

MANTHAN

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1. Hydrologist Günter Blöschl receives Stockholm Water Prize 2025

- Professor Günter Blöschl, a globally recognized expert in flood risk reduction, water resource management, flood scaling, and regional process hydrology, has been awarded the prestigious Stockholm Water Prize for 2025.
- His pioneering work in water engineering has significantly enhanced the global understanding of flood risks and adaptation strategies, particularly in the face of climate change.
- Blöschl has played a crucial role in the development of regional process hydrology, a growing scientific field, and has co-founded sociohydrology.
- These contributions have advanced the study of flood risks on a global scale, influencing policy and decision-making in water management.
- His meticulous research led to the creation of a comprehensive flood database analyzing patterns and scales of floods over a span of 500 years.
- This database has provided groundbreaking insights into the complex nature of flood patterns, proving that flood adaptation requires context-specific solutions rather than generic approaches.
- His work has also shed light on the impact of climate change, land use, and hydraulic structures in flood causation.
- Specifically, he has demonstrated how urbanization, deforestation, and agricultural practices disproportionately influence smaller floods compared to larger ones.
- By integrating empirical observations with innovative hydrological modeling, Blöschl has redefined how scientists and policymakers approach flood risk reduction.
- The Stockholm Water Prize Committee described Blöschl as the “world’s leading flood hydrologist,” acknowledging his significant contributions in linking climate change with increasing flood risks.
- According to the committee, his research has established that the last two decades have been notably more flood-prone than historical records indicate.
- His work has been instrumental in identifying the regional drivers of flood events, helping shape adaptive strategies to mitigate the risks associated with climate change.
- Upon receiving the award, Professor Blöschl expressed his deep appreciation, attributing his success to the collaborative efforts of his colleagues and students.
- He has worked closely with previous Stockholm Water Prize laureates, including Taikan Oki and Andrea Rinaldo, furthering the collective understanding of hydrology and water management.
- Anette Scheibe Lorentzi, Chair of the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), congratulated Blöschl on his achievement, emphasizing the critical role of his research in sustainable water management.
- She noted that as climate change accelerates, the knowledge derived from Blöschl’s studies is more vital than ever in shaping global responses to water-related challenges.

Professor Günter Blöschl

- Professor Blöschl is a distinguished faculty member at the Vienna University of Technology (TUW), where he serves as the head of the Institute of Hydraulic Engineering and Water Resources Management.

- He is also the director of the Doctoral Programme of Water Resources Systems at TUW, which he founded more than 15 years ago. Additionally, he holds a part-time professorship at the University of Bologna.
- Born and raised in Vienna, Blöschl has traveled extensively for his research, including extended stays in the United States, Canada, and Australia.
- His international experience has shaped his perspective on global water challenges, and he values cross-disciplinary collaboration to address pressing environmental and societal issues.
- Blöschl is deeply committed to fostering dialogue between scientists, policymakers, and stakeholders to develop innovative water management strategies.
- Beyond his professional accomplishments, Blöschl enjoys spending time with his family, which includes his three children and four grandchildren.
- His passion for engaging with diverse perspectives and sharing knowledge continues to inspire his work, ensuring a lasting impact on the field of hydrology and flood risk management.
- The recognition of Professor Blöschl with the Stockholm Water Prize highlights the growing importance of water-related research in addressing climate change and flood risks. His pioneering contributions have provided invaluable insights into flood estimation, risk reduction, and sustainable water management, making him a truly deserving recipient of this prestigious honor.

Stockholm Water Prize

The Stockholm Water Prize is a prestigious international award presented annually by the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI). It recognizes individuals, organizations, or institutions that have made outstanding contributions to the sustainable management of water resources.

Key Details:

- **Established:** 1991
- **Presented By:** Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI)
- **Awarded For:** Outstanding achievements in water-related fields, including water conservation, management, and technology.
- **Prize:** Includes a cash award of 1 million SEK (Swedish kronor) and a royal diploma.
- **Patron:** His Majesty King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden, who presents the award.
- **Award Ceremony:** Held annually during World Water Week in Stockholm (August).

Notable Laureates:

- **2023:** Andrea Rinaldo (Italy) – Recognized for his pioneering research in hydrology and water management.
- **2022:** Wilfried Brutsaert (USA/Belgium) – Honored for his groundbreaking work on evapotranspiration and hydrological cycle modeling.
- **2021:** Sandra Postel (USA) – For her efforts in water conservation and public awareness.

Significance:

- The Stockholm Water Prize is considered the “Nobel Prize for Water” and highlights innovations that contribute to sustainable water management, benefiting people and ecosystems worldwide.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

1. Consider the following statements with respect to Water on the Planet Earth:
 1. About 71 per cent of the planetary water is found in the oceans.

2. Nearly 59 per cent of the water that falls on land returns to the atmosphere through evaporation from over the oceans as well as from other places.
3. The amount of water in polar ice caps and glaciers is more than the amount of groundwater.
4. It is to be noted that the renewable water on the earth is constant while the demand is increasing tremendously.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

- A. One statement only
 - B. Two statements only
 - C. Three statements only
 - D. All statements are correct
2. Consider the following sources of freshwater on earth.
1. Atmosphere
 2. Fresh water lakes
 3. Rivers

Arrange the following in increasing order of availability of freshwater from the codes given below.

- A. 3-2-1
- B. 2-1-3
- C. 3-1-2
- D. 1-2-3

2. Kirsty Coventry Becomes First Female and African IOC President

- Zimbabwean swimmer Kirsty Coventry has made history as the first woman and the first African to lead the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in its 131-year history.
- She won the election decisively in the first round, securing 49 out of 97 votes and defeating strong candidates, including Britain's Sebastian Coe and Spain's Juan Antonio Samaranch Jr. Initially perceived as a weak contender, Coventry's campaign gained momentum with strong support from outgoing IOC president Thomas Bach and senior IOC members.
- Her victory marks a major milestone for gender and regional representation in global sports governance.
- A seven-time Olympic medallist, Coventry won gold in the 200-meter backstroke at the 2004 Athens and 2008 Beijing Games.
- In her victory speech, she expressed pride in breaking barriers and highlighted her commitment to inspiring future generations.
- She emphasized the unifying power of sports and her responsibility as a role model.
- Sebastian Coe, seen as the frontrunner due to his experience as the London 2012 Olympics organizer and World Athletics president, finished third with just eight votes.

- He had campaigned on democratic reforms and the protection of women's sports but failed to secure broad support.
- His strategy of appealing to athlete votes first did not work, as Coventry won significant backing from former athletes, particularly women.
- Coe's strained relationship with Bach, dating back to World Athletics' ban on Russian athletes from Rio 2016 over doping, further weakened his chances.
- Japan's Morinari Watanabe, president of International Gymnastics, secured only four votes and humorously remarked that his campaign had been undone in just two minutes.
- The quick election outcome reflected Bach's lasting influence, as he had appointed over two-thirds of the voting members.
- Despite widespread celebration of Coventry's election, her ties to Zimbabwe's government have sparked controversy.
- As the country's sports minister, she serves under a regime facing British sanctions for human rights abuses and democratic backsliding.
- Human Rights Watch has reported repression and judicial misuse against opposition figures in Zimbabwe. Additionally, Coventry's acceptance of \$100,000 from former President Robert Mugabe in 2008 has raised concerns about her political affiliations.
- Nonetheless, Coventry remains focused on her role, which begins when Bach steps down on June 23.
- She has pledged to use sports as a tool for inspiration and global opportunities.
- While her election represents progress in gender and regional representation, her presidency will likely face scrutiny over her political associations and ability to implement meaningful reforms in the IOC.

International Olympic Committee (IOC)

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is the governing body of the Olympic Movement, responsible for organizing the Summer and Winter Olympic Games. Founded on 23 June 1894 by Pierre de Coubertin, the IOC is headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Key Functions of the IOC:

- Organizes and oversees the Summer and Winter Olympic Games.
- Promotes Olympism, which includes sports, culture, and education.
- Ensures adherence to the Olympic Charter, which sets the rules and guidelines for the Games.
- Supports National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and International Federations (IFs).
- Advocates for gender equality, sustainability, and anti-doping measures in sports.
- Engages in humanitarian and development projects related to sports.

Major Initiatives & Updates:

- **Olympic Agenda 2020+5:** A strategic roadmap focusing on sustainability, digital transformation, and athlete welfare.
- **Paris 2024 Olympics:** The Summer Games, with a focus on gender parity and environmental sustainability.
- **Brisbane 2032:** Selected as the host city for the 2032 Summer Olympics.

2028 Summer Olympics

- The 2028 Summer Olympics, officially known as the Games of the XXXIV Olympiad, are scheduled to take place in Los Angeles, USA, from July 14 to July 30, 2028.

- This marks the third time Los Angeles will host the Summer Games, having previously done so in 1932 and 1984.

Sports Program:

- The LA28 Games will feature a diverse array of sports, including traditional events and several notable additions:

Newly Added Sports:

- **Cricket:** Returning to the Olympics after its sole appearance in 1900.
- **Flag Football:** Making its Olympic debut.
- **Lacrosse:** Returning as a medal event for the first time since 1908.
- **Squash:** Making its first-ever appearance at the Olympics.
- **Baseball/Softball:** Reinstated after being absent in the 2024 Paris Games.
- **Modern Pentathlon:** Undergoing a significant change, with the traditional equestrian component being replaced by an obstacle racing event similar to Ninja Warrior. This decision follows animal welfare concerns highlighted during the Tokyo Olympics.

Venue Highlights:

- **Rose Bowl Stadium:** Located in Pasadena, it will host the men's and women's soccer semifinals and finals.
- **SoFi Stadium:** Set to host both the opening ceremonies and swimming competitions.
- To accommodate this dual role, the traditional scheduling of events will be adjusted, with athletics competitions taking place in the first week and swimming in the second week.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

- Consider the following statements with respect to International Olympic Committee (IOC):
 1. It is the international, non-governmental, sports governing body of the modern Olympic Games.
 2. It was founded in 1894 by Pierre de Coubertin and Demetrios Vikelas and it is based in Lausanne, Switzerland.
 3. It is the authority responsible for organizing the Summer, Winter, and Youth Olympics.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

 - A. One statement only
 - B. Two statements only
 - C. All three statements are correct
 - D. None of the above
- Consider the following statements:
 1. The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) is an international body established in 1984 to settle disputes related to sport through arbitration.
 2. The CAS had upheld the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) decision to disqualify Phogat and rejected her appeal for a joint silver medal in the women's 50 kg wrestling category.
 3. Manu Bhaker is the first Indian to win two medals in a single Olympic Games.

4. Neeraj Chopra has won two Olympic medals in the men's javelin throw event.
5. Abhinav Bindra is the first and one of only two Indians to win an individual Olympic gold medal.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

- A. One statement only
- B. Two statements only
- C. Four statements only
- D. All statements are correct

3. Indian Navy is launching its maiden initiatives of IOS Sagar and AIKEYME

- Over the past ten years, Indian Navy has deepened its partnerships with maritime agencies of Indian Ocean Region (IOR), to enhance maritime security in consonance with the GoI's vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR).
- Indian Navy has been collaborating with navies of IOR countries on several initiatives such as joint naval exercises, coordinated patrols, information sharing, HADR efforts, capacity building and other diplomatic engagements.
- With SAGAR entering its second decade, and the announcement of Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security Across the Regions (MAHASAGAR) by Hon'ble Prime Minister, during his visit to Mauritius in March 2025, Indian Navy is launching its maiden initiatives of IOS Sagar and AIKEYME, which are aimed at consolidating Indian Navy's stature as the 'Preferred Security Partner' and 'First Responder' in Indian Ocean Region.

IOS Sagar

- Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) Sagar, is an initiative towards continued cooperation with IOR nations. One Indian Naval ship (INS Sunayna) is being deployed to the Southwest IOR with a combined crew of India and nine Friendly Foreign Countries (Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, South Africa).
- The ship is planned to be deployed for over a month in April 2025, and would be undertaking port calls at Dar-es-Salaam, Nacala, Port Louis, Port Victoria and Male and Joint surveillance of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of Tanzania, Mozambique, Mauritius and Seychelles.
- The personnel from FFCs would undergo a training capsule of two weeks at various naval professional schools at Kochi, including training at Sea.
- The FFC personnel would be engaged in wholship activities, watch keeping and other events related to their respective branches/ trade.
- The participants of IOS Sagar are also planned to witness harbour phase activities of Exercise AIKEYME at Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania.

AIKEYME

- India and Africa give immense importance to maritime security and have reiterated their commitment to increase cooperation in tackling maritime security threats such as piracy, illegal activities including trafficking, unregulated and unreported fishing through sharing of information and surveillance.

- A large scale multilateral maritime engagement exercise with African Countries, titled as ‘Africa India Key Maritime Engagement’ also known as ‘AIKEYME’, which means ‘Unity’ in Sanskrit is an initiative in this direction to enhance interoperability with the navies/ maritime agencies.
- The maiden edition of the exercise is being co-hosted by Indian Navy and Tanzania Peoples’ Defence Force (TPDF) and would be conducted at/ off Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, and is planned to be inaugurated by Hon’ble RM Shri Rajnath Singh in mid-April 2025.
- The exercise is planned over six days and includes participation from Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles and South Africa in addition to the co-hosts.
- The Harbour Phase of the exercise would include TableTop and Command Post exercises on Piracy and Information sharing, along with training on Seamanship and Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS).
- The Sea Phase comprises Seamanship evolutions, Search and Rescue, VBSS, Small Arms firing and Helicopter Operations.

Tri-service Ex Prachand Prahaar

- The Army has conducted a Tri-Service integrated multi-domain warfare exercise, ‘Prachand Prahaar’, in the high-altitude terrain of Arunachal Pradesh from March 25 to 27.
- The exercise aimed at “validating a fully integrated approach to surveillance, command and control, and precision firepower across the three services,” brought together the operational teams in a synergised combat drill designed to simulate future warfare.
- Cutting-edge platforms such as long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft, armed helicopters, UAVs, loitering munitions, and space-based assets were employed to achieve total situational awareness and rapid target engagement.
- Once simulated targets were identified, they were swiftly neutralised through coordinated strikes involving fighter aircraft, long-range rocket systems, artillery up to calibre 155 mm, swarm drones, kamikaze drones, and armed helicopters. These operations were conducted within an electronically contested environment designed to replicate modern battlefield scenarios.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

5. Which of the following is/are correctly matched in terms of equivalent rank in the three services of Indian Defence forces?

Army	Air force	Navy
1. Brigadier	Air Commodore	Commander
2. Major General	Air Vice Marshal	Vice Admiral
3. Major	Squadron Leader	Lieutenant Commander
4. Lieutenant Colonel	Group Captain	Captain

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

6. What are the duties of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) as Head of the Department of Military Affairs?
1. Permanent Chairman of Chiefs of Staff Committee
 2. Exercise military command over the three Service Chiefs
 3. Principal Military Advisor to Defence Minister on all tri-Service matters

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- A. 1, 2 and 3
 - B. 1 and 2 only
 - C. 2 and 3 only
 - D. 1 and 3 only
7. Which of the following statements correctly distinguishes between the objectives of IOS Sagar and Exercise AIKEYME?
- A. IOS Sagar is a multilateral combat exercise, while AIKEYME focuses on maritime trade security.
 - B. IOS Sagar involves bilateral military drills with Tanzania, while AIKEYME is a non-operational naval seminar.
 - C. IOS Sagar emphasizes cooperative maritime deployments and training, while AIKEYME is a multilateral maritime security engagement with African nations.
 - D. IOS Sagar is conducted in Indian waters with only Indian personnel, whereas AIKEYME is conducted in Southeast Asia with African navies.
8. In the context of IOS Sagar and AIKEYME, which of the following countries are common participants in both missions?
1. Comoros
 2. Seychelles
 3. Madagascar
 4. Djibouti

Select the correct answer using code below:

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

4. World Tuberculosis (TB) Day – 2025

- World Tuberculosis (TB) Day is observed every year on March 24th to raise awareness about the need to eliminate TB, the world's deadliest infectious disease.
- The day marks the discovery of the TB-causing bacterium by Dr. Robert Koch in 1882.
- India has been observing this day since 1982, along with the global community. Despite progress, TB still impacts millions, posing serious health, social, and economic challenges.

- This year's theme, "Yes! We Can End TB: Commit, Invest, Deliver", highlights the importance of stronger commitments and action, especially against rising drug-resistant TB.
- India's goal to eliminate TB by 2025 is one of the world's most ambitious health missions.
- Under the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP), India has strengthened its TB response with advanced diagnostics, innovative policies, private sector partnerships, and a patient-first approach.
- Key drivers include record-high case reporting, better diagnostics, financial support for patients, and strong multi-sector collaboration.
- However, with global TB funding declining and shifting priorities, continued commitment is vital to meet India's 2025 target and the UN's goal of ending TB by 2030.
- Despite global efforts, TB remains a major public health challenge worldwide, with India bearing the highest burden.
- Understanding both the global and national estimates is key to gauging the scale of the disease and the urgency of India's elimination mission.

Key Initiatives by Government

- To tackle this significant burden, the Government of India has implemented a range of focused strategies under its National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP).
- These key initiatives under NTEP aim to strengthen diagnosis, treatment, and prevention efforts, accelerating progress toward a TB-free India.

National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP)

- In 2020, the Government of India renamed the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program (RNTCP) the National TB Elimination Program (NTEP).
- This reflects India's goal to eliminate tuberculosis (TB) by 2025, five years before the global target of 2030.
- The NTEP follows the National Strategic Plan (2017-2025), focusing on four key actions: Detect – Treat – Prevent – Build (DTPB) to control and eliminate TB in India.
- The NTEP is making strong strides toward eliminating TB by 2025.

Here are its key achievements:

- The programme recorded its highest-ever case notifications, reporting 25.5 lakh TB cases in 2023 and 26.07 lakh cases in 2024.
- **First-Ever Indigenous TB Burden Model:** India's own mathematical model for state-wise TB estimates.
- Incentives for ASHAs, TB Champions & Caregivers: Strengthening patient support systems.
- 3 Lakh Additional Cases Found via House-to-House Screening: Focus on high-risk groups.
- **Medical College Task Force Active:** 560 colleges supporting TB detection & research.
- **Sub-National Disease-Free Certification Implemented:** Regular surveys, drug sales tracking, and under-reporting assessments.
- **Strong Multi-Sectoral Partnerships:** Collaboration with ministries, industries, NGOs & technical bodies.
- According to WHO's Global TB Report, India has made significant progress in fighting tuberculosis.

- Under the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP), the incidence rate of TB cases have dropped by nearly 17.7%, from 237 cases per 1 lakh people in 2015 to 195 in 2023.
- TB-related deaths have also reduced, falling from 28 to 22 per 1 lakh people during the same period.
- One of its key achievements has been reducing the number of missing TB cases from 15 lakh in 2015 to just 2.5 lakh in 2023 with a decrease of 83%.
- Under NTEP, India has rolled out improved drug-resistant TB treatments, including a safer, shorter all-oral Bedaquiline regimen, boosting success rates from 68% (2020) to 75% (2022). The mBPAL regimen (Bedaquiline, Pretomanid, Linezolid) offers 80% success for MDR-TB, cutting treatment to six months.

Components Of the NTEP Programme

Pradhan Mantri TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan (PMTBMBA)

- The Pradhan Mantri TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan (PMTBMBA), one of the components of NTEP, aims to unite communities, businesses, and institutions to support TB patients and their families. It focuses on providing nutritional, diagnostic, and vocational support to improve treatment outcomes, reduce illness and deaths, and fast-track India's goal of TB elimination. PMTBMBA is also recognized as the world's largest crowd-sourcing initiative for nutritional support to TB patients.

Key goals include:

- Offering additional care and support to TB-affected individuals.
- Promoting active community participation.
- Mobilizing CSR contributions from businesses and institutions.

Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana (NPY)

- The NIKSHAY - TB Notification Incentive for the Private Sector, launched in 2018 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, incentivizes private healthcare providers to report TB cases, improving TB surveillance and treatment.
- Under the Ni-Kshay Poshan Yojana (NPY), financial support for TB patients' nutrition has been increased from ₹500 to ₹1,000 per month, providing ₹3,000 to ₹6,000 per patient throughout treatment.
- The patient must be registered and notified on the NIKSHAY portal.
- The government has introduced Energy Dense Nutritional Supplementation (EDNS) for underweight TB patients (BMI < 18.5).
- Around 12 lakh patients will receive these supplements during the first two months of treatment to improve recovery rates and overall health outcomes.
- Ni-Kshay Mitra initiative - Under the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan (PMTBMBA), the Ni-Kshay Mitra initiative encourages individuals, NGOs, corporates, faith-based organizations, and others to adopt TB patients for at least six months, offering them nutritional, social, or economic support.
- The scope of this initiative has now been expanded to include food baskets for household contacts of TB patients, aiming to boost immunity, lower infection risk, and reduce families' financial burden.
- Additionally, over ₹3,202 crores have been disbursed to 1.13 crore beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfer under the Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY), supporting better nutrition and treatment outcomes.
- To further strengthen these efforts, the government has committed an additional ₹1,040 crores (shared 60:40 between Centre and States), ensuring enhanced support and reduced TB-related mortality.

Ni-kshay Portal

- Ni-kshay Portal is a web-based patient management and surveillance system under the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP).

- Developed by the Central TB Division, MoHFW, in collaboration with NIC and WHO India, it helps health workers in both public and private sectors to register TB cases, order tests, record treatment, monitor adherence, and transfer cases.
- It also serves as India's National TB Surveillance System, ensuring real-time data reporting to the government.
- Over 1.51 crore TB patients are receiving treatment, with approximately 1.18 crore consenting to receive support.
- Around 1.18 crore commitments have been made by Ni-kshay Mitras, and over 2.59 lakh Mitras are registered.
- The initiative emphasizes public participation in TB elimination, resonating with the Prime Minister's call for humanity. More details can be found on the Ni-kshay Dashboard
- India is making steady progress in its goal to eliminate TB by 2025 through focused interventions under the National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP).
- Key initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan (PMTBMBA) and Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana (NPY) are driving community participation and ensuring nutritional support, improving treatment adherence.
- The Ni-kshay Portal further strengthens surveillance and patient care.
- To sustain momentum, increased investments, innovation, and partnerships are crucial. With continued commitment, India is poised to become a global example in the fight against TB.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

9. Consider the following statements with respect to Tuberculosis (TB):

1. World Tuberculosis (TB) Day is observed every year on March 24th to raise awareness about the need to eliminate TB, the world's deadliest infectious disease.
2. The day marks the discovery of the TB-causing bacterium by Dr. Robert Koch in 1882.
3. India has been observing this day since 1982, along with the global community. Despite progress,
4. This year's theme is "Yes! We Can End TB: Commit, Invest, Deliver".

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

- A. One statement only
 - B. Two statements only
 - C. Three statements only
 - D. All statements are correct
10. Which of the following best explains why the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP) was renamed to the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP)?
- E. To align with the World Health Organization's global TB strategy for 2030
 - F. To reflect India's accelerated target to eliminate TB by 2025, ahead of the global timeline
 - G. To shift focus from treatment to research and vaccine development
 - H. To reduce the role of state governments in TB control initiatives

5. Trump want Greenland

- Greenland's politicians have condemned visits that high-level US politicians plan to make as President Donald Trump continues to threaten to take over the island.
- Second Lady Usha Vance is going on a cultural visit to the island this week, while Trump's National Security Adviser Mike Waltz is expected to visit as well.
- Outgoing Greenlandic Prime Minister Mute Egede called the trips aggressive.
- The planned visits come after Greenland's centre-right opposition Democratic party recently won the territory's general election in a surprise result.
- The semi-autonomous island is currently controlled by Denmark. The vote was dominated by the question of independence, and Trump's takeover threat.

Where is Greenland?

- Greenland - the world's largest island which is not a continent - is located in the Arctic.
- It is also the most sparsely populated territory. About 56,000 people live there, mostly indigenous Inuit people.
- About 80% of its territory is covered by ice, meaning most people live on the south-western coast around the capital, Nuuk.
- An autonomous - or self-governing - territory of Denmark, it is also home to Danish and US military bases.
- Greenland's economy is mainly based on fishing. Large subsidies from the Danish government account for about a fifth of its income, or GDP.
- In recent years, there has been increased interest in Greenland's natural resources, including mining for rare earth minerals, uranium and iron.
- These may become more accessible as global warming leads to some of the ice covering Greenland to melt.

What is Greenland's status?

- Located geographically within North America, Greenland has been controlled by Denmark – nearly 3,000 km (1,860 miles) away – for about 300 years.
- The island was governed as a colony until the mid-20th Century. For much of this time, it remained isolated and poor.
- In 1953, it was made part of the Kingdom of Denmark and Greenlanders became Danish citizens.
- In 1979, a referendum on home rule gave Greenland control of most policies within the territory, with Denmark retaining control over foreign affairs and defence.

Greenland importance to the US

- The US has long maintained a security interest in Greenland. After Nazi Germany occupied mainland Denmark during World War Two, the US invaded Greenland, establishing military and radio stations across the territory.
- After the war, US forces remained in Greenland. Pituffik Space Base, formerly known as Thule Air Base, has been operated by the US ever since.
- In 1951, a defence agreement with Denmark granted the US a significant role in the defence of the territory, including the right to build and maintain military bases.

- “If Russia were to send missiles towards the US, the shortest route for nuclear weapons would be via the North Pole and Greenland,” said Marc Jacobsen, an associate professor at the Royal Danish Defence College.
- “That’s why the Pituffik Space Base is immensely important in defending the US.”
- China and Russia have begun building up their Arctic military capabilities in recent years, according to an Arctic Institute paper. The paper called for the US to further develop its presence in the Arctic to counter its rivals.
- In January, Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen said Denmark was open to discussions with the US, adding that Washington had “legitimate” interests in the region.
- “We see a Russia that is arming itself. We see a China that is also starting to take an interest,” Rasmussen said.
- Trump is also likely interested in the mining potential across Greenland’s vast landmass, Mr Jacobsen added, especially the rare earth minerals in the south.

Does the US want full control of Greenland?

- During a speech to Congress, Trump said that control of Greenland was essential “for national security and international security.”
- He said he strongly supported the people of Greenland’s right to determine their own future.
- In 1867, after buying Alaska from Russia, US Secretary of State William H Seward led negotiations to buy Greenland from Denmark, but failed to reach any agreement.
- In 1946, the US offered to pay \$100m (equivalent to \$1.2 bn; £970m today) for the territory, judging that it was vital for national security, but the Danish government refused.
- Trump also tried to buy Greenland during his first presidential term.
- Both Denmark and the Greenlandic government rejected the 2019 proposal, saying: “Greenland is not for sale.”

What do the people of Greenland think?

- According to recent polls, almost 80% of Greenlanders back independence from Denmark.
- But an opinion survey in January found that 85% of Greenlanders rejected the idea of becoming part of the US, versus 6% who wanted it. The rest were undecided.

Pituffik Space Base

- Pituffik Space Base, formerly known as Thule Air Base, is a United States military installation in Greenland.
- It is the northernmost U.S. military base, located about 750 miles (1,207 km) north of the Arctic Circle.
- The base plays a crucial role in missile warning, space surveillance, and satellite command and control.

About Pituffik Space Base:

- **Location:** Northwest Greenland, near the town of Qaanaaq.
- **Operated By:** United States Space Force (USSF).

Primary Functions:

- **Ballistic Missile Early Warning:** It is home to a Solid State Phased Array Radar (SSPAR), part of the U.S. missile defense system.
- **Space Domain Awareness:** Monitors satellites and space debris.

- **Arctic Operations:** Supports military aircraft and operations in the Arctic region.

Historical Background:

- Established in 1951 as Thule Air Base during the Cold War.
- Played a key role in early U.S. nuclear deterrence strategy.
- Renamed Pituffik Space Base in 2023 to reflect its focus on space operations.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

- Which of the following best explains the reason for the strategic military importance of Greenland to the United States?
 - Greenland's location allows for control over global shipping routes through the Atlantic.
 - Greenland lies along the shortest path between the U.S. and potential missile threats from Europe.
 - Greenland enables forward deployment for U.S. troops in East Asia.
 - Greenland lies along the shortest route for potential missile attacks from Russia over the North Pole.
- Which of the following statements about Greenland's political status is incorrect?
 - Greenland is an autonomous territory under the sovereignty of Denmark.
 - Greenland exercises complete control over foreign policy and defense matters.
 - Greenlanders have been Danish citizens since 1953.
 - Greenland held a referendum on home rule in 1979.
- Which of the following correctly identifies historical events shaping the U.S. military presence in Greenland?
 - The U.S. purchased Greenland from Denmark after World War II.
 - The U.S. established bases in Greenland during WWII after Denmark was occupied by Nazi Germany.
 - Greenland volunteered to host NATO bases in exchange for economic aid.
 - Denmark granted base access to the U.S. in the 1990s following Cold War treaties.

6. US Military Operation against Yemen's Houthi rebels

- The United States has intensified its military operations against Yemen's Houthi rebels under President Donald Trump, marking a significant escalation in the region.
- This renewed campaign targets both Houthi launch sites and high-ranking personnel, with airstrikes extending into urban areas.
- The escalation follows Houthi threats against Israeli vessels and ongoing missile attacks on Israel.
- The Houthis, an Iran-backed Shiite movement, have been involved in Yemen's civil war since 2014, controlling significant portions of the country, including the capital, Sanaa.

- They have targeted civilian and naval vessels in the Red Sea, claiming these attacks are in support of Palestinians during the Gaza conflict.
- The U.S. airstrikes have resulted in significant casualties, with reports indicating at least 53 people killed, including children. Despite these efforts, the Houthis remain resilient, continuing their attacks and benefiting from their image as resistance fighters in the region.
- The campaign has also led to controversies within the U.S. administration. Senior officials inadvertently revealed top-secret military plans through a private group chat with a journalist, raising concerns about the handling of classified information.
- The U.S. aims to deter the Houthis and restore freedom of navigation in the Red Sea. However, the intensified military actions risk unintended consequences, as the rebels maintain their demands linked to the conflict in Gaza and receive support from Iran, enhancing their position within the “axis of resistance.”
- Yemen continues to grapple with a multifaceted crisis encompassing political instability, ongoing conflict, and a dire humanitarian situation.

Conflict and Political Landscape

- The Yemeni civil war, which began in 2014, has led to significant territorial, political, and humanitarian challenges.
- The Houthi rebels, a political and military group, seized control of the capital, Sanaa, in 2014, leading to a protracted conflict with the internationally recognized government.
- Despite various attempts at peace negotiations, including the Stockholm Agreement in 2018 and the Riyadh Agreement in 2019, a comprehensive resolution remains elusive.
- In March 2023, a notable development occurred when Iran agreed to halt military support to the Houthis as part of a China-brokered rapprochement deal with Saudi Arabia.
- This agreement aimed to pressure the Houthi militants towards a negotiated settlement. However, despite these diplomatic efforts, the conflict persists, with the Houthis maintaining control over significant portions of Yemen.

Humanitarian Crisis

- Yemen remains one of the world’s largest humanitarian crises. Over 21 million Yemenis are in dire need of assistance, suffering from inadequate food, healthcare, and infrastructure.
- The conflict has led to widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by all parties involved.

Recent Developments

- In March 2025, the United States intensified its airstrike campaign against the Houthi rebels.
- This escalation targets both Houthi launch sites and high-ranking personnel, leading to bombings in urban areas.
- The campaign follows Houthi threats against Israeli vessels and ongoing missile attacks on Israel.
- The Houthis claim that 57 people have died from the airstrikes, while the U.S. military has not confirmed any civilian casualties.
- Furthermore, the Houthis have launched missiles towards Israel, which were intercepted by the Israeli military.

- These actions have heightened regional tensions and prompted increased military presence by the U.S. in the area.
- Despite these developments, the Houthis continue to hold significant control in Yemen. Regional powers like Saudi Arabia and the UAE are focusing on peace talks, indicating a complex and ongoing struggle for stability in the region.

Yemen

- Yemen, officially known as the Republic of Yemen, is an Arab nation situated at the southwestern tip of the Arabian Peninsula in Western Asia.
- It shares borders with Saudi Arabia to the north, Oman to the northeast, the Red Sea to the west, and the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea to the south.
- The country encompasses approximately 527,968 square kilometers and includes over 200 islands, with Socotra being the largest, located about 354 kilometers south of the mainland.
- As of 2025, Yemen's population is estimated to be around 41.4 million people.
- The official language is Arabic, and the majority of the population practices Islam.
- The capital city is Sanaa, though due to ongoing conflicts, the seat of government has been operating from Aden.
- Yemen's rich history dates back to ancient times, with significant roles in trade and cultural exchanges.
- However, since 2015, the nation has been embroiled in a devastating civil war involving regional powers.
- This conflict has led to severe humanitarian crises, with millions displaced and in dire need of assistance. Efforts toward peace have been ongoing, but a lasting resolution remains elusive.
- Geographically, Yemen is predominantly mountainous and arid, though certain regions receive enough precipitation to support agriculture.
- Its natural resources include petroleum, fish, rock salt, marble, and small deposits of minerals such as coal, gold, lead, nickel, and copper.
- The ongoing conflict has severely impacted Yemen's economy, making it one of the poorest countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Development indicators are alarmingly low, with the nation lagging in various sectors.
- Despite these challenges, Yemen's rich cultural heritage and historical significance remain integral to its identity.
- The resilience of its people continues to be a beacon of hope for a more stable and prosperous future.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

14. What diplomatic development in 2023 was intended to pressure the Houthis toward peace but failed to yield a comprehensive resolution?
 - A. Riyadh Agreement brokered by the UN
 - B. U.S.-Houthi ceasefire under the Abraham Accords
 - C. China-brokered Iran–Saudi Arabia rapprochement
 - D. EU-brokered Gulf Security Dialogue

15. Which of the following best describes the U.S. strategic objective behind intensifying its presence in the Red Sea region during the 2025 campaign?
- A. To assist Saudi-led coalition forces in capturing Sanaa.
 - B. To safeguard commercial shipping routes and deter further Houthi aggression.
 - C. To provide humanitarian assistance to displaced Yemeni civilians.
 - D. To enforce a naval blockade of Yemen.
16. Yemen borders with which of the following?
- 1. Saudi Arabia
 - 2. Red Sea
 - 3. Oman
 - 4. UAE
 - 5. Gulf of Aden

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- A. 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
- B. 1, 2 and 3 only
- C. 1, 3 and 5 only
- D. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

7. Three-Language Formula

- The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has once again sparked debate over the three-language formula, particularly between the Centre and Tamil Nadu.
- The roots of this controversy trace back to the 1960s when Tamil Nadu fiercely resisted the “imposition of Hindi” as a compulsory language.
- While the Centre defends the policy as a step towards multilingualism, Tamil Nadu argues that it unfairly pressures non-Hindi-speaking states.

How Did the Three-Language Formula Begin?

- The three-language formula was first proposed by the Education Commission (1964-66), officially known as the Kothari Commission.
- It was formally adopted in the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1968 under then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.
- The policy was reaffirmed in NPE 1986 under PM Rajiv Gandhi and revised in 1992 by Narasimha Rao’s Congress government to promote linguistic diversity and national unity.

Is Hindi Being Imposed in NEP 2020?

- The Centre maintains that the new policy allows more flexibility without enforcing any language.
- NEP 2020 states: “The three-language formula will continue to be implemented while keeping in mind the constitutional provisions, the need to promote multi-lingualism as well as promote national unity.

- However, there will be greater flexibility, and no language will be imposed on any state.”
- NEP 2020 further clarifies that “the three languages learned by children will be the choices of states, regions, and of course the students themselves, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India.”
- This ensures that while the policy promotes linguistic diversity, states retain autonomy in their language preferences.

Why Emphasise Learning in the Mother Tongue?

- NEP 2020 argues that learning in the native language improves comprehension, preserves cultural heritage, and enhances academic performance.
- The policy states: “Children learn and grasp non-trivial concepts more quickly in their home language/mother tongue.”
- UNESCO also supports this approach. In its report, Education in a Multilingual World, Unesco states: “Mother tongue instruction is essential for initial instruction and literacy and should be extended to as late a stage in education as possible.”

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) has consistently backed the three-language formula:

- **NCF 2023:** “The three-language formula should continue to be implemented while keeping in mind constitutional provisions, multilingualism, and national unity.”
- **NCF 2005:** “The multilingual character of Indian society should be seen as a resource for the enrichment of school life.”
- **NCF 2000:** “The three-language formula, which is an outcome of a national consensus, needs to be implemented in its true spirit promoting multilingualism and national harmony.”
- Tamil Nadu’s Opposition to the Policy Tamil Nadu has historically rejected the three-language formula.
- In 1937, the Congress government led by C Rajagopalachari introduced compulsory Hindi in schools. This move sparked widespread protests led by the Justice Party and Dravidian leaders like Periyar.
- The policy was revoked in 1940, but anti-Hindi sentiments persisted. When the three-language formula was introduced in 1968, Tamil Nadu opposed it, seeing it as an attempt to impose Hindi.
- Under Chief Minister C N Annadurai, the state adopted a two-language policy, teaching only Tamil and English.
- Tamil Nadu remains the only state that has never implemented the three-language formula, choosing English over Indian languages, including Hindi and other regional languages.
- Funding Issues and Fresh Controversy Tamil Nadu’s refusal to implement key aspects of NEP 2020, particularly the three-language formula, has resulted in the Centre withholding Rs 573 crore in central education assistance under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA).
- According to policy rules, states must comply with NEP guidelines to receive SSA funding, of which 60% is provided by the Centre in states like Tamil Nadu.
- Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, launched in 2018, has been strengthened under NEP 2020 to focus on experiential learning and foundational literacy.
- The SSA funding structure varies: General states and Union Territories (UTs) with legislatures receive 60% central funding Northeastern and Himalayan states receive 90% central funding UTs without legislatures receive full funding (100%) from the Centre.

Kothari Commission

- The Kothari Commission (1964–66), officially known as the Education Commission, was set up by the Government of India under the chairmanship of Dr. Daulat Singh Kothari, then chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC). It was tasked with examining the education system and recommending reforms to modernize and improve it.

Key Recommendations of the Kothari Commission:

- National Education Policy – Advocated for a uniform national education system with a 10+2+3 structure.
- Free and Compulsory Education – Suggested providing free and compulsory education for children up to the age of 14.

Three-Language Formula – Recommended learning three languages:

- Regional language
- Hindi (for non-Hindi speaking states)
- English as a link language
- **Vocational Education** – Stressed the need to integrate vocational education into mainstream education.
- **Science and Technology** – Encouraged the development of science and technology education.
- **Teacher Training and Status** – Proposed better training, salaries, and working conditions for teachers.
- **Higher Education Reforms** – Recommended the establishment of autonomous colleges and universities.
- Equal Education Opportunities – Advocated for bridging gender and social inequalities in education.
- Moral and Social Education – Suggested value-based education focusing on moral and social responsibility.

Impact:

- The recommendations of the Kothari Commission formed the basis of the National Policy on Education (1968).
- It led to reforms in school and higher education in India, promoting scientific, technological, and vocational education.
- Influenced later policies, including the 1986 and 2020 National Education Policies.

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

- The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a comprehensive framework introduced by the Government of India to transform the education system. It replaces the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and aims to make India a global knowledge superpower by focusing on holistic, flexible, and multidisciplinary education.

Highlights of NEP 2020

1. School Education Reforms

- New Structure (5+3+3+4): Replaces the traditional 10+2 system with a 5+3+3+4 model:
- Foundational Stage (3-8 years): Preschool + Grades 1-2
- Preparatory Stage (8-11 years): Grades 3-5
- Middle Stage (11-14 years): Grades 6-8

- Secondary Stage (14-18 years): Grades 9-12
- Universalization of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) under NCERT's National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for ECCE (NCPFECCE).
- Mother tongue/regional language as the medium of instruction till Grade 5 (preferably till Grade 8).
- No rigid separation between academic, extracurricular, and vocational education from Grade 6.
- Bagless days and internships for hands-on learning.
- Common entrance exams for college admissions through the National Testing Agency (NTA).

2. Higher Education Reforms

- Multidisciplinary approach with flexible subject choices.
- Undergraduate degree options:
 - 3-year and 4-year courses with multiple exit options.
 - Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) for credit transfer.
 - Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) to regulate higher education (except for medical and legal studies).
 - Focus on research with the establishment of the National Research Foundation (NRF).

3. Technology and Digital Learning

- National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) to integrate technology in education.
- E-learning expansion through platforms like DIKSHA, SWAYAM, and e-VIDYA.

4. Teacher Education and Training

- Four-year integrated B.Ed. by 2030 for teacher training.
- Continuous professional development for teachers.

5. Vocational Education & Skill Development

- Vocational training from Grade 6 to bridge the gap between education and employment.
- Internships and apprenticeships to promote real-world skills.

6. Inclusive and Equitable Education

- Special focus on disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), including SC/ST, OBCs, and Divyang (persons with disabilities).
- Gender Inclusion Fund for equal learning opportunities.

Implementation and Impact

- NEP 2020 envisions 100% Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in school education by 2030 and 50% GER in higher education by 2035.
- The policy promotes multidisciplinary learning, skill development, and global competitiveness while maintaining India's rich cultural heritage.

Classical language

- A classical language is a language with a rich literary tradition, historical significance, and influence on later languages.
- In India, the government recognizes six classical languages based on specific criteria, including a long history, a vast body of ancient literature, and originality.

Classical Languages of India:

- Tamil (declared in 2004)
- Sanskrit (declared in 2005)
- Kannada (declared in 2008)
- Telugu (declared in 2008)
- Malayalam (declared in 2013)
- Odia (declared in 2014)

Criteria for Classical Language Status in India:

- High antiquity (over 1500-2000 years of history).
- A rich body of ancient texts and literature.
- Original literary tradition (not derived from other traditions).
- Distinct heritage separate from modern spoken forms.

Other Classical Languages in the World:

- Latin (influence on Romance languages like French, Spanish, and Italian)
- Greek (historical influence on philosophy and science)
- Chinese (Classical Chinese / Old Chinese) (ancient texts and influence on East Asia)
- Persian (Old and Middle Persian) (significant in historical texts and literature)

Official Languages in India

- India has 22 official languages recognized under the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.
- Additionally, Hindi and English are the two official languages of the central government for communication purposes.

Official Languages of India (Eighth Schedule)

- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| • Assamese | • Manipuri |
| • Bengali | • Marathi |
| • Bodo | • Nepali |
| • Dogri | • Odia |
| • Gujarati | • Punjabi |
| • Hindi | • Sanskrit |
| • Kannada | • Santali |
| • Kashmiri | • Sindhi |
| • Konkani | • Tamil |
| • Maithili | • Telugu |
| • Malayalam | • Urdu |
- Hindi and English are used for official purposes by the Government of India.
 - States can have their own official languages for governance.
 - There have been demands to add more languages (such as Tulu, Bhojpuri, and Rajasthani) to the Eighth Schedule.
 - The Official Languages Act, 1963 allows continued use of English along with Hindi.

Solve the multiple choice questions:

17. According to the Official Languages Act and Constitution of India, which of the following statements is correct regarding language usage by the central government?
- A. Hindi is the only language mandated for official communication.
 - B. English must be phased out for all official use by 2025.
 - C. Both Hindi and English are used officially by the central government.
 - D. Each state must use Hindi for all internal administration.
18. Which of the following combinations of languages are recognized both as classical languages and as part of the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution?
- E. Tamil, Kannada, Sanskrit, Urdu
 - F. Tamil, Telugu, Odia, Malayalam
 - G. Kannada, Sanskrit, Santali, Telugu
 - H. Sanskrit, Odia, Dogri, Tamil
19. The NEP 2020 sets specific Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) targets for India. Which of the following pairs correctly matches the target year with its intended GER goal?
- A. 2030 – 100% GER in higher education
 - B. 2035 – 50% GER in school education
 - C. 2030 – 100% GER in school education
 - D. 2025 – 75% GER in both school and higher education

8. India ranks below Pakistan on world happiness index, reveals latest report

- Finland has been named the world's happiest country yet again! This is the 8th straight year that the Nordic nation managed to retain the top spot, as per the World Happiness Report 2025.
- While India made slight improvement in its happiness quotient, it has still not managed to make it to the top 100.
- As per the report, India stood at 118 among 147 countries, up from 126 last year. But surprisingly, even war-torn nations like Israel (8) and Ukraine (111) have fared better than India.
- The report, which focuses on the impact of caring and sharing on people's happiness including how sharing a meal increases happiness, also finds people in Pakistan are happier than India.
- Even though cash-strapped Pakistan's rank dropped from 108 to 109, the country outscored India.
- Even though India ranked 118th overall, in terms of the 'Country rankings for six measures of benevolence', it was listed much higher at 57 for how people donated; at 10 for how people volunteered; 74 for helping a stranger, and in case of wallet returned by a neighbour (115), stranger (86) and police (93).

- The 13th edition of the annual report was released coinciding with the International Day of Happiness that falls on March 20 each year.
- Afghanistan is again ranked as the unhappiest country in the world, with Afghan women saying their lives are especially difficult.
- Sierra Leone in western Africa is the second unhappiest, followed by Lebanon, ranking the 3rd from the bottom.
- Nordic nations rank among the top places for expected and actual return of lost wallets, the study found.
- Bhutan, which focuses on Gross National Happiness, does not feature in the ranking of the 147 countries in this year's World Happiness Report.
- As per the latest findings, believing in the kindness of others is also much more closely tied to happiness than previously thought. As an example, the report suggests that people who believe that others are willing to return their lost wallet is a strong predictor of the overall happiness of a population.
- The United States not only failed to make the top 10 but also slipped to its lowest-ever position in the happiness ranking at 24.
- Last year, it dropped out of the top 20 for the first time since the 2012.
- According to the report, the number of people dining alone in the US has increased 53% over the past two decades.

World Happiness Report

- The World Happiness Report is an annual publication that ranks countries based on their citizens' self-assessed well-being. Initiated in 2012, the report is produced by the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford, in collaboration with Gallup and the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

Happiness Report

Methodology:

- The rankings are derived from data collected through the Gallup World Poll, which surveys individuals in over 150 countries. Participants evaluate their current life on a scale from 0 to 10, known as the Cantril Ladder.
- The report considers six key factors that contribute to happiness:
 - Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita: Economic output per person.
 - **Social support:** Perceived availability of assistance from others.
 - **Healthy life expectancy:** Average number of years a person can expect to live in good health.
 - **Freedom to make life choices:** Perceived autonomy in decision-making.
 - **Generosity:** Willingness to donate time and resources to others.
 - **Perceptions of corruption:** Level of trust in public institutions and businesses.

2025 Rankings:

- In the 2025 report, Finland has been named the happiest country for the eighth consecutive year, followed by Denmark, Iceland, and Sweden. The United States has experienced a decline, dropping to its lowest-ever position at 24th place. Afghanistan remains the least happy country, with Sierra Leone and Lebanon also ranking low.

Key Findings:

- **Social Connections:** The report emphasizes the importance of social interactions, such as sharing meals, in enhancing well-being. Notably, an increase in solo dining in the U.S. has been linked to declining happiness levels.
- **Acts of Kindness:** The “benevolence bump,” a surge in acts of kindness observed during the COVID-19 pandemic, has persisted, with such actions remaining over 10% above pre-pandemic levels.
- **Perception vs. Reality:** Studies indicate that people often underestimate the kindness of strangers. For instance, experiments reveal that lost wallets are returned more frequently than expected, highlighting a discrepancy between perceived and actual societal benevolence.
- The World Happiness Report serves as a valuable resource for understanding the factors that contribute to well-being and offers insights for policymakers aiming to enhance the quality of life in their countries.

Why India stands behind in world happiness index?

- India’s ranking in the World Happiness Index has remained relatively low compared to many other countries. In recent years, India has ranked in the lower half of the global list.

1. Economic Inequality

- While India’s economy has grown significantly, income inequality remains a major issue. A large segment of the population still struggles with poverty, unemployment, and lack of financial security, which affects overall well-being.

2. Social and Mental Well-being

- Mental health awareness is still lacking, and access to quality mental healthcare is limited.
- High stress levels due to job insecurity, competition, and societal expectations affect happiness.
- Family and social structures are strong in India, but urbanization and changing lifestyles have led to increased loneliness and social disconnection.

3. Environmental Concerns

- Pollution, especially in major cities, affects the quality of life.
- Climate change-related issues, such as extreme weather and water scarcity, impact rural and urban populations.

4. Political and Governance Issues

- Corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and political instability in some regions affect trust in governance.
- Issues like communal tensions, religious polarization, and social unrest reduce overall societal happiness.

5. Education and Healthcare

- While India has made progress, access to quality healthcare and education remains uneven.
- The healthcare system is often overburdened, and many people still lack access to basic medical services.

6. Work-Life Balance and Job Satisfaction

- Long working hours, high competition, and job insecurity contribute to stress.
- Many employees do not have flexible working conditions or sufficient leisure time.

7. Perception of Happiness

- The World Happiness Index measures happiness based on GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom, generosity, and corruption levels. India scores lower in some of these key areas compared to countries that rank higher.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

20. Which of the following statements is true about India's ranking in the 2025 World Happiness Report?
- A. India ranked among the top 100 for the first time.
 - B. India improved from last year but still ranked below Pakistan.
 - C. India ranked above both Ukraine and Pakistan.
 - D. India fell in ranking compared to the previous year.
21. Which of the following is not one of the six key factors used to determine the World Happiness Report rankings?
- A. Healthy life expectancy
 - B. Social support
 - C. Cultural heritage
 - D. Generosity

9. Rushikonda Beach's Blue Flag Certification restored with big plans ahead

- Rushikonda Beach in Andhra Pradesh has successfully regained its prestigious Blue Flag certification, marking its return to an elite group of globally recognized sustainable beaches.
- The Blue Flag is an internationally acknowledged eco-label awarded by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) to beaches and marinas that meet stringent standards in cleanliness, safety, environmental sustainability, and visitor facilities.
- The return of this certification highlights the beach's commitment to maintaining high environmental and infrastructural benchmarks after a temporary suspension.
- While specific reasons for the earlier suspension were not detailed, the focus has now shifted toward long-term improvements and future sustainability. Authorities have devised an extensive action plan to elevate Rushikonda Beach's reputation, ensuring it remains one of India's premier coastal destinations.
- The plan includes enhanced security measures to ensure visitor safety, improved signage and educational initiatives to guide tourists, and better traffic management strategies to prevent congestion and parking issues.
- Additionally, significant emphasis is being placed on environmental sustainability, with efforts to enhance waste management, clean shorelines, and improve water treatment processes.

- A dedicated coordination team has been established by the local government to oversee the implementation of these measures, ensuring the beach not only meets but surpasses Blue Flag standards.
- The administration aims to make Rushikonda a model beach by incorporating best practices in sustainable tourism and coastal management. These improvements align with the broader goal of promoting eco-friendly tourism in India, making Rushikonda a benchmark for other beaches aspiring to achieve Blue Flag status.
- Rushikonda Beach is already renowned for its golden sands, pristine waters, and relaxed ambiance, attracting visitors from across Andhra Pradesh and beyond.
- The reinstatement of the Blue Flag certification reinforces its appeal as a world-class tourist destination.
- The certification reassures visitors of high environmental and safety standards, encouraging both domestic and international tourism.
- The Blue Flag program, initiated by the Foundation for Environmental Education, sets rigorous global benchmarks for beach quality. To qualify, beaches must adhere to over 30 criteria related to water quality, environmental management, safety, and educational initiatives. Rushikonda's successful reaccreditation reflects its compliance with these high standards and the authorities' proactive approach in addressing previous shortcomings.
- Beyond its aesthetic and recreational value, Rushikonda Beach's environmental conservation efforts play a crucial role in preserving marine biodiversity. The newly implemented strategies for waste management and grey water treatment will help maintain ecological balance, ensuring the beach remains a thriving habitat for coastal wildlife.
- The rejuvenation of Rushikonda Beach through sustainable development and infrastructural upgrades is expected to boost local tourism and economy. Improved facilities, better accessibility, and enhanced visitor experiences will attract a broader audience, from nature enthusiasts to adventure seekers.
- The Blue Flag certification serves as a valuable endorsement, positioning Rushikonda Beach among India's finest coastal attractions.
- In summary, Rushikonda Beach's reinstated Blue Flag certification signifies a renewed commitment to environmental stewardship and visitor satisfaction.
- Through a well-structured action plan, local authorities aim to transform it into a model beach, setting new benchmarks in sustainability and tourism excellence.
- As efforts continue to enhance its infrastructure and ecological management, Rushikonda stands poised to remain a top-tier beach destination in India.

Blue Flag Certification

- The Blue Flag Certification is an internationally recognized eco-label awarded to beaches, marinas, and sustainable tourism boats that meet strict environmental, educational, safety, and accessibility standards.
- The certification is granted by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), a Denmark-based non-profit organization.

Criteria for Blue Flag Certification:

- Environmental Education and Information – Display of environmental information and eco-awareness programs for visitors.
- Water Quality – Regular testing of water quality to ensure cleanliness and safety for swimming.
- Environmental Management – Proper waste management, sustainable tourism practices, and conservation efforts.
- Safety and Services – Availability of lifeguards, first aid stations, clean restrooms, and accessibility for differently-abled visitors.

Blue Flag Beaches in India:

As of recent updates, India has several Blue Flag-certified beaches, including:

- Shivrajpur Beach (Gujarat)
- Ghoghla Beach (Diu)
- Kasarkod Beach (Karnataka)
- Padubidri Beach (Karnataka)
- Kappad Beach (Kerala)
- Rushikonda Beach (Andhra Pradesh)
- Golden Beach (Odisha)
- Radhanagar Beach (Andaman & Nicobar Islands)

Benefits of Blue Flag Certification:

1. Environmental Protection & Sustainability

- Encourages cleaner beaches and marinas by enforcing strict waste management and pollution control measures.
- Promotes eco-friendly tourism and marine biodiversity conservation.
- Reduces plastic waste and supports efforts to minimize environmental damage.

2. Boosts Tourism & Local Economy

- Enhances the attractiveness of certified locations, drawing more eco-conscious tourists.
- Increases revenue for local businesses, including hotels, restaurants, and tour operators.
- Provides a competitive edge for destinations seeking international recognition.

3. Improves Safety & Infrastructure

- Mandates lifeguards and first aid facilities, ensuring visitor safety.
- Requires well-maintained infrastructure like clean restrooms, waste disposal bins, and accessible pathways.
- Encourages improved water quality monitoring to ensure a clean and safe experience.

4. Promotes Community Awareness & Engagement

- Educates visitors and local communities on sustainable tourism and environmental conservation.
- Encourages local authorities and businesses to adopt greener policies.
- Involves schools and organizations in eco-awareness programs.

5. Enhances Global Recognition

- Elevates the prestige of a beach or marina on the international tourism map.
- Builds trust among travelers looking for eco-friendly destinations.
- Encourages governments and stakeholders to invest in long-term environmental sustainability.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

22. Which of the following is not one of the four major criteria required for Blue Flag Certification?
- A. Environmental Education and Information
 - B. Marine Wildlife Tagging Programs
 - C. Environmental Management
 - D. Water Quality

23. Which of the following Indian beaches is correctly listed as Blue Flag certified along with Rushikonda Beach?
- A. Marina Beach (Tamil Nadu)
 - B. Radhanagar Beach (Andaman & Nicobar Islands)
 - C. Juhu Beach (Maharashtra)
 - D. Baga Beach (Goa)

24. Match the Following Blue Flag-Certified Beaches with Their Respective States/UTs:

List I: Beach

- A. Shivrajpur Beach
- B. Ghoghla Beach
- C. Golden Beach
- D. Padubidri Beach

List II: State/UT

- i. Odisha
- ii. Gujarat
- iii. Karnataka
- iv. Diu (Union Territory)

Options:

- A. A–ii, B–iv, C–i, D–iii
- B. A–iii, B–ii, C–iv, D–i
- C. A–ii, B–i, C–iv, D–iii
- D. A–iv, B–ii, C–i, D–iii

10. Chinese Intrusion near Senkaku Islands

- Japan has voiced serious concerns over a prolonged incursion by Chinese Coast Guard ships near the disputed Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, marking one of the longest intrusions into Japan's territorial waters.
- Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya highlighted the growing escalation of Chinese vessel activity around the Senkaku Islands, stating that the situation is “clearly escalating.”
- Opposition lawmakers in Japan criticized the incursion, with one leader describing it as “extremely inappropriate” given the timing of the high-level talks. Iwaya responded by affirming that Japan will handle the situation “in a resolute and calm manner.”
- Administered by Japan, the uninhabited islets hold strategic importance due to their proximity to shipping lanes, rich fishing grounds, and potential oil reserves.
- The islands are also seen as a focal point in the broader geopolitical rivalry between China and the US, with Japan being a key US ally.
- Japan maintains that no agreement exists with China to “shelve” the issue of the Senkaku Islands, and asserts that China's actions, such as sending ships into the waters since 2008, have contradicted any notion of compromise on the matter.

Senkaku Islands

- The Senkaku Islands are a group of uninhabited islands in the East China Sea, administered by Japan but also claimed by China (where they are known as the Diaoyu Islands) and Taiwan (where they are called the Diaoyutai Islands).

Key Facts:

- Location: East China Sea, about 170 km (106 miles) northeast of Taiwan and 330 km (205 miles) west of Okinawa, Japan.
- Total Area: ~7 km²
- Main Islands: Uotsuri (largest), Kuba, Taisho, Minamikojima, and Kitakojima.

Status:

- Controlled by Japan since 1972 (after U.S. administration post-WWII).
- China and Taiwan both claim historical sovereignty.

Economic Significance:

- Rich in fishing resources.
- Potential oil and gas reserves in surrounding waters.

Strategic Importance:

- Close to key shipping lanes.
- A point of geopolitical tension between Japan, China, and Taiwan.

Current Geopolitical Situation:

- Japan maintains de facto control and has stationed the Japan Coast Guard for patrols.
- China frequently sends coast guard ships and aircraft to assert its claims.
- The U.S. recognizes Japan's administrative control and includes the Senkaku Islands under the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (meaning an attack could trigger U.S. military support).

East China Sea

- The East China Sea is a marginal sea of the Pacific Ocean, bordered by China to the west, South Korea to the north, Japan to the east, and Taiwan to the south.
- It is a strategically important and resource-rich body of water, covering an area of about 1.25 million square kilometers.

Geopolitical Tensions:

- The East China Sea is a hotspot for territorial disputes, particularly between China and Japan over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.
- Taiwan also claims sovereignty over these islands.
- South Korea and China have disputes over the Socotra Rock (Ieodo).

Economic Significance:

- The sea has rich fishing grounds, making it vital for regional economies.
- It is believed to have significant reserves of oil and natural gas, leading to further disputes over maritime boundaries.
- It serves as a crucial shipping route, with heavy commercial traffic connecting China, Japan, and other global markets.

Military Presence:

- China has expanded its naval activities, and the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) frequently patrols disputed areas.

- Japan and the U.S. conduct joint military exercises in the region.
- Air and naval confrontations have occurred, increasing tensions.

Environmental Concerns:

- Overfishing, pollution, and industrial activity have affected marine biodiversity.
- Coastal areas, particularly in China, face high levels of pollution from industrial runoff.

South China Sea

- The South China Sea is a highly strategic and contested region in Southeast Asia, known for its significant geopolitical tensions.
- It is rich in natural resources, including oil and gas reserves, and serves as a crucial maritime trade route.
- Several countries, including China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan, have overlapping territorial claims in the region.

Territorial Disputes:

- China claims nearly the entire South China Sea under its Nine-Dash Line policy, which has been widely disputed.
- Other claimants, such as Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia, assert sovereignty over parts of the sea based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

International Rulings:

- In 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague ruled against China's claims, stating that its historical rights had no legal basis under UNCLOS. However, China rejected the ruling.

Military and Strategic Interests:

- China has built artificial islands and military bases in the Spratly and Paracel Islands.
- The United States, Japan, and Australia conduct Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) to challenge excessive maritime claims.

Economic and Environmental Impact:

- The South China Sea is one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world, handling over \$3.4 trillion in annual trade.
- Illegal fishing, environmental degradation, and coral reef destruction due to land reclamation and dredging activities are growing concerns.

Recent Developments:

- Increased US-China tensions, with the US conducting naval patrols to counter Chinese expansion.
- ASEAN's diplomatic efforts to negotiate a Code of Conduct with China.
- Philippines-China clashes, particularly near the Second Thomas Shoal.

Nine Dash lines

- The Nine-Dash Line refers to China's controversial maritime boundary claim in the South China Sea.
- This demarcation, originally an eleven-dash line introduced by the Republic of China in 1947, was later reduced to nine dashes by the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the 1950s.
- The line encompasses nearly 90% of the South China Sea, covering areas also claimed by Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan.

Key Points:

- **Dispute:** The Nine-Dash Line overlaps with the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of several Southeast Asian nations.
- **Legal Status:** In 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague ruled that China's claims had no legal basis under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). China, however, rejected the ruling.
- **Strategic Importance:** The South China Sea is rich in natural resources, including oil, gas, and fisheries, and is a critical maritime trade route.
- **Ongoing Tensions:** China has built artificial islands and military bases in disputed areas, leading to confrontations with regional and global powers, including the United States.

QUESTIONS

Solve the multiple choice questions:

25. Which of the following best describes Japan's official position on the status of the Senkaku Islands in response to China's recent activities?
- A. Japan recognizes a joint sovereignty arrangement with China and Taiwan.
 - B. Japan acknowledges a historical compromise to shelve the issue temporarily.
 - C. Japan asserts full administrative control and denies any shelving agreement with China.
 - D. Japan supports Chinese patrols as part of a shared security framework.
26. In the context of East and South China Sea disputes, which of the following rulings directly challenged China's maritime claims under the Nine-Dash Line policy?
- A. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2471
 - B. Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruling of 2016
 - C. Shanghai Cooperation Organization Maritime Protocol
 - D. ASEAN Code of Conduct Agreement 2020
27. Which of the following statements about the geopolitical landscape of the East China Sea is incorrect?
- A. The Senkaku Islands are claimed by Japan, China, and Taiwan.
 - B. South Korea and China have a maritime dispute over Socotra Rock (Ieodo).
 - C. The East China Sea is bordered by China, South Korea, Japan, and Vietnam.
 - D. The East China Sea is a marginal sea of the Pacific Ocean.
28. Which of the following combinations correctly matches the directional boundaries of the South China Sea?

Direction	Boundary
(A) North	(i) South China
(B) West	(ii) Borneo and Sumatra
(C) East	(iii) Taiwan and northwestern Philippines
(D) South	(iv) Indochinese Peninsula

Choose the correct option:

- A. A-i, B-iv, C-iii, D-ii
- B. A-i, B-iv, C-ii, D-iii
- C. A-ii, B-i, C-iii, D-iv
- D. A-iii, B-iv, C-i, D-ii

- 29.** Which of the following features are located within the area claimed by China under the Nine-Dash Line in the South China Sea?
- A. Paracel Islands, Spratly Islands, and Scarborough Shoal
 - B. Senkaku Islands, Spratly Islands, and Socotra Rock
 - C. Nicobar Islands, Pratas Island, and Diaoyu Islands
 - D. Kuril, Scarborough Shoal, and Macclesfield Bank
- 30.** The Kuril Islands dispute primarily involves which of the following four islands or island groups claimed by Japan but currently administered by Russia?
- A. Sakhalin, Kamchatka, Chishima, and Kunashir
 - B. Iturup, Kunashir, Shikotan, and the Habomai islets
 - C. Kurilsk, Okhotsk, Rishiri, and Hokkaido
 - D. Kamchatka, Iturup, Shikotan, and Rishiri



ANSWER KEY AND EXPLANATION

1. **D** About 71 per cent of the planetary water is found in the oceans. The remaining is held as freshwater in glaciers and icecaps, groundwater sources, lakes, soil moisture, atmosphere, streams and within life. Of the total freshwater, 69% resides in glaciers, 30% underground, and less than 1% is located in lakes, rivers, and swamps. Nearly 59 per cent of the water that falls on land returns to the atmosphere through evaporation from over the oceans as well as from other places. The remainder runs-off on the surface, infiltrates into the ground or a part of it becomes glacier. It is to be noted that the renewable water on the earth is constant while the demand is increasing tremendously. This leads to water crisis in different parts of the world — spatially and temporally.
2. **B** Distribution of Water: Oceans-97.3%, Ice caps-2%, Ground Water-0.68%, Fresh water & Fresh water lakes-0.009%, Inland Seas and Salt Lakes-0.009%, Atmosphere-0.0019%, Rivers-0.0001%.
3. **C** The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is the international, non-governmental, sports governing body of the modern Olympic Games. Founded in 1894 by Pierre de Coubertin and Demetrios Vikelas, it is based in Lausanne, Switzerland. The IOC is the authority responsible for organizing the Summer, Winter, and Youth Olympics.
4. **D** The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) is an international body established in 1984 to settle disputes related to sport through arbitration. Its headquarters are in Lausanne, Switzerland and its courts are located in New York City, Sydney, and Lausanne. Temporary courts are established in current Olympic host cities. The CAS had upheld the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) decision to disqualify Phogat and rejected her appeal for a joint silver medal in the women's 50 kg wrestling category. Manu Bhaker is an Indian sport shooter. She has won 2 medals at the Olympic Games, 7 medals at the Asian Games and Asian Championships, and 21 medals at the World Championships and World Cups. She gained wide recognition after her performance at the 2024 Olympics where she became the first Indian woman shooter to win an Olympics medal by winning a bronze in the 10m pistol event. She won another bronze in the 10m pistol mixed team event, thus becoming the first Indian to win two medals in a single Olympic Games. Neeraj Chopra has won two Olympic medals in the men's javelin throw event: Gold Medal at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics: On August 7, 2021, Neeraj secured the gold with a throw of 87.58 meters, becoming the first Indian track and field athlete to win an Olympic gold medal. Silver Medal at the Paris 2024 Olympics: In 2024, he clinched the silver medal with a throw of 89.45 meters, marking him as one of the few Indian athletes to win multiple individual Olympic medals. Abhinav Bindra is an Indian former sport shooter and a businessman. He is an Olympic gold medalist as well as the first and one of only two Indians to win an individual Olympic gold medal.
5. **D** Brigadier's equivalent in Navy is Commodore, not Commander. This statement is incorrect. Vice Admiral is equal to Lieutenant General / Air Marshal. This statement is incorrect. Major = Squadron Leader = Lieutenant Commander. This statement is correct. Captain (Navy) is equivalent to Colonel (Army), not Lt. Colonel. Only Statement 3 accurately represents equivalent ranks across the Army, Air Force, and Navy. The other options either mismatch Navy ranks or overstate the Air Force equivalence. Rank structures differ slightly in naming conventions, especially in the Navy, which uses maritime terms.
6. **D** The CDS serves as the Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC), which includes the Chiefs of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. This position helps promote jointness and coordination

across the three services. The CDS does not have direct operational command over the three service chiefs (Army, Navy, Air Force). Each service chief retains command over their respective forces. The President of India is the Supreme Commander of the Indian Armed Forces but the executive authority and responsibility for national security is vested in the Prime Minister of India and their chosen Cabinet Ministers. The CDS does not replace the existing service chiefs and does not exercise direct command authority in war or peace. The CDS acts as the Principal Military Advisor to the Defence Minister, especially on matters involving jointness, tri-service operations, and strategic planning. Each Service Chief continues to be the military advisor for matters exclusively concerning their own Service.

7. **C** IOS Sagar emphasizes cooperative maritime deployments and training, while AIKEYME is a multilateral maritime security engagement with African nations. IOS Sagar focuses on deploying INS Sunayna with a combined crew of India and nine Friendly Foreign Countries (FFCs) for joint EEZ surveillance and training, including port calls and sea-phase familiarization. AIKEYME is a multilateral exercise with African maritime forces, involving operational training in piracy response, VBSS, and interoperability, co-hosted with Tanzania. Other options are factually incorrect: (a) wrongly calls IOS Sagar a combat exercise; (b) misrepresents AIKEYME; (d) incorrectly places IOS Sagar in Indian waters.
8. **C** Countries participating in both IOS Sagar and AIKEYME are: Comoros, Seychelles and Madagascar. Djibouti participates only in AIKEYME, not in IOS Sagar. Hence, the correct answer is 1, 2, and 3 only.
9. **D** World Tuberculosis (TB) Day is observed every year on March 24th to raise awareness about the need to eliminate TB, the world's deadliest infectious disease. The day marks the discovery of the TB-causing bacterium by Dr. Robert Koch in 1882. India has been observing this day since 1982, along with the global community. Despite progress, TB still impacts millions, posing serious health, social, and economic challenges. This year's theme, "Yes! We Can End TB: Commit, Invest, Deliver", highlights the importance of stronger commitments and action, especially against rising drug-resistant TB. India's goal to eliminate TB by 2025 is one of the world's most ambitious health missions.
10. **B** The renaming from RNTCP to NTEP signals India's intensified commitment to eliminate TB by 2025, which is five years ahead of the global 2030 SDG target. This change is strategic and goal-oriented, not administrative or technical. India's goal to eliminate TB by 2025 is one of the world's most ambitious health missions. Under the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP), India has strengthened its TB response with advanced diagnostics, innovative policies, private sector partnerships, and a patient-first approach. Key drivers include record-high case reporting, better diagnostics, financial support for patients, and strong multi-sector collaboration. However, with global TB funding declining and shifting priorities, continued commitment is vital to meet India's 2025 target and the UN's goal of ending TB by 2030. Despite global efforts, TB remains a major public health challenge worldwide, with India bearing the highest burden. Understanding both the global and national estimates is key to gauging the scale of the disease and the urgency of India's elimination mission.
11. **D** Marc Jacobsen explains that if Russia were to send nuclear missiles to the U.S., the shortest trajectory would be over the North Pole and Greenland. That's why the Pituffik Space Base (formerly Thule Air Base) remains a critical component of U.S. missile defense systems.

- 12. B** While Greenland enjoys home rule (granted in 1979), Denmark retains control over foreign affairs and defense. This makes option (b) incorrect. The other statements are all historically accurate.
- 13. B** The U.S. established bases in Greenland during WWII after Denmark was occupied by Nazi Germany. After Nazi Germany occupied Denmark, the U.S. invaded Greenland during World War II to prevent Axis use of the territory and established military and radio stations. These bases, like Thule Air Base (now Pituffik Space Base), continued to operate post-war under a 1951 defense agreement with Denmark.
- 14. C** In March 2023, China brokered a deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia, under which Iran agreed to halt military support to the Houthis. The aim was to push the Houthis toward peace, but conflict continued despite this.
- 15. B** A core U.S. objective is to protect freedom of navigation in the Red Sea, which has been threatened by Houthi attacks on civilian and naval vessels. This has prompted a heightened U.S. military presence in the region.
- 16. A** Yemen a country in West Asia. Located in southern Arabia, it borders Saudi Arabia to the north, Oman to the northeast, the south-eastern part of the Arabian Sea to the east, the Gulf of Aden to the south, and the Red Sea to the west, sharing maritime borders with Djibouti, Eritrea, and Somalia across the Horn of Africa.
- 17. C** Under the Official Languages Act, 1963, both Hindi and English are used for official purposes of the Union. States are free to adopt their own official languages, and English continues to be used alongside Hindi for many central communications.
- 18. B** All four—Tamil, Telugu, Odia, and Malayalam—are officially recognized classical languages and are also included in the Eighth Schedule. Urdu, Dogri, and Santali are Eighth Schedule languages but not classical languages.
- 19. C** NEP 2020 targets 100% Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in school education by 2030, and 50% GER in higher education by 2035. Hence, option (c) is the correct match.
- 20. B** India's rank improved from 126 in the previous year to 118 in 2025, but it still ranked below Pakistan, which was at 109, despite Pakistan's drop from 108.
- 21. C** The six factors are: GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perceptions of corruption. Cultural heritage is not among them.
- 22. B** The FEE, a Denmark-based non-profit organization, grants the Blue Flag Certification to beaches, marinas, and tourism boats that meet strict environmental and safety standards. The four major Blue Flag criteria are: 1. Environmental Education and Information 2. Water Quality 3. Environmental Management 4. Safety and Services. Wildlife tagging is not a specified requirement for Blue Flag certification.
- 23. B** Radhanagar Beach is among the Blue Flag-certified beaches in India, along with others like Shivrajpur, Golden Beach, Ghoghla, and Rushikonda. Marina, Juhu, and Baga Beaches are not Blue Flag certified.
- 24. A** Correct Answer: (a) A–ii, B–iv, C–i, D–iii. A. Shivrajpur Beach – Gujarat (ii): Located near Dwarka, this beach in Gujarat is Blue Flag-certified for its cleanliness and sustainable tourism standards.

Ghoghla Beach – Diu (iv): Ghoghla Beach is part of the Diu Union Territory, not Gujarat, despite geographic proximity. It is a certified clean and eco-friendly beach. Golden Beach – Odisha (i): Located in Puri, Odisha, Golden Beach is a popular Blue Flag beach known for its religious tourism and clean coastline. Padubidri Beach – Karnataka (iii): Padubidri Beach, in Udupi district, Karnataka, is also Blue Flag-certified and well-maintained for eco-tourism.

- 25. C** Japan maintains that there is no agreement with China to shelve the territorial issue and views Chinese incursions as contradictory to any idea of compromise. Japan has administered the islands since 1972, asserting full sovereignty.
- 26. B** The 2016 PCA ruling in The Hague invalidated China's Nine-Dash Line claims in the South China Sea, stating that they had no legal basis under UNCLOS. China, however, rejected the verdict.
- 27. C** Vietnam does not border the East China Sea; it borders the South China Sea. The East China Sea is bordered by China (west), South Korea (north), Japan (east), and Taiwan (south).
- 28. A** The South China Sea is a marginal sea of the Western Pacific Ocean. It is bounded in the north by South China, in the west by the Indochinese Peninsula, in the east by the islands of Taiwan and northwestern Philippines (mainly Luzon, Mindoro and Palawan), and in the south by Borneo, eastern Sumatra and the Bangka Belitung Islands, encompassing an area of around 3,500,000 km² (1,400,000 sq mi). The Taiwan Strait lies between mainland China and Taiwan and connects the South China Sea to the East China Sea. Luzon Strait connects the South China Sea to the Philippine Sea. Karimata and Bangka Straits link the South China Sea to the Java Sea.
- 29. A** China's Nine-Dash Line claim encompasses several disputed maritime features in the South China Sea, including: Paracel Islands (also claimed by Vietnam and Taiwan), Spratly Islands (claimed by multiple countries) and Scarborough Shoal (also claimed by the Philippines). These features lie within the contested maritime zone claimed by both the PRC and ROC.
- 30. B** The Kuril Islands or Kurile Islands are a volcanic archipelago administered as part of Sakhalin Oblast in the Russian Far East. The islands stretch approximately 1,300 km (810 mi) northeast from Hokkaido in Japan to Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia, separating the Sea of Okhotsk from the north Pacific Ocean. The islands have been under Russian administration since their 1945 invasion by the Soviet Union near the end of World War II. Japan claims the four southernmost islands, including two of the three largest (Iturup and Kunashir), as part of its territory, as well as Shikotan and the unpopulated Habomai islets, which has led to the ongoing Kuril Islands dispute. The disputed islands are known in Japan as the country's "Northern Territories".