ex-situ conservation strategies such as zoos and captive breeding, with limited relevance given to in-situ conservation like national parks or community reserves.

4. What the first-ever comprehensive survey of India's river dolphins revealed

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi released the results of the first-ever comprehensive population estimation of riverine dolphins – Gangetic and Indus dolphins – done in India.
- The survey was conducted across the Ganga and Brahmaputra river basins between 2021 and 2023.

- It estimated an average of 6,324 Gangetic dolphins, ranging from 5,977 to 6,688.
- The survey only found three Indus River dolphins in the Indus basin, all in the Beas River in Punjab.
- The first-of-its-kind exercise provides timely estimates of the endangered aquatic mammals, which face threats from pollution, riverbed mining, low water depth, habitat damage, prey decline and climate change.
- Gangetic dolphins and Indus dolphins are classified as endangered and accorded the highest protection under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Key findings of the survey

- The estimation survey was done by the Wildlife Institute of India under the Union Environment Ministry between 2021 and 2023.
- It covered the main channels and tributaries of the Ganga and Brahmaputra rivers, as well as the Beas river in Punjab. 28 rivers were surveyed by boat, and 30 were mapped by road.
- The survey spanned 7,109 kilometres of the Ganga and its tributaries in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan.
- A total of 1,297 kilometres of the Brahmaputra were surveyed, including its tributaries Subansiri, Kulsi, Beki, Kopili, and Barak. 101 kilometres of the Beas river were surveyed as well.
- It thus estimated an average of 3,275 dolphins on Ganga's main stem, 2,414 in its tributaries, 584 in Brahmaputra's main stem and 51 in its tributaries.
- In Beas, it only found 3 Indus River Dolphins, considered a separate species from the Gangetic dolphins.
- The highest number of Gangetic dolphins, 2,397, was found in Uttar Pradesh.
- This was followed by 2,220 in Bihar, 815 in West Bengal, 6235 in West Bengal, 162 in Jharkhand, 95 in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, and three in Punjab.

Survey methodology and challenges

- River dolphins live in opaque, turbid waters and briefly appear on the surface, making any estimates of their population tricky.
- According to the population estimation report, dolphins surface only for 1.26 seconds and dive for 107 seconds.
- This generates the possibility of observer error, which prevents observers from sighting all surfacing dolphins, and availability error, meaning not all dolphins surface during the counting time.
- A combination of visual and acoustic surveys is used. The acoustic survey uses multiple underwater microphones or hydrophones to capture 'dolphin clicks.'
- Dolphins, being functionally blind, navigate by making clicking sounds that travel through water and bounce back after hitting objects. This process is called echolocation.
- Hydrophones record underwater dolphin clicks to counter observer error and reliably triangulate dolphin occurrence. Since multiple hydrophones are used, they can pick up clicking sounds made by different individuals.
- Different kinds of visual surveys are used, depending on the vessel available, water depth and channel width. For deep and wide channels, the double observer method is used, where two teams positioned on different decks cover different angles around the vessel on its left and right flank.
- These teams scan for dolphins surfacing around them as the boat travels at 8-10 km/hour.
- This allows for efficient detection and helps avoid double counting individual dolphins, given that the boat travels faster than the dolphins.
- A tandem method is used for channels less than 600 metres wide and 3 metres deep, while a single boat method is used for channels with a width smaller than 300 metres and a depth lower than 2 metres.

Dolphin 'hotspots' and 'coldspots' and encounter rates

- While a major stretch of the Ganga's main stem flows through Uttar Pradesh, dolphins are sparse or absent in certain stretches of the river called 'coldspots'.
- In the 366-kilometre stretch from Narora to Kanpur, dolphins are almost non-existent with an encounter rate of 0.1 per km, according to the population estimation report.
- Similarly, the Farukhabad-Kannauj stretch between the Narora and Kanpur barrages is considered a coldspot.
- "Similar coldspots were found in the Yamuna River, from Kaushambi-Chitrakoot, in the Sharda River, in Pilibhit, and in Rapti River, from Balrampur – Sidharth Nagar," the estimation report said.
- Moreover, the estimation exercise found several hotspots or stretches where dolphins were abundant.
- As against an encounter rate of 0.62 dolphins/km in Uttar Pradesh, the encounter rate in Bihar was 1.62/km.
- The estimation survey attributed high dolphin occurrence in Bihar to a higher river depth, particularly at the confluence of tributaries such as Ghaghara, Gandak, Kosi and Son.
- The survey found the Chausa-Manihar stretch, spanning 590 kilometres, to be most densely populated, with an encounter rate of 2.20 dolphins/km.
- Similarly dense was the population between Manihari in Bihar and Rajmahal in Jharkhand, with an encounter rate of 2.75 dolphins/km.
- In Assam, despite a healthy water depth on the main stem of Brahmaputra, its tributaries had low average depth.
- The Barak river was identified as a coldspot in Assam. Compared to past estimates, the dolphin population in the Subansiri and Kulsi rivers was declining, according to the estimation report.

National Aquatic Animal of India

- The Ganges river dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*) is a species of freshwater dolphin classified in the family Platanistidae.
- It lives in the Ganges and related rivers of South Asia, namely in the countries of India, Nepal, and Bangladesh.
- It is related to the much smaller Indus river dolphin which lives in the Indus River in Pakistan and the Beas River of northwestern India.
- It is also known by the name susu also shihu in Assam and shushuk in West Bengal and Bangladesh.
- The Ganges river dolphin has been recognized by the Government of India as its National Aquatic Animal and is the official animal of the Indian city of Guwahati.
- Its first occurrence, within the Hooghly River, was documented by William Roxburgh.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

7. Based on the first-ever comprehensive river dolphin survey, which of the following statements best reflects the major methodological innovations and challenges faced in estimating dolphin populations, and how these were addressed?
 - A. The survey primarily relied on satellite imagery to detect dolphins in shallow river areas, avoiding in-person observation methods due to water turbidity, and utilized drone-based cameras for consistent tracking.

- B. Given that river dolphins inhabit transparent waters and remain at the surface for long durations, visual observation without supporting acoustic methods sufficed to generate precise population estimates, reducing the need for error correction mechanisms.
- C. The challenge of detecting dolphins in opaque, turbid river waters—compounded by their brief surfacing (average 1.26 seconds)—was addressed through a combination of visual double-observer and tandem boat methods, depending on river width and depth, and acoustic surveys using hydrophones to capture echolocation clicks, thus reducing observer and availability errors.
- D. The survey was entirely based on visual methods from stationary points along riverbanks, as moving boats could create disturbances, preventing dolphins from surfacing, and excluded acoustic methods due to technical limitations in turbid Indian rivers.
8. Which of the following best captures the key findings about the distribution and population numbers of Gangetic and Indus dolphins in India, based on the 2021–2023 survey?
- A. The survey found over 10,000 Gangetic dolphins evenly distributed across all Indian river systems and confirmed the extinction of Indus dolphins in India.
- B. Approximately 6,324 Gangetic dolphins were estimated, with Uttar Pradesh hosting the highest number; Indus dolphins, a distinct species, were found only in the Beas River with just three individuals recorded, showing their critically low presence in India.
- C. The survey identified 3,275 dolphins in the Ganga main stem but no dolphins in its tributaries, while the Brahmaputra basin hosted over 2,000 Indus dolphins, confirming their presence in multiple rivers of Northeast India.
- D. Gangetic dolphins were found only in Bihar and West Bengal, and no dolphins were recorded from any part of Uttar Pradesh or tributaries, reflecting their restricted distribution due to pollution and water diversion.

5. International Women's Day 2025

- International Women's Day is celebrated around the world on 8th March. It is a day when women are recognized for their achievements across national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political boundaries.
- The theme of International Women's Day 2025 is "For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment."
- This year's theme calls for action to unlock equal rights, power and opportunities for all and an inclusive future where no one is left behind. Central to this vision is empowering the next generation—youth, particularly young women and adolescent girls—as catalysts for lasting change.
- Further, the year 2025 is a pivotal moment as it marks the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
- This document is the most progressive and widely endorsed blueprint for women's and girls' rights worldwide, transforming the women's rights agenda in terms of legal protection, access to services, youth engagement, and change in social norms, stereotypes, and ideas stuck in the past.
- In India, the government has been actively working towards women's empowerment and gender equality through various policies, schemes, and legislative measures.

- The country is witnessing a transition from women's development to women-led development, ensuring equal participation in national progress.
- Women are playing a crucial role in shaping India's socio-economic landscape, breaking barriers in education, health, digital inclusion, and leadership roles.
- On March 3, 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi encouraged women across India to share their inspiring life journeys on the NaMo App Open Forum ahead of International Women's Day.
- He praised the remarkable stories already submitted, highlighting the resilience and achievements of women from different walks of life.
- As a special initiative, he announced that selected women would take over his social media accounts on March 8 to amplify their voices and experiences.
- This initiative aims to celebrate women's contributions and inspire others by showcasing their journey of empowerment, perseverance, and success.

Constitutional and Legal Framework

- The Indian Constitution guarantees gender equality through provisions in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and Directive Principles of State Policy.
- Article 14 ensures equality before the law, while Article 15 prohibits discrimination based on sex. Article 51(a)(e) encourages citizens to renounce practices derogatory to women's dignity.
- The Directive Principles, particularly Articles 39 and 42, emphasize equal livelihood opportunities, equal pay, and maternity relief.

India is a signatory to international treaties such as:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979)
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)
- United Nations Convention Against Corruption (2003)
- Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development
- Government Schemes for Women's Upliftment

1. Education

- Education is the key to women's empowerment and economic independence. India has undertaken several initiatives to ensure that girls have equal access to quality education from primary schooling to higher education. Gender parity in education has improved significantly, with female enrolment surpassing male enrolment in recent years.
- Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 ensures schools are within reach for all children.
 - **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP):** Focuses on improving the child sex ratio and promoting girls' education.
 - **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan:** Supports school infrastructure and girl-friendly facilities.
- National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 prioritizes gender equity and inclusion in education.
 - **Eklavya Model Residential Schools:** Promote quality education for tribal girls
- Female Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) has overtaken Male GER since 2017-18.
- Female enrolment in higher education: 2.07 crore (2021-22), which is nearly 50% of the total number 4.33 crore.

- The female to 100 male faculty ratio has also improved to 77 in 2021-22 from 63 in 2014-15
- **Women in STEM:** 42.57% (41.9 lakh) of total STEM enrolment.
- **STEM Initiatives:**
 - Vigyan Jyoti (2020) promotes STEM education for girls in underrepresented areas.
 - Overseas Fellowship Scheme supports women scientists in global research opportunities.
 - National Digital Library, SWAYAM, and SWAYAM PRABHA ensure access to online learning.
 - Over 10 lakh girl students benefitted under various scholarships for STEM fields.
- **Skill Development Initiatives:**
 - Skill India Mission, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Women Industrial Training Institutes provide vocational and technical training to women.
 - Women Technology Parks (WTPs) serve as hubs for training and capacity building.

2. Health and Nutrition

- Access to healthcare services is crucial for improving the well-being of women and reducing gender-based health disparities. The government has introduced several policies to ensure maternal and child health, nutrition, and medical support for women across all sections of society.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):** Provides cash incentives to pregnant and lactating mothers, with ₹17,362 crore disbursed to 3.81 crore women, as of January 2025.

Improved Maternal Health

- Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) reduced from 130 (2014-16) to 97 (2018-20) per lakh live births.
- Under-5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) decreased from 43 (2015) to 32 (2020).
- Life expectancy for women increased to 71.4 years (2016-20), expected to reach 74.7 years by 2031-36.

Nutrition and Sanitation

- Jal Jeevan Mission provided potable tap water to 15.4 crore households, reducing health risks.
- Swachh Bharat Mission led to the construction of 11.8 crore toilets, improving sanitation and hygiene.
- **Poshan Abhiyaan:** Strengthens maternal and child nutrition programs
- Over 10.3 crore clean cooking gas connections distributed under the Ujjwala Yojana.

3. Economic Empowerment and Financial Inclusion

- Women's participation in the workforce is a key driver of economic growth. The government has launched multiple initiatives to promote financial independence, entrepreneurship, and employment opportunities for women.
- **Women's participation in major household decisions:** Increased from 84% (2015) to 88.7% (2020).

Financial Inclusion

- **PM Jan Dhan Yojana:** Over 30.46 crore accounts (55% belonging to women) opened.
- **Stand-Up India Scheme:** 84% of loans under ₹10 lakh to ₹1 crore sanctioned to women entrepreneurs.
- **MUDRA Scheme:** 69% of microloans given to women-led enterprises.
- **Self-Help Groups under NRLM:** 10 crore (100 million) women connected to 9 million SHGs.
- **Bank Sakhis Model:** 6,094 women banking correspondents processed transactions worth \$40 million in 2020.

Employment and Leadership

- **Women in Armed Forces:** Entry into NDA, combat roles, and Sainik Schools.
- **Civil Aviation:** India has over 15% women pilots, higher than the global average of 5%.
- **Working Women's Hostels (Sakhi Niwas):** 523 hostels benefiting 26,306 women.

Women Entrepreneurs in Startups

- 10% of funds in the Small Industries Development Bank of India reserved for women-led startups

4. Digital and Technological Empowerment

- In the digital era, access to technology and digital literacy are crucial for women's socio-economic progress. The government has been proactive in ensuring women are part of the digital revolution through various initiatives.

Digital India Initiatives

- **PMGDISHA (Prime Minister's Digital Saksharta Abhiyan):** 60 million rural citizens trained in digital literacy.
- **Common Service Centres (CSCs):** 67,000 women entrepreneurs running digital service centers.
- **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM):** Bridging healthcare accessibility through digital solutions.
- **SANKALP Hubs for Women Empowerment:** Functioning in 742 districts across 35 States/UTs

Financial Technology and Inclusion

- Digital banking and Aadhaar-linked services ensure financial security for women.
- Government e-marketplaces encourage female entrepreneurship and online businesses.

5. Safety and Protection

- Ensuring women's safety is a top priority for the Indian government. Several legislative measures, dedicated funds, and fast-track courts have been established to curb crimes against women and provide legal and institutional support.

Key Legal Frameworks

- **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018:** Enhanced penalties for crimes against women.
- Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.
- Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013.
- **POCSO Act, 2012:** Strengthened laws against child abuse.
- **Ban on Triple Talaq (2019):** Criminalizing instant divorce practices.
- **Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961:** Penalizes dowry-related offenses.
- **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006:** Protects minors from forced marriages.
- Nirbhaya Fund Projects (₹11,298 crore allocated)
- **One Stop Centres (OSCs):** 802 centers functional, assisting over 1 million women.
- **Emergency Response Support System (ERSS - 112):** 38.34 crore calls handled.
- **Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs):** 750 operational courts, 408 exclusively for POCSO cases.
- Cyber Crime Helpline (1930) and cyber forensic labs for digital safety.
- **Safe City Projects:** Implemented in 8 cities to enhance women's safety.

- 14,658 Women Help Desks in Police Stations, 13,743 headed by women.
- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023:** Strengthens provisions for gender justice.
- Enhanced punishment for sexual offenses and trafficking.
- Witness protection and digital evidence admissibility improved.
- **Women's representation in CAPFs:** 33% reservation in select forces.
- **Nari Adalat:** Piloted in 50 Gram Panchayats each in Assam and J&K, now expanding.

Conclusion

- On this International Women's Day, it is crucial to reaffirm the commitment to building an inclusive, gender-equal society where women play a central role in shaping the nation's future.
- Sustained efforts in policy-making, community engagement, and digital inclusion will ensure that women continue to drive India's growth story in the years to come.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

- Considering the significance of International Women's Day 2025 and India's legal and policy framework, which of the following most comprehensively reflects how India's approach to women's empowerment aligns with global frameworks like the Beijing Declaration and CEDAW?
 - India focuses primarily on domestic policies and has limited engagement with international frameworks like CEDAW or Beijing Declaration, relying mainly on traditional welfare schemes for women.
 - India's approach to women's empowerment is limited to constitutional guarantees like Articles 14 and 15, without extending into policy, legislative, or international commitments.
 - India's women's empowerment framework is multilayered, combining constitutional guarantees (Articles 14, 15, 39, 42, 51(a)(e)), active policy initiatives transitioning from women's development to women-led development, and robust international commitments, including CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration, and Agenda 2030, thus aligning national efforts with global benchmarks for gender equality.
 - India has focused mainly on education and health for women, avoiding direct engagement with international commitments like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and emphasizing only domestic schemes for gender parity.
- In the context of International Women's Day 2025 and Prime Minister's initiatives, which of the following best illustrates how India is innovatively leveraging technology and public participation to promote women's voices?
 - By exclusively organizing closed-door conferences and seminars on gender equality attended by policymakers and academics, limiting public participation.
 - By introducing mandatory quotas in all government social media platforms for women's representation, without any initiative for individual storytelling or public interaction.
 - By encouraging women to share their life journeys on the NaMo App Open Forum, and launching a unique initiative where selected women will take over the Prime Minister's social media accounts on March 8, thereby amplifying their voices and using digital platforms for national inspiration and dialogue.
 - By focusing solely on offline campaigns in rural areas, avoiding the use of digital tools to maintain traditional forms of outreach.

6. Navratna status for IRCTC and IRFC

- The Centre approved the upgradation of Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) and Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) as the country's 25th and 26th Navratna companies respectively.
- All seven listed Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) of the Indian Railways now have Navratna status. The Indian Railways have a total 12 CPSEs.

When and how does a company get Navratna status?

- Navratnas are the second category of the central government-owned 'Ratna' companies, placed between the Maharatnas and the Miniratnas, based on criteria including profitability, net worth, earning, inter-sectoral performance, etc.
- The Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) of the Ministry of Finance picks the CPSEs for Navratna status. Six indicators are considered: (i) ratio of net profit to net worth, (ii) ratio of manpower cost to total cost of production or services, (iii) ratio of profit before depreciation, interest, and tax (PBDIT) to capital employed or return on capital employed, (iv) ratio of profit before interest and taxes (PBIT) to turnover, (v) earning per share, and (vi) inter-sectoral performance of the company.
- The six indicators carry weights from 10 (for earning per share) to 25 (for ratio of net profit to net worth).
- If a CPSE has a composite score of 60 or higher for all six indicators, and has obtained an Excellent or Very Good MOU rating in three of the last five years, it is eligible to be considered for Navratna status.
- The Navratna status of the two companies, the DPE said IRCTC's annual turnover was Rs. 4,270.18 crore, profit after tax (PAT) Rs. 1,111.26 crore, and net worth Rs. 3,229.97 crore in FY 2023-24.
- IRCTC is an extended arm of the Indian Railways, and the only entity selling train tickets online. The Ministry of Railways holds a 62.40% share in IRCTC. As of March 2024, its turnover was Rs. 4,270 crore and profit Rs. 1,111 crore. It had a net worth of Rs. 3,230 crore and a market capitalisation of Rs. 74,376 crore.
- IRFC's main function is to secure the Indian Railways' extra budgetary resources (EBR) requirements through market borrowings at the most competitive rates and terms.
- The Ministry of Railways holds 86.36% of IRFC, officials said. As of March 2024, the company had a market cap of Rs. 1,86,030 crore.

How does securing Navratna status help a company?

- "Having got Navratna status, IRCTC and IRFC can invest up to Rs. 1,000 crore or 15% of their net worth in a single project without government approval. It makes them more financially autonomous,".
- "The companies can form joint ventures and subsidiaries, and enter into mergers or acquisitions without direct government intervention. They can also make independent business and investment decisions to compete with private sector companies,".
- According to the official, these companies will also be able to enter the international market. "They can form strategic alliances and expand globally without strict bureaucratic hurdles. Navratna companies are considered financially stable, which helps them attract more investors and provide better returns to shareholders,".

What are the other Navratnas of the Indian Railways?

- Five other Indian Railways companies had Navratna status before IRCTC and IRFC – Container Corporation of India (CONCOR), Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd (RVNL), RITES Ltd, IRCON International Ltd, and RailTel Corporation of India Ltd.
- CONCOR became the first Railways Navratna in July 2014. RVNL, IRCON, RITES followed in 2023, and RailTel in August 2024.
- CONCOR is a multimodal logistics company for freight transport, and RailTel provides connectivity services such as IP-based video surveillance systems at stations and NIC ‘e-Office’ services. IRCON specialises in building railways and highways projects in India and abroad.
- RITES is a multidisciplinary transport infrastructure consultancy organisation, and RVNL implements projects relating to creation and augmentation of capacities of rail infrastructure on a fast-track basis.

Maharatna Company

- In India, the “Maharatna” status is a prestigious designation awarded only to select Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) that have consistently demonstrated superior financial performance and operational strength. Here’s how a company can achieve this status:

Eligibility

- Only CPSEs, which are companies in which the Government of India holds a controlling stake, can be considered for Maharatna status.

Performance Criteria

- The enterprise must meet specific financial benchmarks over a defined period (typically three years). Although the exact numbers can be updated over time, the criteria generally include:
 - A net profit of at least a prescribed amount (around Rs. 500 crore or more in at least one of the three years).
 - An average annual turnover of roughly Rs. 25,000 crore.
 - A substantial net worth, often in the vicinity of Rs. 15,000 crore.

Operational Autonomy

- Besides financial performance, the company must demonstrate the capacity to make major investment decisions independently. This increased autonomy allows Maharatna companies to invest in new projects and expand operations without requiring detailed government approvals for each decision.

Review and Notification Process

- The Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises reviews the performance of eligible CPSEs against these criteria. Companies that satisfy the benchmarks are then granted Maharatna status through a formal government notification.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

11. Considering the eligibility and strategic significance of Navratna status, which of the following most accurately captures the distinction of Navratna status and how it positions IRCTC and IRFC among Indian Railways’ CPSEs?
 - A. Navratna status is granted based solely on a company’s annual turnover exceeding ₹25,000 crore, and IRCTC and IRFC have been awarded this status because of their significant international partnerships, making them the first two Navratnas in the railway sector.

- B. Navratna status, awarded by the Ministry of Railways to all public sector companies under its control, grants companies the right to operate as private firms without any governmental oversight, and IRCTC and IRFC are the first to get this status for their digital initiatives.
- C. Navratna status is granted based on a composite score covering profitability, efficiency, earnings, and sectoral performance, with at least 60 points and consistent MOU ratings, and with IRCTC and IRFC's upgradation as Navratnas, all seven listed Indian Railways' CPSEs now hold Navratna status, enhancing their financial and strategic autonomy.
- D. Navratna status is awarded automatically to any CPSE once its market capitalization exceeds ₹50,000 crore, and IRCTC and IRFC have achieved it solely because of their current market value, without any evaluation of their earnings or inter-sectoral performance.
12. Given the structure of public sector company designations (Maharatna, Navratna, Miniratna), and based on the details about IRCTC and IRFC's financials and rights post-Navratna status, which of the following statements best reflects the operational and financial autonomy these companies will now enjoy?
- A. As Navratnas, IRCTC and IRFC can now invest up to ₹1,000 crore or 15% of their net worth in a single project without government approval, form joint ventures and subsidiaries, pursue mergers and acquisitions independently, and explore international markets, thus achieving a level of operational freedom similar to Maharatnas, though with relatively lower financial thresholds.
- B. Navratna status allows IRCTC and IRFC to bypass all Ministry approvals for any investments or business decisions, giving them absolute autonomy equivalent to private corporations, and permits them to engage in activities even beyond their defined scope without regulation.
- C. As Navratnas, IRCTC and IRFC will continue to require Ministry approval for all investments above ₹500 crore and cannot form joint ventures without direct oversight, though they can operate domestically with limited freedom.
- D. Navratna status only confers the right to use the "Navratna" title without impacting financial decision-making, and companies continue to be bound by earlier investment and partnership rules applicable to Miniratnas.

7. Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

- The market of AI models is getting increasingly cluttered.
- OpenAI released GPT-4.5, which was supposed to be the company's "bigger and more compute-intensive than ever".
- The launch came days after Elon Musk-owned xAI introduced the Grok 3 model — the company touted it as the "world's smartest AI". Before that, Anthropic released a hybrid reasoning model for its Claude chatbot.
- And in January, Chinese startup DeepSeek upended the AI industry by building a model at a much cheaper cost and using a modest number of computer chips. Known as the R1, the AI model was called a major breakthrough.

- But the release of new AI models is just a part of the picture when it comes to developments in the AI industry. And it can be quite daunting to follow what's actually happening with each new development. That's because the field of AI is filled with jargon such as LLMs, neural networks, algorithms, etc.
- So, to better understand what is going on, here is a series of explainers, which will break down some of the most common terms used in AI, and why they are important. In the first instalment, we declutter two basic terms: artificial intelligence and machine learning.

What is artificial intelligence?

- Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to the field of computer science which aims to make computer systems think, reason, learn, and act to solve a complex system like humans.
- This field of research was established in 1956 at a small workshop at Dartmouth College (New Hampshire, United States).
- It was organised by a young mathematician named John McCarthy, who had become intrigued with the idea of creating a thinking machine. He also persuaded Marvin Minsky of Harvard University, Nathaniel Rochester from IBM, and Claude Shannon from Bell Telephone Laboratories to help with the workshop. These four men are considered some of the founding fathers of AI.
- The term artificial intelligence was coined by McCarthy. "McCarthy later admitted that no one really liked the name — after all, the goal was genuine, not 'artificial', intelligence — but 'I had to call it something, so I called it "Artificial Intelligence",'" wrote Melanie Mitchell in her book, 'Artificial Intelligence: A Guide for Thinking Humans'.
- However, these days the term AI is often heard about as a technology, or even as an entity. For instance, Google says it has used artificial intelligence to improve many of its products, making them smarter. Then, there are AI models (which will be explained in detail in subsequent explainers) that power AI tools such as OpenAI's ChatGPT.

What is machine learning?

- To enable computer systems to imitate the way that humans learn, and perform tasks autonomously (meaning, without instructions), machine learning (ML) is used. ML is implemented by training (this term will also be explained in subsequent explainers) computers on data so that they can make predictions about new information.
- In other words, "Through a combination of arithmetic, statistics and trial-and-error, machine learning systems identify relationships and patterns within large datasets, enabling them to draw conclusions about new data," according to Built In, a tech website.
- As the computer systems get exposed to more data, they get better at learning to perform new tasks without the need for being explicitly programmed to do so.
- One of the best examples of real-life applications of machine learning is recommendation systems.
- Companies such as Spotify or Netflix use machine learning models to track the user's behaviour to recognise patterns in their listening and viewing history, and then use this data collection to accurately predict which artists or films they may enjoy.

Artificial Intelligence and India

- Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming India's technological, economic, and social landscape. With a robust IT industry, a burgeoning startup ecosystem, and strong government backing, India is emerging as a key player in the global AI arena.

1. A Dynamic Ecosystem

Tech Talent and Innovation:

- India is known for its large pool of IT professionals and engineers. This talent base fuels innovation in AI research and development, making the country a hotspot for both startups and established IT companies.

Startup Culture:

- A vibrant startup ecosystem is addressing local and global challenges using AI. These startups are innovating in areas such as natural language processing, computer vision, and data analytics.

2. Government Initiatives and Strategies

National Strategy for AI:

- The government, through agencies like NITI Aayog, has formulated a national strategy that identifies key sectors where AI can have the most impact—healthcare, agriculture, education, smart cities, and smart mobility. This strategy outlines plans for infrastructure development, skill enhancement, and research promotion.

Policy Support and Funding:

- Initiatives like “Digital India” complement AI development by expanding digital infrastructure and connectivity, particularly in underserved regions. Government support is also fostering public-private partnerships to accelerate AI adoption.

3. AI in Key Sectors

Healthcare:

- AI-powered diagnostics, telemedicine, and personalized treatment solutions are transforming healthcare delivery. These technologies can help bridge the gap in rural healthcare services.

Agriculture:

- Smart farming techniques powered by AI—including crop monitoring, weather forecasting, and precision agriculture—are improving productivity and resource management in one of India’s most vital sectors.

Education:

- AI is enabling personalized learning experiences, adaptive testing, and data-driven educational tools that cater to diverse learning needs, thereby enhancing overall educational outcomes.

Smart Cities and Infrastructure:

- AI applications in traffic management, energy distribution, and urban planning are helping cities become more efficient and sustainable.

4. Challenges and Opportunities

Data Privacy and Security:

- With increased reliance on data-driven systems, ensuring robust data privacy and cybersecurity frameworks is essential.

Infrastructure and Digital Divide:

- While urban areas benefit from advanced digital infrastructure, many rural regions still face connectivity challenges. Bridging this gap is critical for nationwide AI adoption.

Ethical and Regulatory Considerations:

- Developing ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks to oversee AI applications is crucial for ensuring fair, transparent, and accountable use of technology.

Skill Development:

- Continuous investment in education and training is needed to equip the workforce with the skills necessary to develop and manage AI systems.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

13. Which of the following statements best describes the difference between Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML)?
- A. AI refers to the specific models like GPT-4.5 and Grok 3, while ML refers to tools used for data storage.
 - B. AI is the broader field that aims to create thinking and reasoning computer systems, whereas ML is a subset of AI focused on enabling computers to learn patterns from data and make autonomous decisions.
 - C. AI and ML are interchangeable terms and refer to the same concept of building machines for mechanical tasks.
 - D. AI is a recent concept that emerged after ML to tackle data analysis in advanced applications like robotics.
14. Which of the following statements about the origin and development of AI is accurate?
- A. AI was first discussed at a workshop led solely by John McCarthy in 1980 at MIT, focusing only on creating chess-playing programs.
 - B. The term 'Artificial Intelligence' was coined by John McCarthy during a workshop in 1956, where he collaborated with other pioneers like Marvin Minsky and Claude Shannon, and despite the term being unpopular, it has since become widely used.
 - C. AI research began as a result of Google's initiative to improve its search engine and product recommendations.
 - D. John McCarthy coined the term AI in the early 2000s while working on humanoid robots for industrial purposes.

8. Delimitation of constituencies in India

- Home Minister Amit Shah assured southern states last week that they wouldn't lose "even a single seat" after the fresh delimitation of constituencies.
- It was an attempt to address concerns, especially in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, about the potential loss of parliamentary representation if the exercise is based only on population data.
- The 2021 Census, which was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic, is expected to begin this year, and will be followed by the delimitation of constituencies. The Constitution (Eighty-Fourth Amendment) Act, 2002 froze existing constituency boundaries until "the first Census taken after the year 2026".

Constitutional commitment

- The delimitation of constituencies represents the constitutional commitment to a fair and representative electoral framework and the equitable representation of citizens in elected bodies.
- The number of constituencies in Parliament and state Assemblies is adjusted according to the latest population figures to ensure that the number of Indians represented by an MP/ MLA remains roughly the same. (The principle of ‘one citizen, one vote, one value’ laid down under Article 81.)
- Article 82 (“Readjustment after each census”) says that “Upon the completion of each census, the allocation of seats in the House of the People to the States and the division of each State into territorial constituencies shall be readjusted by such authority and in such manner as Parliament may by law determine”.
- Article 170(3) provides for the readjustment, “upon the completion of each census”, of the “total number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of each State and the division of each State into territorial constituencies”.

History of delimitation in India

- Following the 1951 Census, the Delimitation Commission Act of 1952 created the first Delimitation Commission to draw the boundaries of Lok Sabha and state Assembly constituencies.
- These boundaries have been subsequently redrawn thrice by delimitation commissions set up under the Delimitation Commission Acts of 1962, 1972, and 2002.
- The most recent delimitation re-drew some constituency boundaries on the basis of the 2001 Census.
- However, the number of Lok Sabha seats, the allocation for each state, and the number of seats in state Assemblies, have remained unchanged since the delimitation of 1972.
- Based on the Census of 1971, the number of Lok Sabha seats was fixed at 543, which meant that each MP represented roughly a million Indians. (The number of Lok Sabha seats was earlier fixed at 494 and 522 after the censuses of 1951 and 1961 respectively.)
- The Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976 – passed by the government of the Emergency focused on efforts to control India’s population – froze the number of Lok Sabha seats until after the first Census taken after 2000.
- And in 2002, the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government extended the freeze until at least 2026.

How the process of delimitation works

- The President appoints a Delimitation Commission headed by a retired judge of the Supreme Court, and comprising the Chief Election Commissioner or his representative, and the State Election Commissioners.
- In addition, associate (or co-opted) members are appointed for each state or Union Territory undergoing delimitation.
- These members are sitting MPs appointed by the Speaker of Lok Sabha and MLAs appointed by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly concerned.
- Associate members provide inputs and advice, but do not have decision-making powers or the right to vote, if voting is required on any issue.
- The Commission operates independently of the government, and the revised boundaries drawn by it cannot be challenged in court.

Importance of Census

- Census data serve as the main basis of delimitation.

- This is at the heart of the apprehensions of southern states who fear the failure of North Indian states at controlling their population could be rewarded by increased representation in Parliament, while the South is punished for its success.
- In this scenario, the BJP's domination of the North could in theory lead to the South, where the BJP does not have a strong presence except in Karnataka, becoming irrelevant in national politics.
- Census data also serve as the crucial guide for re-drawing electoral boundaries, taking into account geographical contiguity, population density, and socio-economic realities.
- In particular, the data help to identify regions with significant Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) populations, and ensure that seats are reserved in proportion to the share of the SC/ST population.
- However, since Dalit populations are scattered, SC seats are reserved based both on the concentration of the SC population and the spread of these seats across the various regions of the state.
- Following the creation of proposed borders, the Delimitation Commission releases its recommendations and invites feedback from the general public, political parties, and other stakeholders.
- The delimitation plan is finalised after making the necessary revisions.
- Once published in the official Gazette, the Commission's orders take effect in the next election.

2022 Delimitation Commission

- The most recent delimitation commission was set up on 12 July 2002 after the 2001 census with Justice Kuldeep Singh, a retired Judge of the Supreme Court as its Chairperson.
- The Commission has submitted its recommendations. In December 2007, the Supreme Court on a petition issued notice to the central government asking reasons for non implementation.
- On 4 January 2008, the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA) decided to implement the order from the Delimitation Commission.
- The recommendations of the Commission was approved by President Pratibha Patil on 19 February.
- This means that all future elections in India for states covered by the commission will be held under the newly formed constituencies.
- The present delimitation of parliamentary constituencies has been done on the basis of 2001 census figures under the provisions of Delimitation Act, 2002.
- The assembly election in Karnataka, conducted in three phases in May 2008, was the first to use the new boundaries as drawn by the 2002 delimitation commission.
- The tenure of the Delimitation Commission lasted until 31 May 2008.
- The delimitation orders issued by the Commission were given effect from 19 February 2008 for most states and union territories and 20 March 2008 for Tripura and Meghalaya, by a presidential order.
- The orders regarding Jharkhand were nullified till 2026 by inserting section 10B into the Delimitation Act, 2002.
- The delimitation of four north-eastern states was deferred due to security risks, by four separate presidential orders, all issued on 8 February 2008, for Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur.
- The order regarding Assam was rescinded on 28 February 2020.
- Subsequently, the Government of India has reconstituted the Delimitation Commission for these four states as well as the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir on 6 March 2020, under the chairpersonship of former Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prakash Desai.
- In March 2021, the four north-eastern states were removed from the purview of the reconstituted Commission.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

15. Which of the following statements accurately reflects both the composition and authority of the Delimitation Commission in India?
- A. The Delimitation Commission is composed exclusively of Supreme Court judges and operates under the Prime Minister's direct supervision, with decisions subject to judicial review.
 - B. The Delimitation Commission is a constitutional body comprising a retired Supreme Court judge as chairperson, the Chief Election Commissioner or representative, and State Election Commissioners; it includes associate members (MPs and MLAs) for consultative purposes, and its decisions are final and cannot be challenged in court.
 - C. The Delimitation Commission is led by the President and includes state Governors, and while it proposes constituency boundaries, final approval is given by Parliament and the Supreme Court.
 - D. The Delimitation Commission includes bureaucrats from the Ministry of Law and Justice and makes recommendations on delimitation, which are subject to parliamentary debate and state government consent before implementation.
16. Which of the following statements regarding the historical timeline of delimitation exercises in India is correct?
- A. Delimitation exercises have been carried out after every census since India's independence without any interruption or freeze in the number of seats.
 - B. The last delimitation of Lok Sabha seats was done based on the 2011 Census, and new boundaries are redrawn after every census as per Article 82.
 - C. Although the delimitation commissions were set up under various Acts (1952, 1962, 1972, 2002), the number of Lok Sabha seats has remained frozen since the 1971 Census, first under the 42nd Constitutional Amendment and later extended by the 84th Amendment until 2026.
 - D. The first delimitation exercise was done in 2002 based on the 1991 Census data, and since then, no further delimitation process has taken place in India.

9. Arab leaders have endorsed a \$53 billion plan to rebuild Gaza

- Arab leaders have endorsed a \$53 billion plan to rebuild Gaza, presenting a comprehensive alternative to former U.S. President Donald Trump's controversial proposal.
- Trump had previously suggested a property development-style plan involving the relocation of Gaza's Palestinian population—a move that was widely condemned as effectively endorsing ethnic cleansing.
- In sharp contrast, the Arab-led initiative, unveiled during an emergency summit of the Arab League in Cairo, seeks to focus on immediate humanitarian relief, the restoration of critical infrastructure, and the creation of a sustainable economic environment in the devastated territory.
- The reconstruction strategy is designed to be implemented under the future administration of the Palestinian Authority (PA). However, the feasibility of PA governance in Gaza remains in serious doubt, as Israel has consistently ruled out any role for the PA in the region.

- During his first term, Trump had further undermined Palestinian leadership by shutting down the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) liaison office in Washington and intensifying support for Israel.
- These moves have contributed to a deeply fractured political landscape, where divergent visions for Gaza's future continue to emerge.
- Israel's reaction to the new plan was sharply critical.
- The Israeli foreign ministry argued that the proposal "failed to address" the security realities following the devastating Hamas-led attack on October 7, notably neglecting the killings and kidnappings of Israelis during that assault.
- Conversely, Hamas acknowledged the Arab summit as a "step forward" for garnering regional and Islamic support, though it remained firmly opposed to any plan that would impose external projects or displacement on the Palestinian population.
- Senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri emphasized the necessity of protecting Palestinian rights to self-governance and resisting any form of custodial intervention.
- Egypt played a central role in shaping the proposal. President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, in his opening remarks at the summit, underlined that the reconstruction plan would empower Palestinians to "remain on their land," directly countering the relocation scheme favored by Trump.
- The 112-page proposal, replete with visionary AI-generated images, outlines ambitious plans for housing developments, community centers, landscaped gardens, a commercial harbor, a technology hub, beach hotels, and even an airport.
- However, it stops short of clearly defining the governance structure, merely referring to support for a "Palestinian administrative committee."
- Additionally, the summit's final communique called for a unified Palestinian representation under the PLO, effectively excluding Hamas, which further highlighted longstanding intra-Palestinian divisions.
- UN Secretary-General António Guterres also expressed strong support for the initiative, affirming the international community's readiness to cooperate in Gaza's reconstruction and cautioning against policies that might lead to ethnic cleansing.
- Overall, the \$53 billion plan represents a bold effort to restore Gaza while igniting a political process aimed at achieving Palestinian statehood, despite significant challenges ahead.

US President Proposal

- Donald Trump's proposal envisions turning the war-torn Gaza Strip into a high-end, property development project—a "Riviera of the Middle East."
- In his idea, once the current conflict ends, the U.S. would take a long-term ownership role over Gaza to clear the rubble and rebuild the area with state-of-the-art infrastructure, luxury housing, and job-creating developments.
- The plan calls not only for redevelopment but also for the forced relocation of Gaza's roughly 2 million Palestinian residents—moving them, for example, to new "permanent" communities in neighboring countries like Egypt and Jordan, which Trump claims would offer "much better housing."
- Proponents like Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have cautiously praised the "outside-the-box" thinking behind the proposal, suggesting it might remove Hamas from power and transform the region.
- However, the plan has been met with widespread international condemnation. Critics argue it would violate international law, constitute ethnic cleansing, and trigger further regional instability by uprooting an entire people for the sake of a real estate project.

Arab League

- The Arab League, officially known as the League of Arab States, is a regional organization that brings together Arab countries from North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and the Middle East.

History and Foundation

- **Founded:** The League was established on March 22, 1945, primarily to promote collaboration and solidarity among its member states.
- **Founding Members:** Initially, the organization was formed by seven countries—Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan (now Jordan), Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen.

Objectives and Functions

- **Political Coordination:** The Arab League works to foster political cooperation among its members. It serves as a forum for discussing common challenges and potential diplomatic solutions.
- **Economic and Social Development:** The organization promotes initiatives aimed at economic integration, cultural exchange, and social development across the Arab world.
- **Conflict Resolution:** The League has often played a mediating role in regional disputes and has been a vocal advocate for the Palestinian cause.

Structure and Membership

- **Headquarters:** The organization is headquartered in Cairo, Egypt.
- **Membership:** It currently includes 22 member states. These nations share linguistic and cultural ties, and the League seeks to coordinate their policies on regional and international issues.
- **Leadership:** The League is headed by a Secretary-General, a role that has been pivotal in steering its initiatives and representing Arab interests on the global stage.

Impact and Challenges

- **Regional Influence:** Over the decades, the Arab League has contributed to shaping regional policies and fostering unity among Arab nations, although it has also faced criticism for its limited ability to enforce decisions among its members.
- **Contemporary Relevance:** Today, the League continues to address a wide range of issues—from economic integration and political reform to cultural cooperation and the resolution of conflicts in the region.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

17. Which of the following statements best highlights the major difference between the Arab League's \$53 billion Gaza reconstruction plan and former U.S. President Trump's proposal for Gaza's future?
- A. Both the Arab League's plan and Trump's proposal focus on forced relocation of Palestinians to neighboring countries, but differ in their approach to international funding.
 - B. While Trump's proposal involves relocating Gaza's population and creating luxury developments, the Arab League's plan emphasizes rebuilding Gaza to empower Palestinians to remain on their land, focusing on humanitarian relief and sustainable infrastructure.
 - C. The Arab League's plan seeks to establish full Israeli administrative control over Gaza, while Trump's plan involves placing Gaza under U.N. trusteeship.
 - D. Trump's proposal aims at creating industrial zones for Palestinian employment within Gaza, while the Arab League's plan focuses only on environmental conservation without addressing economic recovery.

18. Which of the following accurately describes the current political and administrative challenges facing the implementation of the Arab League's Gaza reconstruction plan?
- A. The plan is fully supported by Israel and Hamas, and its implementation is expected to start immediately without political hurdles.
 - B. Although backed by Arab leaders and endorsed by the UN Secretary-General, the plan faces major obstacles including Israel's rejection of PA governance in Gaza, Hamas's opposition to external interventions, and ongoing intra-Palestinian divisions.
 - C. The reconstruction plan has been halted because the Palestinian Authority has already regained full control over Gaza, leaving no need for international intervention.
 - D. The plan's main difficulty lies only in securing enough financial aid, as political actors including Israel, Hamas, and PA are unanimously supportive of its framework.

10. UK hosts European leaders' summit as Britain, France and Ukraine agree to work on ceasefire plan

- European leaders gathered in London to reinforce support for Ukraine and draft a ceasefire plan, as the country continues to defend against Russia's invasion.
- The summit, hosted by British Prime Minister Keir Starmer at Lancaster House, comes after an extraordinary Oval Office meeting between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his United States counterpart Donald Trump, which left doubts about future American backing.
- The meeting brings together leaders and officials from over a dozen countries, including French President Emmanuel Macron, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, Italian PM Giorgia Meloni, and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte.
- The summit also includes representatives from Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Canada, Finland, Sweden, the Czech Republic, and Romania, along with top European Union officials.

The ceasefire plan

- UK PM Starmer announced that Britain, France, and Ukraine have agreed to draft a ceasefire plan to present to the United States. Ahead of the summit, the UK PM briefed leaders of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania on his recent talks with key allies, emphasizing the need for Europe to remain united.
- "The Prime Minister updated them on his discussions with the leaders of Ukraine, France, and the United States in recent days — and underlined his focus on securing a lasting peace in Ukraine that ensures their future sovereignty, backed up by strong security guarantees," Starmer's office said. "The Prime Minister underlined his focus on securing a lasting peace in Ukraine that ensures their future sovereignty," his office added.

Macron warns of Russian threat to Europe

- France's Macron, speaking to La Tribune Dimanche, warned that Russian President Vladimir Putin's ambitions pose a threat beyond Ukraine. "We have an over-armed and aggressive Russia on our borders.

It is carrying out terrorist actions and massive disinformation campaigns here and in Europe,” he said. “If Putin is not stopped, he will certainly move on to Moldova and perhaps beyond to Romania.”

Meloni calls for Western unity

- Italian PM Meloni echoed the call for a united Western front. “I think it is very, very important that we avoid the risk that the West divides. On this, the UK and Italy can play an important role in bridge-building,” she said.
- Both Meloni and Starmer confirmed that they had spoken with Trump following his tense meeting with Zelenskyy.
- Meloni, who has close ties with Trump and was the only European leader to attend his inauguration, is a strong advocate for Ukraine.

Poland says Europe must recognize its strength

- Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk urged Europe to recognize its military power. “Europe has 2.6 million professional soldiers—more than the US, China, or Russia,” he said before departing for London. “In areas of combat aircraft and artillery, we are also strong. Europe has an advantage over everyone here,” he said.
- Tusk added that Poland’s support for Kyiv remains firm. “Today in Europe there is a deficit of imagination and courage. Europe must understand its strength,”.

Russia responds to peacekeeper discussions

- Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov dismissed talks of European peacekeepers in Ukraine, calling it further “incitement” against Russia. “They want to prop up (Zelenskyy) with their ‘bayonets’ in the form of peacekeeping units,” Lavrov said.
- Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov claimed that the US and Russia are aligning on foreign policy. “The new (US) administration is rapidly changing all foreign policy configurations.

Norway vows continued support for US Navy

- Norwegian Defense Minister Tore Sandvik reaffirmed that Norway will continue supporting US Navy vessels, following reports that a private Norwegian company was refusing to supply US ships in protest of Washington’s Ukraine policy.
- “The US and Norway maintain a close and strong defense cooperation,” Sandvik said. “American forces will continue to receive the supply and support they require from Norway,” Sandvik added.
- Meanwhile, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stressed on the need to bolster European defense. “The path to peace is strength. Weakness breeds more war. We will support Ukraine, while undertaking a surge in European defense,” she wrote.

Some reasons for Russia Ukraine Clashes

- The roots of the recent Russia–Ukraine conflict are complex and multifaceted, stemming from a mix of historical legacies, geopolitical strategies, and domestic political shifts.

Historical and Cultural Context

- **Post-Soviet Legacy:** After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine emerged as an independent state, but the historical, cultural, and political ties between Ukraine and Russia remained strong. Russia has long seen Ukraine as part of its “near abroad” and an essential element of its sphere of influence.

- **Identity and Language:** Divisions within Ukraine—between those with a stronger Ukrainian national identity and those with cultural, linguistic, and familial ties to Russia—have also fueled tensions.

Geopolitical and Strategic Factors

- **NATO and EU Expansion:** Over the past decades, Ukraine's increasing tilt toward Western institutions like the European Union and NATO raised concerns in Moscow. Russia viewed Ukraine's potential integration with Western security structures as a direct threat to its strategic interests.
- **Buffer Zone:** Maintaining influence over Ukraine has been central to Russia's broader geopolitical goal of keeping a buffer between itself and NATO-aligned countries.

Immediate Triggers in the Near Past

- **Euromaidan Protests (2013–2014):** A wave of protests erupted in Ukraine in late 2013 against then-President Viktor Yanukovich's decision to abandon an association agreement with the EU. The resulting political upheaval led to his ouster in early 2014, which was perceived by Russia as a Western-backed coup.
- **Annexation of Crimea:** In the wake of Yanukovich's removal, Russia moved quickly to annex Crimea in March 2014—a region with deep historical and strategic significance. This action not only altered regional dynamics but also set a precedent for further conflict.
- **Conflict in Eastern Ukraine:** Following the annexation, pro-Russian separatist movements in eastern Ukraine (notably in the Donbas region) received support from Moscow, escalating the conflict into a prolonged, low-intensity war that underscored the unresolved issues between the two nations.

Conclusion

- In essence, the conflict is the result of long-standing historical ties and divisions, combined with the strategic imperatives of both Russia and Ukraine.
- Russia's concerns about NATO's eastward expansion, coupled with Ukraine's push for closer ties with the West and its internal political realignments, have together created a volatile environment that eventually erupted into open conflict.

Meeting between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his United States counterpart Donald Trump

- A high-profile meeting between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his United States counterpart Donald Trump has devolved into a shouting match, as the two leaders clashed over the future of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- Zelenskyy arrived at the White House to discuss a proposed deal to give the US access to Ukraine's rare earth minerals, while pushing for US security assurances.
- For more than a decade, Ukraine has faced territorial incursions from Russia, culminating in a full-scale invasion that began in February 2022.
- The international community has largely denounced Russia's actions as illegal, and the US has been a pivotal partner in Ukraine's defence, committing \$65.9 bn in military assistance since the start of the war three years ago.
- But that support has come into doubt since Trump took office in January. Earlier this month, Trump spoke directly with Russian President Vladimir Putin and sent US envoys to negotiate a peace deal with Russian officials in Saudi Arabia, without Ukrainian or European participation.
- Zelenskyy and other European leaders have denounced those proceedings as sidelining their interests.
- As the two leaders settled into the Oval Office for their first press appearance of the day, Trump launched into his usual talking points, touting the deal to access Ukraine's rare earth minerals.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

- 19.** Which of the following statements best summarizes the purpose and outcomes of the European leaders' summit hosted by the UK?
- A. The summit aimed to discuss post-war reconstruction of Ukraine, with no immediate focus on ceasefire or ongoing security concerns.
 - B. The summit, hosted by UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, primarily focused on reinforcing European support for Ukraine, drafting a ceasefire plan involving Britain, France, and Ukraine, and emphasizing lasting peace and Ukraine's sovereignty backed by security guarantees.
 - C. The summit focused on negotiating direct military interventions in Russia to end the Ukraine conflict swiftly.
 - D. The summit was organized to criticize the United States for its lack of commitment to Ukraine, with no constructive outcomes or plans discussed.
- 20.** Which of the following accurately reflects France and Italy's stance during the summit regarding Russia and Western unity?
- A. France and Italy proposed independent peace talks with Russia, sidelining the UK and Ukraine to avoid escalating tensions.
 - B. France, through President Macron, warned about Russia's broader threat to Europe beyond Ukraine, while Italian PM Meloni emphasized the need for Western unity and preventing division among allies, aligning closely with the UK's position.
 - C. France and Italy both supported Trump's reluctance to back Ukraine, arguing for a neutral stance and withdrawal of military support.
 - D. Italy called for unilateral Western sanctions against Ukraine, while France remained neutral to avoid antagonizing Russia.

ANSWER KEY AND EXPLANATION

1. **B** Option B is correct because it clearly states that Dholavira was excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India between 1990–2005 under Dr. Ravindra Singh Bisht. It also mentions that the site yielded habitation in seven cultural phases from 3000–1500 BCE and added new facets to the understanding of Harappan Civilization and its connections with other Bronze Age civilizations. Option A is incorrect because although Dr. Bisht led the excavation, Dholavira was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site only in 2021, not in 2005. Option C is incorrect because Dholavira was not excavated by British archaeologists, it dates to around 3000–1500 BCE, not 4000 BCE, and is especially noted for its advanced architectural and urban planning, contrary to the statement. Option D is incorrect because Dholavira is located on an island called Khadir in Kachchh district, not on the mainland, and while it had trade connections, its UNESCO status is largely due to its urban planning and water management systems, not solely maritime trade.
2. **B** Option B is correct because it highlights the advanced town planning, sophisticated water conservation systems, and well-structured reservoirs of Dholavira. Even President Droupadi Murmu remarked that in several aspects, Harappan technological advancements surpass modern capabilities, clearly referencing the city's urban and hydraulic engineering feats. Option A is incorrect because although inscriptions have been found, the hallmark of Dholavira is not its monumental sculptures or writing, but its urban planning and water systems. Option C is incorrect because no large temples or idol worship centers have been found in Dholavira or other Harappan sites; in fact, Harappan civilization is often noted for the absence of prominent religious structures like ziggurats or pyramids seen in Mesopotamia or Egypt. Option D is incorrect because Dholavira is located on Khadir Island, not the mainland, and contrary to the statement, it features urban elements like reservoirs, planned streets, and complex drainage systems, not merely agricultural remains.
3. **B** Option B is correct because Swavalambini is explicitly designed to go beyond mere beneficiary schemes, as emphasized by Shri Jayant Chaudhary. It includes Entrepreneurship Awareness Programmes (EAP), Women Entrepreneurship Development Programmes (EDP), mentorship, Faculty Development Programmes (FDP), and Award to Rewards initiatives — building a comprehensive ecosystem for women-led entrepreneurship. Option A is incorrect because Swavalambini is not limited to one-time financial support, but involves multi-stage capacity building. Option C is incorrect as the programme does not focus solely on high-tech startups, but rather encourages women in diverse entrepreneurial fields, starting from basic entrepreneurial awareness to advanced training. Option D is incorrect because while traditional sectors may be part of it, the programme aims at modern entrepreneurial ventures as well, and AI-based curriculum integration was mentioned as part of broader initiatives.
4. **B** Option B is correct because MSDE and NITI Aayog are the primary collaborators, and NIESBUD is the implementing body. Two MoUs were signed — one with Skills Development Network (SDN) (partner of Wadhvani Foundation) and another with Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut. Option A is incorrect because Ministry of Commerce and Industry and IIT Kanpur are not mentioned as part of this specific initiative. Option C is incorrect as neither Ministry of Women and Child Development, UGC, nor IIM Ahmedabad are mentioned. Option D is incorrect because AICTE and CII are not part of the formal collaboration for Swavalambini mentioned in the event described.
5. **B** Option B is correct because it captures the comprehensive nature of India's strategy: combining protected area expansion, flagship species programs (Tiger, Elephant, Snow Leopard), international

collaborations (Big Cats Alliance), and ecosystem-based approaches (dolphin and lion conservation, wetlands, marine habitats), supported by increased budgetary allocations and policy measures via MoEFCC. Option A is incorrect because while species-specific programs are a major component, habitat and ecosystem-level strategies are equally emphasized, including protected areas and landscape conservation. Option C is incorrect as eco-tourism is not mentioned as the core or singular focus, and in fact, government budgetary allocations have been increased, not avoided. Option D is incorrect because while community reserves are part of the strategy, national parks and sanctuaries remain central to India's conservation framework, and no such phasing out is indicated.

6. **B** Option B is correct because it accurately captures both the scale of India's protected area network (1,014 protected areas covering 5.32% of the country's geographical area) and the strategic fiscal emphasis — including a 9% budget increase, ₹450 crore for integrated habitat development, and ₹290 crore for flagship species conservation, showing a balance of habitat and species-centered approaches. Option A is incorrect because the budget has not been stagnant; on the contrary, there has been a significant 9% increase in allocations for 2025-26. Option C is incorrect as conservation extends beyond just the four biodiversity hotspots, covering diverse ecosystems (deserts, grasslands, wetlands, marine areas), and the protected area network has expanded over time, with updated data as of November 2023. Option D is incorrect because India's focus is strongly on in-situ conservation through national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and reserves, not merely on ex-situ measures like zoos.
7. **C** Option C is correct because it explicitly describes that dolphins live in opaque, turbid waters and surface only for about 1.26 seconds, making visual identification alone insufficient. Therefore, hydrophones were used to detect echolocation clicks, alongside structured visual surveys using double-observer, tandem, and single boat methods, depending on channel width and depth. Option A is incorrect because satellite imagery and drones are not mentioned or feasible given the dolphins' underwater and briefly surfacing behavior in muddy rivers. Option B is incorrect because exclusive visual observation would not overcome the key challenge of short surfacing times; hence, acoustic methods were crucial. Option D is incorrect because moving boats were indeed used, and acoustic methods were not excluded but were central to reducing counting errors.
8. **B** Option B is correct because the survey estimated around 6,324 Gangetic dolphins, and Uttar Pradesh had the highest number (2,397). It also found only 3 Indus River dolphins in the Beas River, highlighting their extremely low numbers in India. Option A is incorrect because there are not over 10,000 Gangetic dolphins, and Indus dolphins are not extinct in India, though they are critically endangered with only three recorded individuals. Option C is incorrect because Indus dolphins were not found in Brahmaputra, and Gangetic dolphins were present both in the Ganga main stem and its tributaries (2,414 dolphins in tributaries). Option D is incorrect because Uttar Pradesh had the highest number of Gangetic dolphins, and they were also found in other states like Bihar and West Bengal, not just in those two.
9. **C** Option C is correct because it clearly highlights India's comprehensive approach, including constitutional provisions (Articles 14, 15, 39, 42, 51(a)(e)), transition to women-led development, and active international commitments, such as CEDAW, Beijing Declaration, UDHR, and Agenda 2030. Option A is incorrect as India is deeply engaged with international frameworks, not limited to domestic welfare measures. Option B is incorrect because India's strategy goes beyond constitutional guarantees and extends into policy, legislative measures, and international commitments. Option D is incorrect as India is part of international treaties like UDHR and CEDAW, and its initiatives cover broader areas beyond education and health, including leadership, digital inclusion, and legal empowerment.

- 10. C** Option C is correct because it directly reflects the innovative use of technology and public platforms, including the NaMo App Open Forum and women taking over PM's social media handles on March 8 to share inspiring stories. Option A is incorrect because the initiative focuses on public participation and storytelling, not closed-door events. Option B is incorrect as there are no mandatory quotas mentioned for social media representation, but rather a participatory platform for sharing stories. Option D is incorrect because digital tools are explicitly highlighted, and the campaign goes beyond traditional offline outreach.
- 11. C** Option C is correct because the Navratna status requires a composite score of 60 or higher based on six weighted indicators, as well as an Excellent or Very Good MOU rating in 3 out of the last 5 years. Also, with IRCTC and IRFC upgraded, all seven listed CPSEs under Indian Railways now hold Navratna status. Option A is incorrect because turnover alone is not the criterion, nor are international partnerships the basis for Navratna status. Also, they are not the first Navratnas in Railways, but now part of the group. Option B is incorrect because Navratna status is conferred by the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE), not directly by the Ministry of Railways, and it does not make companies free of governmental control, though it gives them enhanced autonomy. Option D is incorrect because market capitalization is not the sole or automatic criterion; composite performance measures and MOU ratings are crucial.
- 12. A** Option A is correct because it clearly outlines that with Navratna status, IRCTC and IRFC can now invest up to ₹1,000 crore or 15% of net worth in a project without government approval, form JVs and subsidiaries, pursue M&A independently, and enter international markets—granting them high operational autonomy, though still below Maharatnas in financial scope. Option B is incorrect because Navratnas do not have absolute autonomy, and certain higher-level strategic decisions may still need government oversight or alignment with sectoral policies. Option C is incorrect because Navratnas can invest up to ₹1,000 crore/15% of net worth without approval, a threshold higher than ₹500 crore, and they can form JVs and subsidiaries independently. Option D is incorrect because Navratna status directly impacts financial and operational decision-making and expands their autonomy significantly beyond Miniratna limitations.
- 13. B** Option B is correct because it clearly states that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the overall field of computer science aimed at making machines think and act like humans, while Machine Learning (ML) is a method within AI that allows machines to learn from data and perform tasks without explicit programming. Option A is incorrect because while GPT-4.5 and Grok 3 are AI models, AI itself is not limited to specific models, and ML is not about data storage but about learning from data. Option C is incorrect because AI and ML are not interchangeable; ML is a subset of AI. Option D is incorrect because AI as a concept predates ML, and AI itself was founded as a field in 1956, while ML emerged as a branch to address specific learning capabilities.
- 14. B** Option B is correct because it specifies that John McCarthy coined the term AI during the 1956 Dartmouth workshop, where he was joined by Marvin Minsky, Nathaniel Rochester, and Claude Shannon. Although the name was not universally liked, it was used and has since become central to the field. Option A is incorrect because the event took place in 1956 at Dartmouth College, not MIT in 1980, and it was not limited to chess programs. Option C is incorrect because Google's involvement came much later, not at the inception of AI as a field. Option D is incorrect because the term AI was coined in 1956, not in the 2000s, and humanoid robots were not its initial focus.
- 15. B** Option B is correct because, the Delimitation Commission is chaired by a retired Supreme Court judge, with CEC/representative and State Election Commissioners as members. It also includes associate members (MPs, MLAs) for consultation, but their role is non-binding. Importantly, the

Commission operates independently and its decisions are final and not subject to court challenge. Option A is incorrect because although chaired by a retired SC judge, it is not composed exclusively of judges and is not under the PM's supervision. Its decisions cannot be reviewed in court. Option C is incorrect because the President appoints but does not chair the Commission, and Governors are not part of it. Also, neither Parliament nor the Supreme Court give final approval. Option D is incorrect because bureaucrats from the Ministry of Law and Justice are not formal members, and its recommendations are not subject to parliamentary debate or state consent, as its decisions are binding.

- 16. C** Option C is correct because it clearly mentions that delimitation commissions have been set up multiple times (1952, 1962, 1972, and 2002), but the number of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies has remained frozen since 1971, first by the 42nd Constitutional Amendment (1976) and later extended by the 84th Amendment (2002) till after the first census post-2026. Option A is incorrect because there was a freeze imposed on the number of seats despite some boundary redrawing. Option B is incorrect because the last delimitation was based on the 2001 Census, not 2011. Option D is incorrect because the first delimitation exercise took place in 1952, not 2002.
- 17. B** Option B is correct because it contrasts the two plans — Trump's plan involves relocation of Palestinians and redevelopment as a luxury zone, whereas the Arab League's proposal focuses on humanitarian efforts, infrastructure rebuilding, and enabling Palestinians to stay in Gaza. Option A is incorrect because the Arab League explicitly rejects forced relocation, which is a central (and controversial) part of Trump's plan. Option C is incorrect because the Arab League does not propose Israeli control, and Trump's plan does not mention a UN trusteeship. Option D is incorrect because Trump's plan is about luxury developments, not industrial employment, and the Arab League's plan focuses on economic revival alongside humanitarian and infrastructural recovery, not just environmental issues.
- 18. B** Option B is correct because it notes Israel's opposition to PA control, Hamas's resistance to imposed solutions, and the lack of unified Palestinian representation, all of which present serious barriers to the plan's execution. Option A is incorrect because Israel is critical of the plan, and Hamas, though acknowledging it as a step forward, opposes any imposed elements. Option C is incorrect because the PA does not have control over Gaza, and international intervention is still deemed necessary. Option D is incorrect because the main challenges are political and administrative, not just financial, and the stakeholders are far from unified in their support.
- 19. B** Option B is correct because it highlights that the summit was organized by UK PM Keir Starmer, aimed at drafting a ceasefire plan, and focused on securing a lasting peace for Ukraine with security guarantees, showing coordinated European efforts. Option A is incorrect because the focus was not just on reconstruction, but on ongoing security issues and ceasefire discussions. Option C is incorrect because there is no mention of military interventions inside Russia. Option D is incorrect because although concerns about U.S. support were present, the summit produced concrete initiatives, including a ceasefire plan proposal.
- 20. B** Option B is correct because it clearly mentions Macron's warning about Russia posing threats beyond Ukraine (to Moldova, Romania, etc.), and Meloni's call for Western unity to avoid internal divisions, both aligning with Starmer's approach to a unified stance. Option A is incorrect because France and Italy did not propose independent talks excluding the UK and Ukraine. Option C is incorrect because both France and Italy strongly support Ukraine, contrary to Trump's ambiguous position. Option D is incorrect because Italy did not propose sanctions against Ukraine, and France did not remain neutral but was vocal about the Russian threat.