

MANTHAN

MAY 2025 : WEEK-4

Registered / Corporate Office:

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1. Banu Mushtaq wins International Booker Prize for Kannada short story collection 'Heart Lamp'

- Writer, activist and lawyer Banu Mushtaq's short story collection 'Heart Lamp' became the first Kannada title to win the coveted GBP 50,000 International Booker Prize in London.
- Mushtaq described her win as a victory for diversity as she collected the prize at a ceremony at Tate Modern along with her translator Deepa Bhashti, who translated the title from Kannada to English.
- The annual prize celebrates the best works of long-form fiction or collections of short stories translated into English and published in the UK and/or Ireland between May 2024 and April 2025.
- The other five books on the shortlisted included: On the Calculation of Volume I by Solvej Balle, translated from Danish by Barbara J. Haveland; Small Boat by Vincent Delecroix, translated from French by Helen Stevenson; Under the Eye of the Big Bird by Hiromi Kawakami, translated from Japanese by Asa Yoneda; Perfection by Vincenzo Latronico, translated from Italian by Sophie Hughes; and A Leopard-Skin Hat by Anne Serre, translated from French by Mark Hutchinson.
- Each shortlisted title is awarded a prize of GBP 5,000 – shared between author and translator and the winning prize money is split between Mushtaq and Bhashti, who receive GBP 25,000 each.
- In 2022, Geetanjali Shree and translator Daisy Rockwell won the coveted prize for the first-ever Hindi novel Tomb of Sand, with Perumal Murugan's Tamil novel Pyre, translated into English by Aniruddhan Vasudevan making it to the longlist in 2023.



International Booker Prize

- The International Booker Prize is a prestigious literary award presented annually for a book translated into English and published in the UK or Ireland.
- It celebrates the best work of international fiction in translation, recognizing both the author and the translator, who share the prize money equally.
 - **Established:** 2005 (in its current form since 2016)
 - **Prize Money:** £50,000 (split equally between author and translator)
 - **Eligibility:** Fiction books translated into English and published in the UK or Ireland
 - **Organized by:** The Booker Prize Foundation

Difference between Booker Prize and International Booker Prize

- The Booker Prize and the International Booker Prize are two prestigious literary awards, but they have different scopes and eligibility criteria.

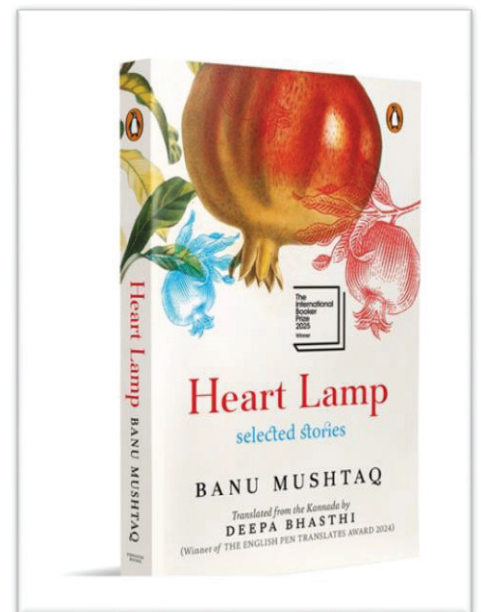
Feature	Booker Prize	International Booker Prize
Former Name(s)	Booker Prize for Fiction	Man Booker International Prize
First Awarded	1969	2005 (restructured in 2016 to current form)
Awarded For	Best original novel written in English and published in the UK or Ireland	Best work of fiction translated into English and published in the UK or Ireland
Language Requirement	Must be written originally in English	Originally written in any language, but must be translated into English
Author's Nationality	Open to writers of any nationality (since 2014), but the book must be published in the UK or Ireland	Open to authors and translators of any nationality
Prize Money	£50,000 (entirely to the author)	£50,000 (split equally between author and translator)
Focus	Celebrates a single novel by an English-language author	Celebrates a single translated work and its translator
Frequency	Annual	Annual

Heart Lamp

- Heart Lamp is a groundbreaking collection of 12 short stories by Indian writer, lawyer, and activist Banu Mushtaq, originally penned in Kannada between 1990 and 2023.
- Translated into English by Deepa Bhasthi, the book won the 2025 International Booker Prize, marking the first time a Kannada-language work and a short story collection have received this prestigious honor.

About the Book

- Heart Lamp offers intimate portrayals of Muslim and Dalit women navigating life in patriarchal communities of southern India.
- Mushtaq's narratives blend dry humor with deep empathy, shedding light on themes like gender oppression, caste dynamics, faith, and resilience.



- The stories are drawn from her experiences as a journalist and advocate for women's rights.

Critical Acclaim

- The International Booker Prize jury, chaired by Max Porter, praised the book as “a radical translation” that brings “beautiful, busy, life-affirming stories” to English readers.
- Bhashthi's translation was lauded for preserving the multilingual and oral storytelling essence of the original Kannada text.

QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following statements accurately reflects the literary significance of Heart Lamp in the context of the International Booker Prize?
 - A. It is the first Indian novel to win the Booker Prize for Fiction.
 - B. It is the first translated work from Tamil to be shortlisted for the International Booker Prize.
 - C. It is the first Kannada-language book and short story collection to win the International Booker Prize.
 - D. It is the first book to win the International Booker Prize without a translator.
2. Which statement is factually incorrect regarding the 2025 International Booker Prize?
 - A. 'Heart Lamp' became the first Kannada book to win the prize.
 - B. Each shortlisted author-translator pair receives £5,000.
 - C. Deepa Bhashthi translated 'Heart Lamp' from Hindi to English.
 - D. The prize was awarded at the Tate Modern in London.
3. Which of the following correctly distinguishes the International Booker Prize from the Booker Prize in terms of eligibility and prize distribution?
 - A. Only the Booker Prize allows entries translated from any language into English and splits the prize between the author and translator.
 - B. The International Booker Prize is awarded solely to the translator of a work originally published in any language.
 - C. The Booker Prize requires the author to be a UK citizen and gives equal prize money to the editor and author.
 - D. The International Booker Prize recognizes fiction translated into English from any original language, awarding £50,000 shared equally between author and translator.

2. Home Minister launches new OCI portal

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched a new Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) portal.
- The revamped OCI portal with an updated user interface has been launched to simplify the registration process for overseas citizens.
- It must be ensured that the Indian-origin residents face no inconvenience when visiting or staying in India.

- The new portal will provide enhanced functionality, advanced security, and a user-friendly experience for more than 5 million OCI cardholders and new users.
- The OCI scheme was introduced through an amendment to the Citizenship Act, 1955, in 2005.
- The scheme provides for the registration of Persons of Indian Origin as Overseas Citizens of India, provided they were citizens of India on or after January 26, 1950 or were eligible to become citizens on that date.
- However, individuals who are or had been citizens of Pakistan or Bangladesh, or whose parent or grandparent or great grandparent are or had been citizens of those two countries are not eligible.
- The existing OCI Services portal was developed in 2013 and is currently operational in over 180 Indian missions as well as 12 Foreigners Regional Registration Offices (FRROs), processing approximately 2,000 applications per day.
- Given the significant technological advancements over the past decade and feedback received from OCI cardholders, a revamped OCI portal has been developed to address existing limitations and enhance user experience.

Overseas Citizen of India (OCI)

- Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) refers to a category of individuals who are of Indian origin but hold citizenship in another country.
- The OCI status allows them to live and work in India indefinitely without the need for a visa.

Eligibility:

- A foreign national who:
- Was eligible to become an Indian citizen on 26th January 1950, or
- Belonged to a territory that became part of India after 15th August 1947, or
- Is a child/grandchild/great-grandchild of such a person.
- A minor child of such persons.
- Spouse of an Indian citizen or an OCI cardholder (with conditions).

Benefits:

- Lifelong multiple-entry, multi-purpose visa to visit India.
- Exemption from registering with Foreigners Regional Registration Officer (FRRO).

Parity with Indian nationals in areas like:

- Domestic airfares and entry fees to monuments, parks, and national reserves.
- Admission to Indian educational institutions under NRI quota.
- Pursuing professions such as doctors, lawyers, architects, and chartered accountants (as per regulatory bodies).
- Can own property in India (except agricultural or plantation land).

Restrictions:

- No right to vote in Indian elections.
- Cannot hold public office (*e.g.*, President, Vice President, Judge of SC/HC).
- Cannot purchase agricultural land.
- Cannot travel to India for missionary, mountaineering, or research activities without prior permission.

Recent Developments:

- In 2021, the Government of India clarified that OCIs are considered foreign nationals and not Indian citizens.
- OCIs need special permission for certain professional and academic activities.

How to Apply for OCI

- Applications can be made online through the Ministry of Home Affairs website or via the Indian consulates/embassies abroad. Required documents typically include:
- Proof of current citizenship
- Proof of Indian origin (passport of self/parents/grandparents)
- Indian visa or residence permit (if applicable)

Citizenship of India

- Citizenship of India is governed by the Constitution of India and regulated by the Citizenship Act, 1955.

1. Constitutional Provisions

- **Articles 5 to 11** of the Indian Constitution deal with citizenship at the commencement of the Constitution (*i.e.*, as of January 26, 1950).
- **Article 5:** Citizenship by domicile.
- **Article 6:** Rights of migrants from Pakistan.
- **Article 7:** Rights of certain migrants to Pakistan.
- **Article 8:** Citizenship of Indians residing abroad.
- **Article 9:** Persons voluntarily acquiring citizenship of a foreign State are not Indian citizens.
- **Article 10:** Continuance of rights of citizenship.
- **Article 11:** Parliament to regulate citizenship by law.

2. Citizenship Act, 1955

- This Act provides for the acquisition and termination of Indian citizenship after the commencement of the Constitution.
- Acquisition of Citizenship

Citizenship can be acquired in the following ways:

By Birth:

- Born in India between Jan 26, 1950, and July 1, 1987: Citizen by birth.
- Born between July 1, 1987, and Dec 3, 2004: At least one parent must be an Indian citizen.
- Born on or after Dec 3, 2004: One parent must be a citizen and the other should not be an illegal migrant.

By Descent:

- Born outside India on or after Jan 26, 1950, but before Dec 10, 1992: Citizen if the father was an Indian citizen.
- Born after Dec 10, 1992: Either parent must be a citizen.
- Since Dec 3, 2004: Must be registered at an Indian consulate within a year.

By Registration:

- Available to persons of Indian origin, spouses of Indian citizens, and others after residing in India for a specified period.

By Naturalization:

- A foreigner can acquire citizenship by naturalization if they meet qualifications including 12 years of residence (11 years in the preceding 14 years, and 1 year immediately before application).

By Incorporation of Territory:

- If a territory becomes part of India, the people of the territory automatically become Indian citizens (*e.g.*, Goa, Pondicherry, Sikkim).

3. Termination of Citizenship

- **Renunciation:** Voluntary declaration by an Indian citizen to give up citizenship.
- **Termination:** If a citizen voluntarily acquires citizenship of another country (not applicable to minors).
- **Deprivation:** The government can deprive a naturalized citizen if citizenship was acquired by fraud, or if the person is disloyal or has been imprisoned within 5 years of naturalization.

4. Dual Citizenship

- India does not allow dual citizenship in the sense of holding two passports.
- However, Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) schemes grant certain privileges to foreign citizens of Indian origin.

How Indian Citizenship different from citizenship of other countries:

1. No Dual Citizenship in India

- India does not allow full dual citizenship. If an Indian citizen acquires foreign citizenship voluntarily, they lose Indian citizenship (as per Article 9 of the Constitution and the Citizenship Act, 1955).

In contrast:

- USA, UK, Canada, Australia, and many European countries allow dual or multiple citizenships.
- Japan and China do not allow dual citizenship, like India.
- **Alternative in India:** The OCI (Overseas Citizen of India) scheme grants long-term residency and other rights to foreign citizens of Indian origin, but not political rights (*e.g.*, voting or contesting elections).

2. Citizenship by Birth

- India has made its citizenship by birth rules more restrictive over time:
- Before 1987: Anyone born in India was a citizen.
- After 2004: At least one parent must be an Indian citizen, and the other must not be an illegal migrant.

In contrast:

- USA, Canada, and many South American nations follow *jus soli* (right of soil) — anyone born in the country is a citizen, regardless of parents' nationality.
- Most European and Asian countries follow *jus sanguinis* (right of blood) — citizenship is based on parentage, not birthplace.

3. Citizenship by Descent

- India allows citizenship by descent, but with strict rules:

- Children born abroad must be registered at an Indian consulate within a specific time.
- Many countries like Germany, Israel, Ireland, etc., also grant citizenship by descent, sometimes even for second or third generations.

4. Citizenship by Naturalization

In India:

- A foreigner must have resided in India for 11 out of 14 years, and 1 year immediately before application to be eligible.

In contrast:

- USA: 5 years (3 if married to a U.S. citizen).
- UK: 5 years (or 3 with a British spouse).
- Canada: 3 years of residence out of the last 5.
- India's process is longer and more selective, especially for non-South Asians.

5. Citizenship by Investment

- India does not offer citizenship by investment.

Many countries such as:

- Malta, Cyprus, Antigua & Barbuda, St. Kitts & Nevis, etc., offer “Golden Passport” or “Citizenship by Investment” programmes.

6. Citizenship Revocation

- India allows deprivation of citizenship only for naturalized or registered citizens under specific grounds (fraud, disloyalty, etc.).
- Other countries like the UK and Australia have also expanded powers to revoke citizenship, even for terror-related grounds.

QUESTIONS

- Which of the following statements correctly explains the key eligibility exception under the OCI scheme as per the Citizenship Act amendments and recent clarifications?
 - Any person of Indian origin, regardless of ancestral nationality, is eligible for OCI status.
 - Individuals whose great-grandparents were citizens of Pakistan or Bangladesh are eligible only if they were born after 1971.
 - Foreign nationals who were ever citizens of Pakistan or Bangladesh, or whose parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents held such citizenship, are ineligible for OCI registration.
 - Spouses of Pakistani or Bangladeshi citizens are allowed OCI status upon marriage to an Indian national.
- Which of the following combinations of benefits and restrictions is correctly matched for an Overseas Citizen of India (OCI)?
 - Eligible for voting rights and can purchase agricultural land in India.
 - Exempted from registering with FRRO and can work as a civil servant in India.
 - Can pursue regulated professions like medicine or law (subject to regulations) and enjoy parity in domestic airfares with Indian nationals.
 - Can contest Lok Sabha elections and also enjoy visa-free access to Indian embassies.

6. A child is born in India on October 15, 2005. The child's mother is an Indian citizen, and the father is a foreign national who entered India illegally and remains undocumented. According to the Citizenship Act, 1955, will the child be considered an Indian citizen by birth?
- A. Yes, since the mother is an Indian citizen.
 - B. No, because the father is not an Indian citizen.
 - C. Yes, if the child applies for naturalization.
 - D. No, because one parent is an illegal migrant.
7. A person born outside India on January 15, 2005, can claim Indian citizenship by descent under which of the following conditions?
- A. If either parent is an Indian citizen, regardless of place or time of birth.
 - B. Only if the birth is registered at an Indian consulate within one year and either parent is an Indian citizen.
 - C. Only if the father is an Indian citizen and consulate registration is not required.
 - D. Only if both parents are Indian citizens and the person resides in India for at least 7 years.

3. Operation Gideon's Chariots

- Israel has launched a major ground offensive in the Gaza Strip under the name Operation Gideon's Chariots, escalating its military campaign after more than two months of a complete blockade.
- The offensive follows the collapse of a ceasefire in March and comes amid stalled peace talks in Doha between Israeli and Hamas negotiators.
- Backed by intense airstrikes, the Israeli military is targeting both northern and southern Gaza, claiming the aim is to expand "operational control," defeat Hamas, and rescue captives held in Gaza.
- However, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces criticism for sidelining the release of captives and rejecting ceasefire proposals from Hamas.
- Leaked comments from Netanyahu also revealed intentions of forced displacement of Palestinians, raising international concern.
- The offensive began during the second day of ongoing ceasefire negotiations, a timing consistent with Israel's historical pattern of intensifying operations during peace talks.
- The operation coincided with the end of a U.S. Middle East tour by President Donald Trump, who did not visit Israel, adding to the political context of the assault.
- Israel claims to be targeting Hamas infrastructure, but human rights groups challenge these claims, noting repeated attacks on civilian infrastructure, including hospitals.
- The Indonesian Hospital in northern Gaza, a critical facility, has been rendered non-operational due to Israeli attacks.
- Hamas responded by condemning the attacks, particularly on displaced civilians in Khan Younis, labeling them as war crimes.

- The group accused the United States of direct complicity due to its military and political support for Israel.
- The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has worsened drastically.
- The UN reports that over 90% of the population is displaced, with many Palestinians forced to move multiple times.
- Famine looms large, with two million people starving and aid deliveries halted since March 2.
- The World Health Organization warned that 116,000 tonnes of aid are stuck at the border, while 9,000 children have been hospitalized due to acute malnutrition.
- Under growing international pressure, Netanyahu announced that Israel would allow limited food into Gaza to prevent a hunger crisis. However, no clear timeline has been given for opening the border.
- Meanwhile, ceasefire talks continue with little progress, as both sides entered negotiations without preconditions but remain at a stalemate.

Matter of concern between Israel and Palestine

- The main matter of concern between Israel and Palestine is a long-standing and deeply complex conflict centered around territory, national identity, security, and sovereignty.

1. Territorial Disputes

1947 UN Partition Plan:

- Proposed dividing British Mandate Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. Jews accepted; Arabs rejected it.

1948 Arab-Israeli War:

- After Israel declared independence, neighboring Arab countries attacked. Israel expanded its territory.
- Over 700,000 Palestinians became refugees.

1967 Six-Day War:

- Israel occupied the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights, and Sinai Peninsula (returned to Egypt in 1979). The West Bank and East Jerusalem remain occupied.
- Palestinians seek an independent state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem.

2. Jerusalem

- A sacred city for Jews, Muslims, and Christians.
- Israel claims all of Jerusalem as its capital.
- Palestinians want East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.
- International community is divided on recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

3. Israeli Settlements

- Israel has built Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
- These are considered illegal under international law (Fourth Geneva Convention), though Israel disputes this.
- Settlements fragment the West Bank and hinder the formation of a viable Palestinian state.

4. Refugees and Right of Return

- Around 5 million Palestinian refugees are registered with UNRWA, many in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Gaza, and the West Bank.
- Palestinians demand the right of return for refugees and their descendants.
- Israel rejects this, fearing it would alter the Jewish character of the state.

5. Security and Violence

- Israel cites security concerns for maintaining military control over the West Bank and enforcing blockades on Gaza.
- Gaza, under Hamas rule since 2007, faces blockades from both Israel and Egypt, contributing to a humanitarian crisis.

6. Recognition and Political Status

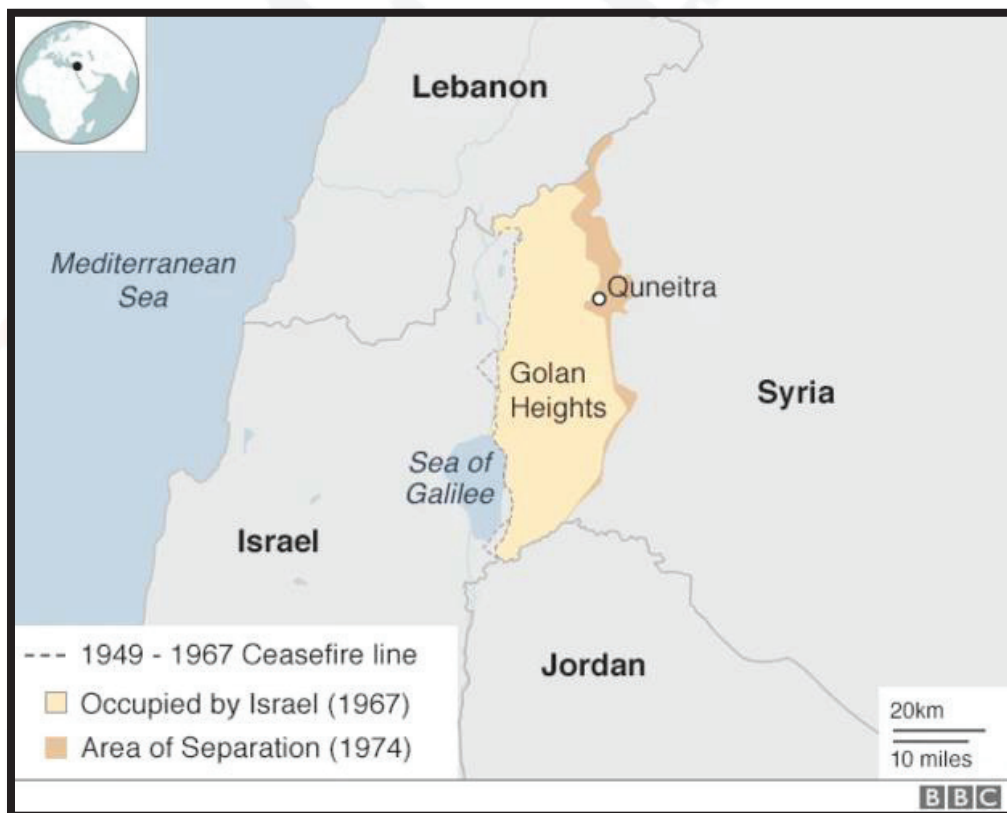
- Israel seeks recognition as a Jewish state.
- Palestinians demand statehood and international recognition.
- Many countries recognize Palestine as a state, but no full UN membership due to US vetoes in the Security Council.

7. Peace Process Stalemate

- Several attempts at peace talks (e.g., Oslo Accords, Camp David, Annapolis, US initiatives) have failed or stalled.

Golan Heights

- **Location:** A plateau in southwestern Syria, bordering Lebanon to the north, Jordan to the south, Israel to the west, and Syria proper to the east.
- **Area:** Approximately 1,800 square kilometers (about 690 square miles).
- **Terrain:** Elevated, with volcanic hills, making it militarily strategic and a source of freshwater.



Historical Context

- **Pre-1967:** Part of Syria.
- **1967 Six-Day War:** Captured by Israel from Syria.
- **1973 Yom Kippur War:** Syria attempted to recapture the territory but failed.
- **1981 Israeli Annexation:** Israel unilaterally extended its law and administration to the Golan Heights, effectively annexing it. This move has not been widely recognized internationally.

International Status

- **UN Position:** The United Nations regards the Golan Heights as occupied Syrian territory.
- **UNSC Resolution 497 (1981):** Declared the Israeli annexation “null and void and without international legal effect.”
- **U.S. Recognition (2019):** The United States under President Donald Trump recognized Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, breaking with most of the international community.

Strategic Importance

- **Military:** Its elevation provides a strong strategic advantage for military observation and defense.
- **Water Resources:** It includes the headwaters of the Jordan River, making it vital for water security.
- **Security:** Israel views control over the Golan Heights as essential for defense against potential attacks from Syria.

Demographics:

- **Population:** Roughly 50,000 people live there.
- Half are Israeli Jews living in settlements.
- The other halves are Druze, most of whom identify as Syrian and have resisted Israeli citizenship.

Current Issues

- **Settlement Expansion:** Israeli settlements continue to expand despite international objections.
- **Border Tensions:** Occasional military clashes and security concerns, especially related to the Syrian civil war and presence of Iranian-backed militias in Syria.
- **Peace Prospects:** Long-standing peace negotiations between Israel and Syria have stalled, partly due to the Golan issue.

QUESTIONS

8. Why is the Golan Heights considered strategically and geopolitically significant, particularly in the context of the Israel-Syria conflict?
- A. It is a densely populated valley controlling access to the Mediterranean Sea.
 - B. It provides Syria with naval bases along Israel’s western border.
 - C. It is an elevated plateau offering military advantage and contains vital water resources.
 - D. It is the only route linking Gaza and the West Bank through Syria.

9. Which of the following is a correctly matched pair concerning major historical wars and their impact on the territorial status of Palestine or Israel?
- A. 1947 Partition Plan – Israel gains West Bank from Egypt
 - B. 1948 Arab-Israeli War – Over 700,000 Palestinians became refugees
 - C. 1967 Six-Day War – Israel loses East Jerusalem to Jordan
 - D. 1973 Yom Kippur War – Palestine gains control of Golan Heights
10. Which of the following aspects of Operation Gideon's Chariots reflects a pattern seen in Israel's historical military strategy during peace negotiations?
- A. Initiation of offensives coinciding with ceasefire implementation.
 - B. Launching major offensives during ongoing international mediation or peace talks.
 - C. Unilateral withdrawal from all contested zones as a confidence-building measure.
 - D. Offering recognition of Palestinian sovereignty in exchange for disarmament.

4. Golden Dome defence system announced by Donald Trump

- United States President Donald Trump announced that he has selected a \$175 bn design for the multilayered Golden Dome missile defence programme aimed at countering aerial threats “even if they are launched from space”.
- As part of the project, the US would deploy missile interceptors in space to shield against ballistic and hypersonic threats.

What did Trump announce?

- Trump announced \$25 bn initial funding for the project that will cost \$175 bn and be completed by the end of his current term in 2029.
- US Space Force General Michael Guetlein would be the lead programme manager, responsible for overseeing the project's progress.

What is the Golden Dome project?

- Golden Dome was made to take down “hypersonic missiles, ballistic missiles and advanced cruise missiles”, adding that the programme would have space-based interceptors and sensors.
- The system is aimed at protecting “the homeland from cruise missiles, ballistic missiles, hypersonic missiles, drones, whether they're conventional or nuclear”.
- Trump signed an executive order to “immediately begin the construction of a state-of-the-art Iron Dome missile defence shield, which will be able to protect Americans”.
- The Iron Dome is Israel's missile defence system which detects an incoming rocket, determines its path, and intercepts it.
- The development of the system was funded by a grant from the US.
- Existing defence capabilities will be used in the construction of the project, and predicted the total cost would be about \$175 bn.

- The White House has not yet released further details about the project.
- The system would be developed in the US, he has not named which companies will be involved.
- A space-based defence system was first envisaged by Ronald Reagan, the Republican US president from 1981 to 1989.
- Amidst the Cold War, Reagan proposed a barrier to nuclear weapons that included space-based technology, as part of his Strategic Defense Initiative, or Star Wars project.

Is the Golden Dome plan feasible?

- Industry experts have questioned the timeline and budget of the plan.
- Funding for the Golden Dome has not yet been secured.
- Trump confirmed that he was seeking \$25 bn for the system in a tax cut bill currently moving through Congress, although that sum could be cut amid ongoing negotiations.
- Additionally, some variation is expected in the total cost of the project.
- Trump had been given three versions of the plan, described as “medium,” “high”, and “extra high”.
- These versions correspond to the number of satellites, sensors and interceptors that will be placed in space.
- Trump picked the “high” version, which has an initial cost ranging between \$30 bn and \$100 bn.
- “The new data point is the \$175 billion, but the question remains, over what period of time.
- On May 1, 42 Democratic members of the US Congress signed a letter questioning the possible involvement of Elon Musk’s SpaceX, which is among the top technology companies seeking to build key components of the Golden Dome.

How did China and Russia – the US’s biggest rivals – react?

- The US sees a growing threat from China and Russia, its main adversaries.
- Over the past decades, China has greatly advanced its ballistic and hypersonic missile technology, while Moscow boasts one of the most advanced intercontinental-range missile systems in the world.
- Russia and the US have amassed the largest arsenals of nuclear warheads worldwide.
- The threat of drones has also grown amid advancements in technology.
- China denounced the Golden Dome as a threat to international security and accused the US of prompting an arms race.
- “The United States puts its own interests first and is obsessed with seeking its own absolute security, which violates the principle that no country’s security should come at the expense of others,”.
- “(The plan) heightens the risk of space becoming a battlefield, fuels an arms race, and undermines international security,”.

Star Wars project

- The “Star Wars” project refers to a U.S. military initiative formally known as the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI)

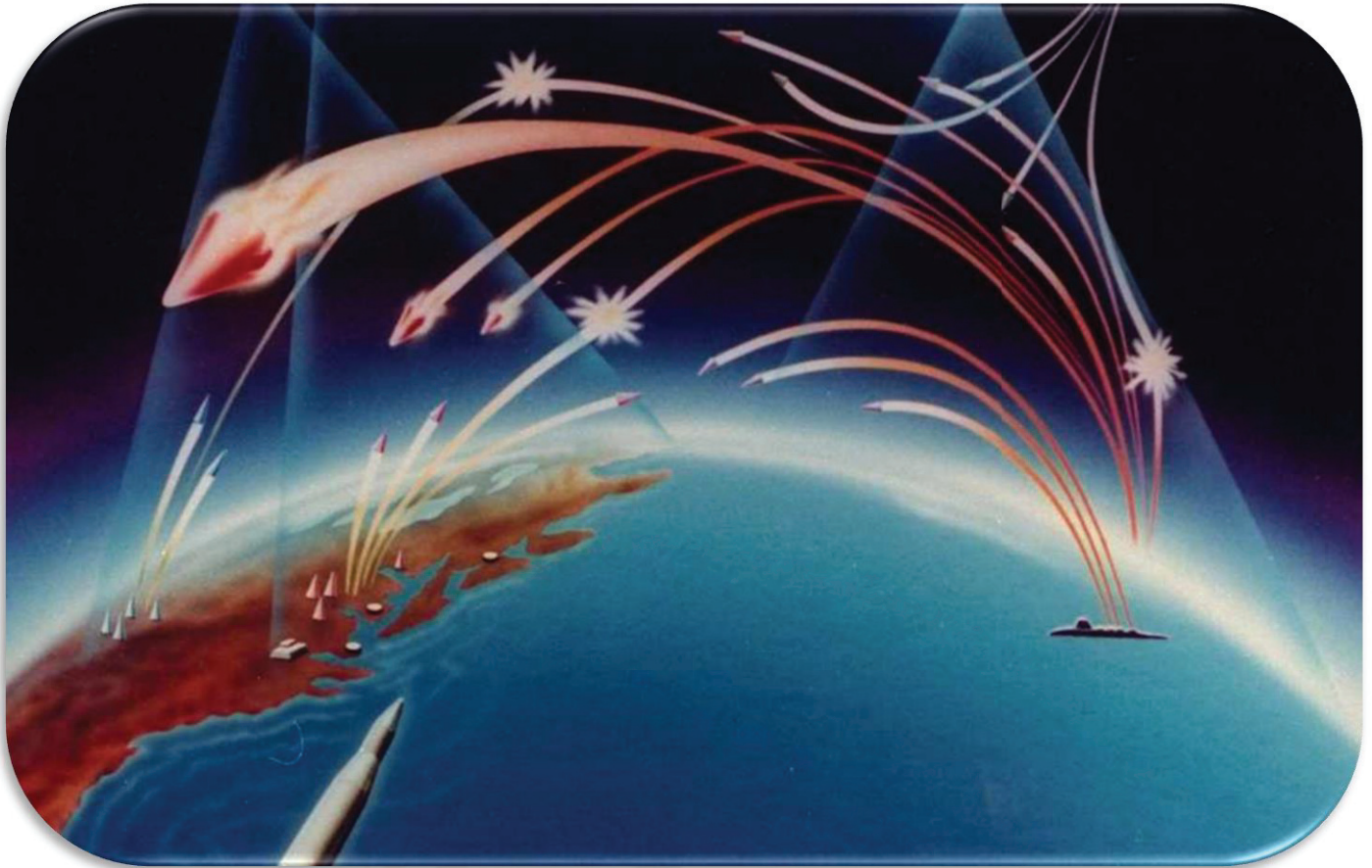
- **Nickname:** Star Wars
- **Launched by:** President Ronald Reagan
- **Date Announced:** March 23, 1983

Purpose:

- To develop a missile defense system that could protect the United States from attack by nuclear ballistic missiles, particularly from the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

Key Features:

- Intended to intercept and destroy incoming ICBMs (Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles) before they reached U.S. territory.
- Proposed the use of space-based weapons and ground-based missile interceptors.



Included advanced technologies like:

- Lasers in space
- Kinetic energy weapons
- X-ray lasers mounted on satellites
- Particle beam weapons

Why It Was Called “Star Wars”:

- The media dubbed it “Star Wars” because the idea of using high-tech weapons in space sounded futuristic and similar to the science fiction universe of the Star Wars films.

Outcome and Legacy:

- Technologically challenging and very expensive — estimated to cost hundreds of billions of dollars.
- Faced scientific skepticism and international criticism, especially from the Soviet Union, which saw it as a threat to nuclear deterrence.

- Never fully implemented, but parts of the research contributed to later missile defense systems.
- Led to developments in space surveillance and laser technology.
- Influenced later programs such as the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization (BMDO) and the Missile Defense Agency (MDA).

QUESTIONS

- Which of the following correctly differentiates Donald Trump's Golden Dome project from Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), also known as "Star Wars"?
 - Golden Dome is designed only to intercept nuclear ICBMs, while SDI targeted all aerial threats including drones.
 - Golden Dome includes operational deployment of interceptors in space, whereas SDI remained largely conceptual.
 - SDI was developed jointly with Israel, while Golden Dome is led by NATO.
 - SDI focused exclusively on ground-based systems, while Golden Dome is exclusively sea-based.
- Why has the Golden Dome project raised strategic concerns regarding the weaponization of space, particularly under international arms control norms?
 - It violates the Outer Space Treaty by deploying nuclear weapons in orbit.
 - It proposes to place sensors and interceptors in space, which can be seen as dual-use military assets.
 - The project calls for space-based missile launches targeting Earth-bound satellites.
 - It openly calls for satellite collisions as a missile neutralization strategy.

5. Gyan Bharatam Mission

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the revamped National Manuscripts Mission, which was announced in the Union Budget earlier this year.
- The 'Gyan Bharatam Mission', which is expected to cover more than one crore manuscripts, would be responsible for the survey, documentation and conservation of India's manuscript heritage lying with academic institutions, museums, libraries and private collectors.
- To accommodate this new initiative, the Union Budget had hiked the budgetary allocation for the existing National Manuscripts Mission (NMM) from ₹3.5 crore to ₹60 crore.
- Union Ministry of Culture was set to "revive and relaunch" the NMM and was mulling the formation of an autonomous body to help preserve ancient texts in India.
- Presently, NMM is a part of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts. It was set up in 2003, but had not taken off as expected.
- The Culture Ministry had organised a meeting first on October 14, 2024, to discuss the way forward.
- NMM has till date, prepared a metadata of 52 lakh manuscripts and roughly over three lakh titles have been digitised. However, only one-third of them have been uploaded.
- Around 80% of manuscripts in India are with private parties.

- The NMM has also informed that over the last 21 years, they have undertaken preventive and curative conservation of nine crore folios.

Indian Manuscripts

- India's manuscripts have for centuries captured the imagination of the world. As early as the seventh century Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang took back hundreds of manuscripts from India.
- Later in the late eighteenth century, the Nawab of Awadh gifted a superb illuminated manuscript of the Padshahnama to King George III of England.
- When the English East India Company first came to India, they acknowledged the sub-continent as the bearer of a great and rich civilization that abounded in intellectual and artistic endeavour.
- Great scholars took an avid interest in many facets of the culture of the sub-continent as found in the vast treasure of handwritten manuscripts on a variety of materials including palm leaf, paper, cloth and even gold and silver.
- The Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India, established the National Mission for Manuscripts in February 2003 as an ambitious project with the specific objectives of locating, documenting, conserving and disseminating the knowledge content of India's manuscripts.
- A unique project in its programme and mandate, the Mission seeks to unearth and preserve the vast manuscript wealth of India. India possesses an estimate of five million manuscripts, probably the largest collection in the world.
- These cover a variety of themes, textures and aesthetics, scripts, languages, calligraphies, illuminations and illustrations. Together, they constitute the 'memory' of India's history, heritage and thought.
- The National Mission for Manuscripts revived the New Catalogus Catalogorum programme in 2003 with Madras University. Till date thirty six volumes have been published.
- Working with specially identified Manuscript Resource Centres (MRC-s) and Manuscript Conservation Centres (MCC-s) in states all over the country, the Mission collects data on manuscripts located in a variety of places, from universities and libraries to temples, mathas, madrasas, monasteries and private collections.

Gilgit manuscripts

- The oldest surviving manuscripts in India are the Gilgit manuscripts, dating back to the 5th to 6th century A.D.
- These birch bark and clay coated manuscripts, discovered in the Gilgit region of Kashmir, contain Buddhist texts written in a hybrid Sanskrit language and Gupta Brahmi script.

Bower Manuscript:

- Another significant collection of ancient Indian manuscripts, the Bower manuscript, also dates back to the 5th or 6th century and contains texts on medicine and divination, now at the University of Oxford.

Spitzer Manuscript:

- This manuscript, dating to the early centuries CE, includes a list of the chapters of the Mahābhārata and is kept in Berlin.

Bakhshali Manuscript:

- While the Gilgit manuscripts are generally considered the oldest, the Bakhshali manuscript, a mathematical text, may be older than previously thought, with carbon dating suggesting it dates from as early as the 3rd or 4th century CE

Manuscript

- A manuscript is a handwritten composition on paper, bark, cloth, metal, palm leaf or any other material dating back at least seventy-five years that has significant scientific, historical or aesthetic value.
- Lithographs and printed volumes are not manuscripts. Manuscripts are found in hundreds of different languages and scripts.
- Often, one language is written in a number of different scripts.
- For example, Sanskrit is written in Oriya script, Grantha script, Devanagari script and many other scripts.
- Manuscripts are distinct from historical records such as epigraphs on rocks, firmans, revenue records which provide direct information on events or processes in history. Manuscripts have knowledge content.

Scripts & Languages

- Script is a particular system or style of writing.
- It can be comprehended as symbolic representation of sounds of a particular language.
- Since the time immemorial India is one of the countries multifaceted in terms of language, scripts, and culture.
- There are hundreds of languages and dialects are spoken in different parts of the country even today. This perhaps has prompted Indian manuscripts to cover a wide range of themes.
- The Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India lists only 22 official languages of the Republic of India.
- As far as National Mission for Manuscripts is concerned, it primarily deals with ancient scripts of manuscripts.
- There are some ancient scripts which are taught in the Manuscriptology & Palaeography workshops *i.e.* Brahmi, Gupta, Kutila, Nagari, Nandinagari, Sharada, Grantha, Kharosthi, vattelutu, Kaithi, Karani, Odia, Modi, Siddham, Lepcha, Naskh, Nasta'liq, Kufic, Reqa'i, Sulsi etc.
- Most of the Indian scripts have been used for writing 70% of manuscripts are in the Sanskrit language.
- Other 30% of manuscripts are in languages like Assamese, Bengali, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Meithei /Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Newari/Nepal Bhasa, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Chakma etc.



QUESTIONS

13. Which of the following statements best explains why the Gyan Bharatam Mission represents a significant policy shift in India's cultural preservation strategy?
- It replaces the National Archives of India with a decentralized digital platform.
 - It focuses exclusively on Sanskrit manuscripts, leaving regional language texts to state governments.
 - It transitions the National Manuscripts Mission from a limited archival initiative to a comprehensive national survey, documentation, and conservation program with significantly enhanced funding.
 - It aims to convert all manuscripts into printed lithographs for public distribution under a private-public partnership model.
14. Which of the following correctly identifies the primary distinction between a manuscript and other historical records like inscriptions or firmans?
- Manuscripts are created using metallic ink and paper, while inscriptions are etched on stone.
 - Manuscripts carry abstract philosophical reflections, while historical records are purely factual.
 - Manuscripts represent handwritten documents with embedded knowledge content, whereas inscriptions or firmans are considered direct event records or administrative documents.
 - Manuscripts are in classical Sanskrit only, while historical records are multilingual.
15. Which of the following combinations of ancient Indian manuscripts and their unique features is correctly matched?
- Gilgit Manuscripts – Jain cosmology written in Devanagari on palm leaf
 - Bower Manuscript – Medical and divinatory texts written on birch bark in hybrid Sanskrit
 - Spitzer Manuscript – Pali Buddhist sermons discovered in Tamil Nadu
 - Bakhshali Manuscript – Jain algebraic texts written in Arabic numerals

6. 16th Census Confirms 891 Asiatic Lions across 11 Districts in Gujarat

- Gujarat has successfully completed its 16th Asiatic lion population census, with Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel announcing a total of 891 lions now thriving across 11 districts in the state.
- The figures reflect a continuing upward trend in lion numbers and underscore the effectiveness of Gujarat's long-standing conservation efforts, including the government-backed Project Lion.
- The four-day census, held from May 10 to 13, covered an extensive area of 35,000 square kilometers, spanning 58 talukas in districts such as Junagadh, Gir Somnath, Amreli, Bhavnagar, Rajkot, Morbi, Surendranagar, Devbhumi Dwarka, Jamnagar, Porbandar, and Botad.
- Preliminary figures from the census indicate that of the 891 lions counted, 196 are adult males, while the rest include females, sub-adults, and cubs.
- Unlike their African counterparts, Asiatic lions once roamed from the Middle East to India, but due to extensive hunting and habitat loss, their numbers dwindled drastically by the early 20th century.

Project Lion

- Project Lion is an initiative launched by the Government of India aimed at the conservation of the Asiatic lion (*Panthera leo persica*), which is found only in India.



What is Project Lion?

- **Launched by:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2020 during the Independence Day speech.
- **Objective:** To protect and conserve the Asiatic lion, which is currently found only in the Gir Forest National Park and surrounding areas in Gujarat.
- **Implemented by:** Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Why is it Important?

- The Asiatic lion is an endangered species and is listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

- It is also listed as Endangered in the IUCN Red List.
- Their limited range (primarily Gir Forest) makes them vulnerable to disease, natural disasters, and other localized threats.

Key Features of Project Lion

Landscape Approach:

- Goes beyond the Gir forest to include other areas in the Saurashtra region for lion conservation.
- Focuses on habitat improvement and expansion.

Modern Technologies:

- Use of drone technology, camera traps, and satellite imaging for better tracking and monitoring.
- Deployment of trackers and sensors on lions for real-time data.

Disease Management:

- Focus on veterinary care, vaccination, and rapid response teams to manage potential disease outbreaks like canine distemper virus (CDV).

Genetic Diversity:

- Plans for scientific management of the lion population to maintain genetic diversity.
- Possibility of relocation to other suitable habitats to avoid over-concentration in one area.

Community Participation:

- Involvement of local communities in conservation efforts.
- Eco-development activities to support sustainable livelihoods and reduce man-animal conflicts.

World Lion Day

- World Lion Day is celebrated annually on August 10th to raise awareness about the declining lion population and the urgent need for their conservation.
- It's a day to acknowledge the importance of lions in the ecosystem and to promote efforts to protect them from threats like habitat loss, poaching, and human-wildlife conflict.

Project Elephant

- Project Elephant is a flagship initiative launched by the Government of India in 1992 to ensure the long-term survival of the Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*) in its natural habitats across India.
- It is managed by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

Objectives of Project Elephant

- Protection of elephants, their habitats, and corridors.
- Addressing human-elephant conflict (HEC) through mitigation strategies.
- Welfare of captive elephants.
- Research and monitoring of wild elephant populations and their migration patterns.
- Education and awareness programs to garner public support for conservation.

Elephant Reserves in India

There are 33 Elephant Reserves (ERs) across 14 states (as of 2025), including:

- Singhbhum Elephant Reserve (Jharkhand) – First ER (1992)
- Nilgiri Elephant Reserve (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka)

- Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong ER (Assam)
- Mayurjharna ER (West Bengal)

Important:

- India is home to over 60% of the global wild Asian elephant population.
- Elephants are classified as Schedule I species under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and are also listed in Appendix I of CITES, which provides the highest level of international protection.

Gaj Yatra and Haathi Mere Saathi Campaigns

- **Gaj Yatra:** A nationwide awareness campaign launched to mark the 30th anniversary of Project Elephant.
- **Haathi Mere Saathi:** A mass campaign involving creative art, music, and community outreach to reduce human-elephant conflict and promote coexistence.

World Elephant Day

- Celebrated on August 12 every year to raise awareness of the threats facing elephants and to support conservation efforts globally.

Project Tiger

- Project Tiger is a flagship conservation program launched by the Government of India in 1973 to protect the Bengal tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*) and its natural habitat.
- It is one of the most successful wildlife conservation efforts in the world.

Objectives of Project Tiger:

- Ensure a viable population of tigers in India for scientific, economic, aesthetic, cultural, and ecological values.
- Protect tiger habitats from degradation and fragmentation.
- Minimize human-tiger conflict by relocating villages and managing buffer zones.
- Foster eco-development for local communities living around tiger reserves.
 - **Launched:** April 1, 1973.
 - **Initial Tiger Reserves:** 9 (e.g., Jim Corbett, Kanha, Manas, Simlipal).

As of 2025:

- As of March 2025, India has 58 tiger reserves established under Project Tiger to protect the endangered species and their habitat.
- These reserves are spread across various states, including Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Uttarakhand.
- Notable examples include Ranthambore National Park, Satpura Tiger Reserve, and Jim Corbett National Park.

Tiger population growth:

- **1973:** ~1,800 tigers
- **2006:** ~1,411 tigers (a low point)
- **2018:** 2,967 tigers

- **2022-23 (latest):** 3,682 tigers
(India hosts ~75% of the global wild tiger population)
- **International Recognition:** Project Tiger is a model for tiger conservation globally.

Administered By:

- National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) – Established in 2006 under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 to strengthen tiger conservation.

QUESTIONS

16. Which of the following pairs is correctly matched regarding wildlife conservation projects and their launch years?

Conservation Project	:	Launch Year
A. Project Tiger	:	1985
B. Project Elephant	:	1992
C. Project Lion	:	2003
D. Project Crocodile	:	2010

17. Which of the following statements is correct regarding the status of elephants and lions under Indian and international law?

- A. Asiatic lions are listed in Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act, while elephants are in Schedule I.
- B. Both elephants and lions are protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, but only elephants are included in Appendix I of CITES.
- C. Lions and elephants are both included in CITES Appendix II due to their large populations.
- D. Elephants enjoy no international protection due to their domestication in India.

18. Which of the following methods were specifically mentioned as part of modern tracking technologies in the latest Project Lion efforts?

- A. AI-based facial recognition and DNA editing of lions
- B. Real-time satellite-based collars, drone surveillance, and sensor deployment
- C. RFID tagging in paw pads and biometric cages
- D. Smart bio-implants that trigger sedatives in case of human interaction

7. Member states of WHO adopt global pandemic treaty

- Following more than three years of arduous negotiations, member states of the World Health Organization (WHO) adopted a legally binding treaty designed to tackle future pandemics better.
- The pandemic treaty, which has been adopted without the United States, is the only the second legally binding accord in the WHO's 75-year history, the first being the 2003 tobacco control treaty.

But first, why was there a need for a global pandemic treaty?

- The negotiations for a global pandemic treaty began in December 2021, at a time when the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 was spreading across the world and producing a massive new surge of COVID-19.
- By then, countries that were manufacturing COVID-19 vaccines had hoarded millions of doses, leaving those with no vaccine plants often with no access to the shots.
- A 2022 study published by the journal Nature revealed that more than one million lives could have been saved if COVID-19 vaccines had been shared more equitably with lower-income countries — the virus had claimed more than seven million lives across the world.
- “The combination of poor strategic choices, unwillingness to tackle inequalities, and an uncoordinated system created a toxic cocktail which allowed the pandemic to turn into a catastrophic human crisis.”
- In a bid to prevent loss of human life, and disruption to households and societies at large – as it happened due to the COVID-19 pandemic — during future pandemics, WHO member states got together and began to iron out a treaty.
- It took nearly three-and-a-half years and 13 rounds of meetings to reach the deal.

What does the pandemic treaty say?

- One of the key elements of the agreement is a “pathogen access and benefit sharing” system, which gives pharmaceutical companies access to scientific data such as pathogen samples and genomic sequences in return for more equitable sharing of drugs, vaccines and diagnostics during a pandemic.
- The treaty says participating manufacturers will have to allocate 10% of their production of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics to the WHO. Another 10% will then be supplied at “affordable prices”.
- Also, member states should “promote and otherwise facilitate or incentivise” the exchange of technology and know-how to help manufacturers in developing nations make their own drugs and vaccines, the agreement says.
- Countries also need to develop national policies for putting conditions on research into drugs and vaccines that they fund — given either to universities or companies — to guarantee “timely and equitable access” to resulting drugs or diagnostics during pandemics.

How strong is the global pandemic treaty?

- Clause 24, paragraph three states, “Nothing in the WHO Pandemic Agreement shall be interpreted as providing the WHO Secretariat, including the WHO Director-General, any authority to direct, order, alter, or otherwise prescribe the national and/or domestic laws, as appropriate, or policies of any Party.”
- The treaty also says that the WHO does not have the power to mandate or otherwise impose any requirements such as “ban or accept travellers, impose vaccination mandates or therapeutic or diagnostic measures, or implement lockdown”.
- This means that in a situation like the fierce competition for COVID-19 vaccines, the WHO would have no way to ensure countries adhere to the terms to which they had agreed.
- As a result, pharmaceutical companies may hesitate to commit resources to developing medical solutions for emerging pathogens.

- Intellectual property protection and legal certainty are essential for the innovative-based pharmaceutical industry to invest in high-risk research and development and enable voluntary partnerships that we will need in the next pandemic.
- Also, currently, there is no clarity on how the pathogen access and benefit sharing system will work.

Epidemic and Pandemic

- The terms pandemic and epidemic both refer to the spread of infectious diseases, but they differ mainly in terms of scale, geographical reach, and impact.

1. Epidemic

- **Definition:** An epidemic is an outbreak of a disease that spreads rapidly among individuals in a specific geographic area or population.
- **Scope:** Limited to a community, region, or country.

Examples:

- Ebola outbreak in West Africa (2014–2016)
- Zika virus in Brazil (2015–2016)
- Cholera outbreaks in Yemen

2. Pandemic

- **Definition:** A pandemic is an epidemic that has spread over multiple countries or continents, usually affecting a large number of people.
- **Scope:** Global or international scale.

Examples:

- COVID-19 pandemic (2019–present)
- H1N1 influenza (swine flu) pandemic (2009)
- Spanish flu (1918–1919)

78th World Health Assembly

- India addressed the plenary session of the 78th World Health Assembly, reaffirming its commitment to global health equity under the theme “One World for Health.”
- India has extended health coverage under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana to all citizens above 70 years of age, regardless of economic status.
- WHO and member states on the historic progress made toward advancing the Pandemic Treaty, while emphasizing the importance of confronting future health challenges with a commitment to ensuring that no one is left behind.

QUESTIONS

19. Which of the following provisions of the WHO Pandemic Treaty most directly aims to address the vaccine inequity observed during the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - A. Establishing binding national lockdown protocols across member countries
 - B. Requiring 20% of pandemic-related health products to be allocated to the WHO or at affordable prices
 - C. Allowing WHO to mandate international travel bans and vaccine passports
 - D. Establishing centralized manufacturing hubs in Geneva for all pandemic responses

20. Which of the following best illustrates the principle of "pathogen access and benefit sharing" as defined in the WHO Pandemic Treaty?
- A. Allowing universal copyright claims on medical patents
 - B. Mandating countries to share vaccines only with G7 nations
 - C. Sharing pathogen samples and genomic data in return for equitable distribution of medical countermeasures
 - D. Banning the export of biological samples from outbreak zones
21. Why is the WHO Pandemic Treaty considered only the second legally binding international accord in the organization's history?
- A. It legally binds countries to military cooperation during health crises
 - B. It follows the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (2003) as the only other such accord
 - C. It mandates dual citizenship for healthcare workers
 - D. It abolishes patent rights of companies during pandemics

8. China, Pakistan, Afghanistan meet in Beijing, decide to expand CPEC

- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a key component of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), is set to be expanded to Afghanistan, marking a significant development in regional connectivity and geopolitical dynamics.
- This expansion was announced following a trilateral meeting in Beijing involving Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, and Afghanistan's acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi.
- The meeting aimed to revive the long-dormant trilateral foreign ministers' mechanism and boost cooperation amid regional tensions.
- The three sides agreed to deepen collaboration on infrastructure, security, and regional connectivity, with a specific focus on extending CPEC into Afghanistan.
- The Chinese Foreign Ministry emphasized joint efforts in building regional interconnection networks and combating terrorism.
- It called for vigilance against external interference in the region's internal affairs, a veiled reference to broader geopolitical rivalries.
- India has strongly opposed the CPEC since it passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), territory it claims as its own.
- New Delhi is also critical of the larger BRI framework.
- Tensions have escalated further with India recently deciding to put the 1960 Indus Water Treaty with Pakistan in abeyance and amid ongoing military tensions.

- The trilateral meeting also took place against the backdrop of strained relations between Islamabad and the Taliban government, particularly over Pakistan's deportation of Afghan refugees and the Taliban's alleged inaction against anti-Pakistan militant groups operating from Afghan territory. Despite these issues, China reiterated its support for the sovereignty, security, and national dignity of both Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- Looking ahead, the three countries agreed to hold the 6th Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Kabul at a mutually convenient date, signaling a continued commitment to dialogue and cooperation amid complex regional challenges and shifting diplomatic alignments.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a major infrastructure and economic development project between China and Pakistan, and a flagship component of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Overview

- **Launched:** April 2015 (during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Pakistan)
- **Total Estimated Investment:** Over \$62 billion
- **Core Objective:** Connect China's western region (Xinjiang) with Pakistan's Gwadar Port on the Arabian Sea via a network of roads, railways, pipelines, and energy projects.

Strategic Importance

For China:

- Provides direct access to the Arabian Sea, bypassing the longer route through the Strait of Malacca.
- Helps develop its underdeveloped western region (Xinjiang).
- Enhances its regional influence and trade connectivity.

For Pakistan:

- Aims to improve infrastructure, energy supply, and boost economic development.
- Seen as a means to enhance connectivity and investment in Baluchistan and other less developed regions.

Infrastructure Development:

- Roads (e.g., Karakoram Highway expansion)
- Rail networks (upgrading Pakistan Railways' ML-1 line)
- Gwadar Port development and Free Zone

Energy Projects:

- Coal, hydro, solar, and wind power projects
- Aimed at addressing Pakistan's chronic energy shortages

Special Economic Zones (SEZs):

- Planned across various regions to promote industry and job creation

Challenges and Criticism

- **Security Concerns:** Militancy and separatist movements, especially in Baluchistan
- **Debt Trap Allegations:** Critics argue CPEC may increase Pakistan's dependence on Chinese loans
- **Local Discontent:** Concerns over displacement, lack of local benefit, and transparency

- **Geopolitical Tensions:** India opposes CPEC as it passes through Gilgit-Baltistan, a region it claims as part of Jammu and Kashmir

Current Status (as of 2024)

- Many energy and infrastructure projects have been completed, while others are ongoing or delayed.
- Phase II of CPEC focuses on industrial cooperation, agriculture, technology, and people-to-people connectivity.

Significance in Global Politics

- CPEC symbolizes China's growing footprint in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region.
- It has shifted regional alliances and raised concerns among India, the U.S., and other Western powers.

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

- The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a global infrastructure and economic development strategy initiated by China in 2013, under the leadership of President Xi Jinping. The initiative aims to enhance regional connectivity and embrace an ambitious economic and geopolitical vision by building infrastructure and broadening trade links across Asia, Africa, Europe, and beyond.

Silk Road Economic Belt:

- Focuses on connecting China to Europe through Central Asia.
- Land-based route following the ancient Silk Road.

21st Century Maritime Silk Road:

- Sea-based route linking China to Southeast Asia, Africa, and Europe via sea lanes.
- Enhances maritime trade and port development.

Objectives

- Improve global trade and investment flows.
- Enhance China's influence in global economic governance.
- Promote regional development and economic integration.
- Export Chinese industrial overcapacity (*e.g.*, steel, cement).
- Secure energy routes and markets.

Infrastructure Projects Include

- Roads, railways, ports, pipelines, and power plants.

Examples:

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

- Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway in Kenya
- Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka

Participation

- Over 150 countries and international organizations have signed cooperation agreements.
- Involves developing and developed countries, although mostly focused on Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe.

Criticism and Challenges

Debt-trap diplomacy:

- Critics argue that BRI loans lead to unsustainable debt levels in some countries.

- Lack of transparency in project financing and terms.
- Environmental concerns due to large-scale infrastructure development.
- Geopolitical tensions, especially with the United States, India, and EU nations, who view BRI as a tool of Chinese strategic expansion.
- Delays and corruption in some projects.

QUESTIONS

22. India opposes the CPEC project primarily because:
- A. It competes with India's Sagarmala maritime project
 - B. It involves Chinese military presence in Nepal
 - C. It passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), which India claims as its own
 - D. It includes investments in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka
23. Which of the following best explains why CPEC is viewed as a debt trap by critics?
- A. Pakistan has taken multiple IMF loans to fund CPEC projects
 - B. Pakistan is required to invest in Chinese social welfare schemes
 - C. Many CPEC projects are funded through high-interest Chinese loans, increasing Pakistan's external debt
 - D. CPEC requires Pakistan to replace its currency with the Chinese yuan in trade
24. What is the primary purpose of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, a component of China's BRI?
- A. Construct a trans-Arctic shipping route to reduce trade costs
 - B. Establish digital infrastructure through fiber optic submarine cables
 - C. Enhance maritime connectivity through port development across Asia, Africa, and Europe
 - D. Create a network of naval bases to strengthen China's military power

9. Mizoram Achieves Full Functional Literacy

- Chief Minister of Mizoram, Shri Lalduhoma officially declared Mizoram a fully literate state, marking a historic milestone in the state's educational journey.
- With this achievement, Mizoram becomes the first state in India to attain full literacy.
- Mizoram, which attained statehood on 20th February 1987, spans a geographical area of 21,081 km² (8,139 sq mi).
- As per the 2011 Census, it recorded a literacy rate of 91.33%, ranking third in India.
- Building on this strong foundation, the ULLAS – Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram (New India Literacy Programme) was implemented to identify and educate the remaining non-literate individuals.
- A door-to-door survey conducted by Cluster Resource Centre Coordinators (CRCCs) across the state in August–September 2023 identified 3,026 non-literates.

- Out of these, 1,692 learners were actively engaged in teaching-learning activities.
- By this account, Mizoram had crossed the full literacy mark, *i.e.*, above 95% literacy rate (to be considered equivalent to Full literacy) as defined by Ministry of Education, Govt. of India.
- As per PFLS survey for 2023-24 also, the literacy rate of Mizoram is 98.20%.
- In a remarkable display of community spirit, 292 volunteer teachers—including students, educators, resource persons, and CRCCs—came forward to lead this initiative.
- Guided by a profound sense of duty (Kartavya Bodh) and the Mizo cultural value, these volunteers played a crucial role in achieving full literacy.
- The celebratory event, hosted at the Auditorium of Mizoram University in Aizawl, stands as a powerful testament to the collaborative efforts of the people and government of Mizoram in advancing inclusive education and empowering every citizen through literacy.
- ULLAS - Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram or New India Literacy Programme (NILP) is a centrally sponsored scheme implemented from 2022-2027.
- The scheme, aligned with NEP 2020, targets adults (aged 15 years and above) who couldn't go to school.
- The scheme has five components- Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, Critical Life Skills, Basic Education, Vocational Skills and Continuing Education.
- The vision of the ULLAS Scheme is to make Bharat - Jan Jan Saakshar and is based on the spirit of Kartavya Bodh and is being implemented on volunteerism.
- Under ULLAS scheme more than 1.77 crore learners (neo literates) have appeared in the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Test (FLNAT) till now across the country.
- More than 2.37 crore learners and 40.84 lakh volunteer teachers have been registered on the ULLAS Mobile app.
- Ladakh became the first administrative unit to declare full literacy.

PFLS survey for 2023-24

- The PLFS survey for 2023-24 indicates a relatively stable national unemployment rate at 3.2%, with a slight increase in the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) to 60.1%.
- Urban areas saw an increase in LFPR, particularly for males, while urban unemployment rates remained relatively constant.

Unemployment Rate:

- The unemployment rate remained unchanged at 3.2%, marking the first time since PLFS began in 2017-18 that it hasn't declined year-on-year.

LFPR:

- The national LFPR increased from 57.9% in 2022-23 to 60.1% in 2023-24.

Urban LFPR:

- In urban areas, LFPR increased for both males and females, with males seeing a more significant rise.

Worker Population Ratio (WPR):

- The WPR, representing the percentage of employed persons, increased to 58.2%.

Rural LFPR:

- The rural LFPR increased to 63.7%, potentially indicating a shift towards rural labor markets due to reverse migration or limited urban job opportunities.

Female LFPR:

- The female LFPR saw an increase from 37.0% in 2022-23 to 41.7% in 2023-24, indicating a positive trend in female workforce participation.

NEP 2020

- The NEP 2020, or the National Education Policy 2020, is a major overhaul of India's education system, introduced by the Union Cabinet on July 29, 2020.
- Its key goal is to align education with 21st-century needs, focusing on holistic development, diversity, and innovation.
- The policy aims to make education more inclusive, equitable, and accessible, while equipping students with the skills needed for the future.

Features and Goals of NEP 2020:

Shift in Curriculum:

- The policy introduces a new 5+3+3+4 curriculum structure, replacing the traditional 10+2 system.
- This structure focuses on early childhood education, foundational literacy and numeracy, and a more flexible curriculum.

Holistic Development:

- NEP 2020 emphasizes holistic education, fostering creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills in students.

Foundational Literacy and Numeracy:

- The policy stresses the importance of foundational literacy and numeracy, ensuring that all students develop a strong base in these areas.

Multilingualism:

- NEP 2020 recognizes the importance of multilingualism and encourages the use of mother tongue and regional languages in education.

Integration of Vocational Education:

- The policy aims to integrate vocational education into mainstream education, providing students with practical skills and vocational opportunities.

Technology-Driven Learning:

- NEP 2020 encourages the use of technology in education to make learning more engaging and effective.

Focus on Teacher Training:

- The policy emphasizes the importance of teacher training and development, recognizing teachers as the backbone of the education system.

Increased Expenditure on Education:

- NEP 2020 aims to increase state expenditure on education to 6% of GDP.

Internationalization of Education:

- The policy also focuses on internationalizing education by promoting collaborations with foreign institutions and attracting international students.

Autonomy and Accountability:

- The policy proposes greater institutional autonomy and decentralization of decision-making, while also emphasizing accountability and transparency in education.

Mizoram

Geographical Uniqueness

- **Hill State:** Nearly 90% of Mizoram is covered by hills ranging from 1,000 to 2,000 meters in height.
- **Dense Forests:** Over 85% of its area is forested, rich in biodiversity and home to many rare species.
- **Location:** It shares international borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh, making it strategically significant.

Social Harmony and Literacy

- **High Literacy Rate:** One of the highest in India, often above 90%.
- **Peaceful State:** Mizoram is known for its communal harmony and low crime rate.
- **Mizo Society:** Strong sense of community, with traditions like 'Tlawmngaihna' — an unwritten Mizo code of selfless service and discipline.

Cultural Richness

- **Tribal Heritage:** Predominantly inhabited by the Mizo people with a vibrant tribal culture.
- **Folk Dances:** Cheraw (bamboo dance), Khuallam, and Chheihlam are famous traditional dances.
- **Festivals:** Chapchar Kut, Mim Kut, and Pawl Kut are major festivals celebrating agriculture and community.

Historical and Political Significance

- **From Insurgency to Peace:** Mizoram transitioned from insurgency in the 1960s-80s to peace after the 1986 Mizoram Peace Accord, which is often cited as a model for conflict resolution in India.
- **Statehood:** Became a full-fledged state in 1987.

Agriculture and Environment

- **Shifting Cultivation (Jhum):** Still practiced in some parts, although efforts are on to encourage settled farming.
- **Eco-conscious living:** Communities often engage in conservation efforts and forest protection.

QUESTIONS

25. What is the minimum literacy percentage required by the Ministry of Education, Government of India to declare a region as having "full functional literacy"?
- A. 90%
 - B. 92.5%
 - C. 95%
 - D. 98.2%
26. Which of the following statements is incorrect with respect to Mizoram's full literacy achievement?
- A. It is the first Indian state to be declared fully literate.
 - B. Over 290 volunteers contributed to this achievement through the ULLAS initiative.
 - C. It surpassed 95% literacy rate as per door-to-door survey by CRCCs.
 - D. Ladakh was the first state to declare full functional literacy.

27. Which of the following statements correctly reflects the scope and nature of the ULLAS – Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram?
- A. It provides free higher education to underprivileged rural women.
 - B. It is a compulsory adult education programme for all states with less than 75% literacy.
 - C. It is a volunteer-based adult education programme targeting individuals aged 15 and above who missed formal schooling.
 - D. It is an exclusive digital literacy programme for urban slum populations.

10. 'Operation Olivia' Helps Protect 6.98 Lakh Olive Ridley Turtles In Odisha

- The Indian Coast Guard's (ICG) annual conservation initiative, Operation Olivia, has played a pivotal role in protecting Olive Ridley turtles, an endangered marine species, along India's eastern coastline, particularly in Odisha.
- During its 2025 mission, Operation Olivia helped safeguard over 6.98 lakh Olive Ridley turtles that successfully nested at the Rushikulya river mouth in February—a record figure that highlights the operation's growing impact on marine biodiversity conservation.
- Launched in 1980s and conducted annually from November to May, Operation Olivia is dedicated to ensuring the safe nesting of Olive Ridley turtles at key coastal locations like Gahirmatha Beach and other areas in Odisha.
- These locations collectively witness the arrival of over eight lakh turtles each year, making them among the world's largest nesting grounds for this species.
- The operation involves an integrated approach combining maritime patrols, aerial surveillance, enforcement against illegal activities, and community engagement.
- Beyond enforcement, the ICG has adopted a collaborative strategy to ensure the long-term survival of Olive Ridley turtles.
- This includes engaging local fishing communities by encouraging the use of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) and forging partnerships with NGOs through formal Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs).
- These collaborations focus on promoting sustainable fishing practices and increasing awareness through conservation education.
- The Defence Ministry emphasized that the record-breaking nesting at the Rushikulya river mouth is a testament to the effectiveness of these multifaceted efforts.
- It also underscores the importance of continued monitoring, adaptive conservation strategies, and community-based approaches in preserving marine ecosystems.

Turtles: An Overview

Scientific Classification:

- Kingdom: Animalia
- Phylum: Chordata

- Class: Reptilia
- Order: Testudines (or Chelonia)

Key Characteristics:

- **Shell:** Turtles have a hard, protective shell made of bone and cartilage. It's divided into the carapace (top) and plastron (bottom).
- **Limbs:** Depending on the species, turtles have flippers (sea turtles) or webbed feet (freshwater turtles and tortoises).
- **Lifespan:** Many turtles live 50 to 100+ years, with some tortoises living over 150 years.
- **Diet:** They can be herbivores, carnivores, or omnivores.

Habitat:

- **Sea turtles:** Oceans and coastal areas.
- **Freshwater turtles:** Rivers, lakes, and ponds.
- **Tortoises (a type of turtle):** Land-dwelling, found in deserts, grasslands, and forests.

Types of Turtles:

- **Sea Turtles** (e.g., Green, Leatherback, Loggerhead)
- **Freshwater Turtles** (e.g., Red-eared slider, Painted turtle)
- **Tortoises** (e.g., Galápagos tortoise, Indian star tortoise)
- **Terrapins** (semi-aquatic, often brackish water dwellers)

Conservation Status:

Many turtle species are endangered or critically endangered due to:

- Habitat loss
- Pollution (especially plastic in oceans)
- Climate change (affects sex of hatchlings)
- Poaching and illegal trade

Example:

- **Leatherback Sea Turtle:** Vulnerable
- **Hawksbill Sea Turtle:** Critically Endangered

Major Turtles of India:

- Olive Ridley Turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*)

General Information:

- **Common Name:** Olive Ridley sea turtle
- **Scientific Name:** *Lepidochelys olivacea*
- **Family:** Cheloniidae
- **Conservation Status:** Vulnerable (IUCN Red List)
- **Distribution:** Tropical and subtropical oceans worldwide, especially in the Indian, Pacific, and Atlantic Oceans.
- **Habitat:** Coastal areas, mainly shallow waters, bays, and estuaries.

Physical Characteristics:

- **Size:** Medium-sized sea turtle; adults typically 2 to 2.5 feet (60-70 cm) in shell length.
- **Weight:** Usually 35 to 45 kg (77 to 99 lbs).
- **Shell Color:** Olive green to greyish-green, hence the name.
- **Shape:** Heart-shaped carapace with a slightly serrated rear edge.

Behavior and Life Cycle:

- **Diet:** Omnivorous, feeding mostly on jellyfish, crabs, shrimp, seaweed, and algae.
- **Nesting:** Known for their mass nesting behavior called arribada (Spanish for “arrival”).
- During arribadas, thousands of females come ashore simultaneously to lay eggs on select beaches.
- Nesting sites are usually the same beaches where they were born.
- **Reproduction:** Females lay about 100 eggs per clutch and can lay multiple clutches in a nesting season.

Unique Facts:

- Olive Ridleys are the most abundant sea turtles in the world.
- Their synchronized mass nesting (arribada) is one of the most remarkable phenomena in the animal kingdom.
- Hatchlings emerge at night to avoid predators and head to the ocean instinctively.

Conservation Threats:

- Egg poaching and collection for consumption.
- Bycatch in fishing gear (nets, trawls).
- Coastal development destroying nesting habitats.
- Pollution, including plastic debris.
- Climate change, affecting sand temperature, which influences sex determination of hatchlings.

Conservation Efforts:

- Protection of nesting beaches with community participation.
- Use of turtle excluder devices (TEDs) in fishing nets to reduce bycatch.
- Awareness campaigns to reduce egg poaching.
- International protection under CITES and other treaties.
- Several countries have established Olive Ridley conservation programs (*e.g.*, India’s Odisha coast is famous for mass arribadas).

Gahirmatha Beach (Kendrapara District)

- Gahirmatha Beach, part of the Gahirmatha Marine Wildlife Sanctuary, is the largest known rookery for Olive Ridley turtles globally.
- Located between the Dhamra and Brahmani river mouths, this sanctuary encompasses approximately 1,435 km², with 1,408 km² of it being water.
- The beach serves as a critical nesting ground, with annual nesting numbers ranging from 100,000 to 500,000 turtles.
- In 2025, a satellite-tagged Olive Ridley turtle completed a remarkable 1,000 km journey from Gahirmatha to the Andhra Pradesh coast in 51 days, traversing waters of Sri Lanka, Pondicherry, and Tamil Nadu.

Rushikulya Beach (Ganjam District)

- Rushikulya Beach, located in Ganjam district, is another vital nesting site for Olive Ridleys.
- In early 2025, the beach witnessed a record-breaking mass nesting event, with approximately 698,718 turtles laying eggs between February 16 and 23. A second phase of nesting occurred from March 20 to 27, adding another 205,799 turtles to the count, bringing the total to over 900,000 turtles for the season.



QUESTIONS

28. Which of the following best describes the primary objective of Operation Olivia conducted by the Indian Coast Guard?
- Promoting eco-tourism along the eastern coast
 - Enforcing coastal security through maritime exercises
 - Protecting Olive Ridley turtles during their mass nesting season
 - Regulating illegal sand mining along coastal estuaries
29. What was a record-breaking achievement under Operation Olivia in 2025 at Rushikulya Beach?
- First-time use of drone-based turtle surveillance
 - Use of artificial intelligence to count turtle eggs
 - Highest number of Olive Ridley turtles recorded nesting—6.98 lakh in one phase
 - Establishment of India's first turtle genome bank
30. Which of the following statements is correct regarding the distribution and migration of Olive Ridley turtles in India?
- They are found only at Gahirmatha beach and do not migrate beyond Odisha.
 - They are open-ocean nesters that do not return to land.
 - Tagged turtles have been observed to travel over 1,000 km across coastal states.
 - They migrate only northwards from nesting beaches due to water currents.

ANSWER KEY AND EXPLANATION

1. **C** Heart Lamp is notable as the first Kannada-language work and also the first short story collection to win the International Booker Prize. It was translated from Kannada into English by Deepa Bhashthi. Option A is incorrect because it was not the Booker Prize for Fiction, and option B incorrectly refers to Tamil. Option D is invalid as the award was shared with a translator.
2. **C** Deepa Bhashthi translated 'Heart Lamp' from Kannada, not from Hindi. The author, Banu Mushtaq, writes in Kannada, and her win marks the first time a Kannada title has won the International Booker Prize. Hence, option C is incorrect. The prize was indeed awarded at the Tate Modern in London, and each shortlisted pair receives £5,000, so other options are correct.
3. **D** The International Booker Prize celebrates translated works of fiction, giving equal recognition and financial reward (£25,000 each) to both the author and translator. In contrast, the Booker Prize is awarded for original English-language novels, with £50,000 going entirely to the author. Therefore, D accurately captures the distinguishing features of eligibility and prize distribution.
4. **C** As per the OCI rules and amendments to the Citizenship Act, individuals who are or had been citizens of Pakistan or Bangladesh, or whose parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents were such citizens, are explicitly excluded from OCI eligibility. This is due to national security and diplomatic considerations. A and B are factually incorrect. D is also false because even if married to Indian citizens, former Pakistani or Bangladeshi nationals are ineligible.
5. **C** OCIs are: Allowed to pursue professions like doctors, lawyers, CAs, architects, etc., subject to regulatory body approval. Granted parity with Indian citizens in areas like domestic airfares and entry fees to heritage sites. However: They cannot vote, contest elections, or hold public office. They are not eligible to purchase agricultural or plantation land. So, C is the only correct match.
6. **D** According to the Citizenship Act, 1955, for births on or after December 3, 2004, a person is an Indian citizen only if: One parent is an Indian citizen, and The other is not an illegal migrant. Since the father is an illegal migrant, the child cannot be considered a citizen by birth, even though the mother is Indian.
7. **B** For persons born outside India on or after December 3, 2004, the Citizenship Act, 1955, mandates: Either parent must be an Indian citizen, and The birth must be registered at an Indian consulate within one year of the birth (or with permission of the Central Government if delayed). Hence, B is correct.
8. **C** The Golan Heights, a plateau captured by Israel from Syria during the 1967 Six-Day War, is: Elevated, providing military vantage points over both Israel and Syria. Rich in freshwater resources, including feeding into the Jordan River and Sea of Galilee. This makes it strategically and geopolitically vital, especially in the context of Israel-Syria hostilities. A and B are incorrect geographically. D is false; the Golan Heights does not connect Gaza and the West Bank.
9. **B** The 1948 Arab-Israeli War followed the rejection of the UN Partition Plan by Arab nations. As Israel declared independence and expanded its territory, more than 700,000 Palestinians were displaced, many becoming refugees. A is wrong: Egypt controlled Gaza, not the West Bank. C is incorrect: Israel captured, not lost, East Jerusalem in 1967. D is false: Golan Heights was captured by Israel from Syria in 1967 and held since.

- 10. B** The timing of Operation Gideon's Chariots — launched during active ceasefire negotiations in Doha — follows a historical pattern where Israel intensifies military campaigns during peace talks, potentially as leverage. This strategic alignment has been observed in past conflicts. A is incorrect; offensives usually break ceasefires, not accompany them. C and D are not aligned with Israel's current or historical approaches in such conflicts.
- 11. B** Trump's Golden Dome is a proposed multilayered missile defence program involving space-based interceptors designed to counter hypersonic, ballistic, and cruise missiles, with an announced budget and timeline. Reagan's SDI (Star Wars) was a Cold War-era concept focused on space and ground-based interceptors to neutralize Soviet ICBMs, but it was never fully developed or deployed and remained mostly theoretical due to technological and budgetary constraints. Thus, B is correct.
- 12. B** The Golden Dome involves placing interceptors and sensors in space, which could be perceived as dual-use military technologies—used for defense but also capable of offensive functions. This raises concerns about the militarization of space, especially under treaties like the Outer Space Treaty (1967), which limits the deployment of weapons of mass destruction in orbit, but not necessarily missile defenses. B is correct because of this legal and ethical ambiguity. Options A, C, and D are either not mentioned in the project or factually incorrect based on current disclosures.
- 13. C** The Gyan Bharatam Mission, launched by PM Modi, revamps and significantly expands the earlier National Manuscripts Mission (NMM), which had seen limited success since 2003. Budget increased from ₹3.5 crore to ₹60 crore, Goal expanded to covering over 1 crore manuscripts, Includes surveying, digitization, and conservation, Thus, C correctly reflects this policy transition. Options A, B, and D are incorrect and not aligned with the mission's stated scope.
- 14. C** Manuscripts, as per the NMM's definition, are handwritten documents that contain knowledge — scientific, philosophical, religious, literary, etc. Epigraphs, firmans, and revenue records, on the other hand, are administrative or historical documents providing direct information about events. So, C is the most precise distinction. A, B, and D contain partial truths but are overgeneralized or inaccurate.
- 15. B** Bower Manuscript (5th–6th century CE): Found in Central Asia, it is one of the earliest known Indian manuscripts. It includes Ayurveda (medicine) and divination texts, written in hybrid Sanskrit on birch bark. A is incorrect: Gilgit Manuscripts are Buddhist, not Jain. C is wrong: The Spitzer Manuscript contains a chapter list of the Mahābhārata, discovered in Central Asia, not Tamil Nadu. D is false: The Bakhshali Manuscript is mathematical but predates Arabic numerals, though it includes a zero symbol.
- 16. B** Project Elephant was launched in 1992 to protect elephants and their habitats. Project Tiger began in 1973, not 1985. Project Lion was launched in 2020. Project Crocodile was launched in the 1970s, not 2010. Thus, only Option B is correctly matched.
- 17. B** Both Asiatic lions and Asian elephants are listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, offering them highest national protection. Elephants, due to their global decline, are listed in Appendix I of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species), Asiatic lions are not in Appendix I of CITES. So, only Option B is correct.
- 18. B** Project Lion incorporates: Drone technology, Camera traps, Satellite imaging, and Trackers/sensors on lions for real-time monitoring. These are scalable, field-tested tools in modern conservation. Options A, C, and D are either fictional or not part of the officially documented strategy.

19. **B** The treaty mandates that 10% of pandemic-related health products (vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics) be donated to the WHO and another 10% be supplied at affordable prices, directly addressing the inequities faced by developing countries during the COVID-19 pandemic. Option A and C are incorrect as the treaty explicitly denies WHO power to enforce national policies. Option D is not part of the treaty's framework.
20. **C** The “pathogen access and benefit sharing” system allows pharmaceutical companies and nations to access genomic sequences and biological samples, in return for committing to fair distribution of vaccines and treatments globally during pandemics. Options A, B, and D either contradict the treaty’s goals or are not mentioned.
21. **B** The treaty is historically significant as only the second legally binding WHO accord, after the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (2003). None of the other options reflect WHO’s policy tools or legal structure.
22. **C** India's core objection to CPEC is that it passes through Gilgit-Baltistan, part of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), which India considers its own territory. Options A, B, and D are unrelated or only marginally connected to India's opposition to CPEC.
23. **C** Critics argue that CPEC relies on expensive loans from China, contributing to Pakistan’s rising external debt and increasing dependency—hallmarks of what is termed a "debt trap". Options A and D are incorrect. Option B is false; China does not mandate foreign investment in its welfare schemes.
24. **C** The Maritime Silk Road focuses on maritime trade infrastructure, especially port development, to enhance China's global trade and logistics capabilities. Option D reflects a strategic concern, but not the declared objective. A and B are minor elements, not core goals.
25. **C** According to the Ministry of Education, crossing the 95% literacy mark is considered equivalent to full functional literacy. Mizoram achieved a 98.2% literacy rate per the PLFS 2023–24, thereby meeting this standard.
26. **D** Ladakh was the first administrative unit (not a state) to declare full literacy. Mizoram is the first Indian state to achieve full functional literacy status.
27. **C** ULLAS (New India Literacy Programme) is a volunteer-driven programme aimed at non-literates aged 15 years and above. It is not compulsory, and covers five components including foundational literacy, basic education, and vocational skills.
28. **C** Operation Olivia, launched in the 1980s and conducted annually (Nov–May), is focused on protecting Olive Ridley turtles during their nesting season on beaches like Gahirmatha and Rushikulya. It involves aerial surveillance, maritime patrols, and community engagement, especially promoting use of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs).
29. **C** In 2025, Rushikulya Beach saw a record-breaking arribada, with 698,718 Olive Ridley turtles nesting in one week in February—an unprecedented event under Operation Olivia. A second nesting phase later added over 2 lakh more.
30. **C** In 2025, a satellite-tagged Olive Ridley turtle from Gahirmatha was tracked migrating over 1,000 km across the coasts of Sri Lanka, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, and reaching Andhra Pradesh in 51 days—highlighting their wide migratory range in the Indian Ocean.