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IMPORTANT INSIGHTS

UNEP Warns Global Warming Will Overshoot 1.5°C, Requiring a New Overshoot, Peak and Decline Climate Strategy

Recent Developments:

- The **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** released its *Limiting Overshoot: Navigating exceedance of 1.5°C and pathways towards return* report on **2 September 2026**, warning that crossing the **1.5°C warming threshold** is now widely assessed as unavoidable under current and near-term trajectories.
- The report proposes an “**overshoot, peak and decline**” pathway, under which global temperatures temporarily exceed 1.5°C, peak at the lowest possible level and subsequently decline towards the Paris Agreement goal.
- Even if countries fully implement their existing climate commitments and **net-zero targets**, UNEP projects peak warming of around **1.8°C**, while current policies point towards approximately **2.6°C warming by 2100**.
- UNEP therefore argues that climate policy must simultaneously pursue **rapid emission reductions, adaptation and carbon removal**, rather than treating the possibility of exceeding 1.5°C as a reason for policy resignation.

Background of the 1.5°C Goal:

Paris Agreement and Temperature Target:

- The **Paris Agreement, adopted at COP21 in 2015**, seeks to hold the increase in global average temperature to **well below 2°C** above pre-industrial levels while pursuing efforts to limit warming to **1.5°C**.
- The 1.5°C threshold is important because climate risks generally increase with every additional fraction of warming, particularly for **extreme heat, sea-level rise, ecosystems, food security and vulnerable communities**.
- The threshold should not be interpreted as a single physical “tipping point” at which climate change suddenly becomes catastrophic; rather, it represents a **risk-management benchmark** within international climate policy.
- The **IPCC** has established that overshooting a warming level produces greater and potentially irreversible impacts compared with pathways that remain below that level.

Why the Overshoot Concept Matters:

- **Overshoot** refers to a temporary period during which global warming exceeds a specified temperature level before subsequently declining through sustained **net-negative CO₂ emissions**.
- The larger and longer the overshoot, the greater the associated risks and the larger the quantity of **carbon dioxide removal (CDR)** required to reverse warming.
- The new UNEP approach therefore shifts the policy question from simply “**Can 1.5°C be avoided?**” towards “**How low can peak warming be kept, and how quickly can temperatures return below 1.5°C?**”

UNEP's Overshoot, Peak and Decline Pathway:

Three-Stage Climate Strategy:

- **Overshoot:** Global temperatures temporarily rise above 1.5°C because cumulative greenhouse-gas emissions have already consumed much of the remaining carbon budget.
- **Peak:** Governments seek to minimise the maximum temperature reached through accelerated reductions in **CO₂ and short-lived climate pollutants**, particularly methane.
- **Decline:** Temperatures are gradually reduced through sustained **net-negative CO₂ emissions**, requiring atmospheric carbon removal to exceed remaining emissions.

Projected Warming Scenarios:

- UNEP estimates that full implementation of existing climate commitments could still result in approximately **1.8°C peak warming**, demonstrating the gap between present commitments and the 1.5°C objective.
- Under **current policies**, warming could reach approximately **2.6°C by 2100**, highlighting the continuing implementation and ambition gap in global climate action.
- The IPCC similarly finds that pathways returning to 1.5°C after an overshoot require substantially greater **net-negative CO₂ emissions** than pathways that avoid or minimise overshoot.

Compounding Costs of Overshoot:

Environmental and Socioeconomic Risks:

- Higher peak warming increases the likelihood of **extreme heat, heavy precipitation, wildfires, glacier loss, sea-level rise and ecosystem degradation**.
- **Coral reefs, glaciers, polar ecosystems and coastal systems** are particularly vulnerable because some impacts become irreversible or continue for very long periods even after temperatures decline.
- Overshoot can increase the risk of crossing **climate tipping points**, including instability of the **Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets, Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation and Amazon ecosystems**.
- Temperature reversal does not automatically reverse every climate impact; for example, **sea-level rise can continue for decades to millennia** even after global warming begins to decline.
- The resulting burden is likely to fall disproportionately on **developing countries and vulnerable populations**, raising issues of climate justice, adaptation finance and loss and damage.

Why Delay Becomes More Costly:

Carbon Budget and Negative Emissions:

- The remaining **carbon budget** represents the cumulative amount of CO₂ that can still be emitted while retaining a specified probability of limiting warming to a particular temperature level.
- Continued high emissions reduce this budget and increase the probability of overshoot, thereby transferring a larger mitigation burden to future generations.
- The IPCC estimates that reducing global temperature by **0.1°C** through atmospheric carbon removal requires roughly **220 GtCO₂ of net-negative emissions**, with a likely range of 160–370 GtCO₂.
- Consequently, delayed emission reductions create a double burden because they increase both **peak warming** and the subsequent requirement for **carbon removal**.

Methane as a Near-Term Priority:

Short-Lived Climate Pollutant:

- **Methane (CH₄)** is a potent greenhouse gas with a much shorter atmospheric lifetime than CO₂, making methane mitigation particularly important for reducing **near-term warming**.
- The IPCC finds that rapid reductions in methane and other non-CO₂ emissions can lower peak warming and reduce dependence on later **net-negative CO₂ emissions and CDR**.
- Key methane-reduction opportunities exist in **oil and gas operations, coal mining, livestock, rice cultivation, landfills and wastewater management**.
- For an overshoot strategy, methane reduction has strategic importance because it can deliver relatively rapid climate benefits while CO₂ reduction remains essential for **long-term temperature stabilisation**.

Role of Carbon Dioxide Removal:

Need and Limitations:

- Returning global warming below 1.5°C after an overshoot requires **carbon dioxide removal**, because atmospheric CO₂ concentrations must decline sufficiently to produce net-negative emissions.
- CDR options include **afforestation, reforestation, ecosystem restoration, soil-carbon sequestration, bioenergy with carbon capture and storage and direct air capture**.
- Large-scale CDR can create trade-offs involving **land, water, food security, biodiversity, energy and local livelihoods**, particularly when land-intensive methods are expanded rapidly.
- CDR should therefore **complement rather than substitute deep emission reductions**, because excessive dependence on future removals could increase technological, ecological and governance risks.

Implications for India:

Climate Policy and Development:

- India faces a dual challenge of pursuing **rapid economic development and poverty reduction** while limiting growth in greenhouse-gas emissions.
- Greater emphasis on **renewable energy, energy efficiency, electric mobility, green hydrogen, public transport and resilient infrastructure** can reduce emissions while supporting long-term development.
- India also requires stronger **heat-action plans, climate-resilient agriculture, water management, urban cooling, disaster preparedness and early-warning systems** because adaptation needs will rise even under successful mitigation.
- Methane reduction can provide opportunities through improved **waste management, livestock practices, landfill-gas capture and agricultural interventions**.
- India can also contribute to nature-based carbon removal through **ecosystem restoration, afforestation and improved land management**, while ensuring that carbon projects do not undermine food security or community rights.

Challenges in Global Climate Governance:

Equity and Climate Justice:

- A major challenge is determining who should bear the costs of **emission reductions, adaptation and carbon removal**.

- Developing countries argue that historical emissions and differences in financial and technological capacity must remain central to climate negotiations.
- Large-scale CDR may generate new disputes over **land acquisition, carbon accounting, permanence, monitoring and benefit sharing**.
- Climate finance therefore remains essential for enabling developing countries to pursue both **mitigation and adaptation** without compromising developmental priorities.

Need for Integrated Action:

- The Paris Agreement also seeks to strengthen countries' ability to **adapt to climate impacts and build resilience**, making mitigation and adaptation complementary rather than competing priorities.
- The first **Global Stocktake**, concluded at COP28 in 2023, established an important mechanism for assessing collective progress and informing stronger national climate action.
- The central policy objective should therefore remain **deep and immediate emission reductions**, while preparing for unavoidable impacts and developing responsible carbon-removal capacity.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Keywords and Answer Enrichment:

- **Overshoot:** Temporary exceedance of a specified warming level followed by a decline in global temperature.
- **Peak Warming:** The maximum level of warming reached before temperatures begin to decline.
- **Net-Negative Emissions:** A situation in which global removal of greenhouse gases exceeds global emissions.
- **Carbon Dioxide Removal:** Human activities that remove CO₂ from the atmosphere and store it durably.
- **Tipping Points:** Critical thresholds beyond which changes in climate systems can become self-reinforcing and difficult or impossible to reverse.
- **Climate Justice:** The principle that climate responsibilities and burdens should reflect historical emissions, capabilities and differing vulnerabilities.
- **UPSC-ready conclusion:** The prospect of 1.5°C overshoot should not become a justification for climate inaction; it strengthens the case for **faster mitigation, aggressive methane reduction, climate-resilient development, equitable finance and carefully governed carbon removal**.

Haldwani Purification Row Revives Debate on Untouchability, Caste Discrimination and Constitutional Morality

Recent Developments:

- A “**purification**” ritual reportedly performed at the Ramlila Maidan in **Haldwani, Uttarakhand**, after a public meeting addressed by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, has triggered a wider debate over caste discrimination and the constitutional prohibition of **untouchability**. The controversy has also generated political and legal responses, including an FIR connected with statements made about the incident.
- The episode raises an important constitutional question: whether a ritual based on an alleged belief that a public space became “impure” because of the presence or use of a **Dalit person** can fall within the wider understanding of untouchability under **Article 17**.

- The issue is particularly significant after the Supreme Court's 2024 ruling in **Sukanya Shantha v. Union of India**, which connected untouchability with caste-based notions of **purity and pollution** and clarified that exclusion need not always involve physical denial of entry.

Concept of Purity and Pollution in the Caste System:

Core Idea:

- Traditional caste hierarchies were historically reinforced through ideas of **ritual purity and pollution**, under which social groups were assigned different degrees of status, occupation and social interaction.
- Communities associated with occupations involving **waste, sanitation, death and animal carcasses** were often treated as "polluting", creating a social basis for exclusion and untouchability.

Social and Spatial Exclusion:

- The ideology of purity and pollution contributed to **social segregation**, including restrictions on access to temples, wells, common spaces and other public facilities, while Dalit settlements were frequently located separately from dominant-caste settlements.
- Such practices transformed occupational and birth-based distinctions into systems of **social stigma, unequal status and restricted interaction**.

Contemporary Relevance:

- Modern forms of untouchability may become less visible while continuing through **social exclusion, housing segregation, institutional discrimination and caste-based restrictions**.
- The constitutional challenge therefore extends beyond eliminating physical exclusion to dismantling the underlying social belief that caste determines a person's inherent purity or social worth.

Historical Perspectives on Untouchability:

Reformist and Anti-Caste Movements:

- The **Bhakti Movement** challenged caste hierarchy by emphasising spiritual equality and devotional access, with figures such as **Ravidas and Kabir** questioning birth-based social distinctions.
- **Swami Dayananda Saraswati** criticised untouchability as a later social distortion and associated the **Shuddhi Movement** with religious reform and the reintegration of communities considered socially excluded.
- **Jyotirao Phule** established the **Satyashodhak Samaj in 1873** and linked caste oppression with social and economic exploitation, making education and empowerment central to emancipation.
- **Sri Narayana Guru** challenged ritual hierarchy through the **Aruvipuram consecration in 1888** and advocated the principle of "**One Caste, One Religion, One God for Humankind.**"
- **Periyar's Self-Respect Movement**, launched in **1925**, adopted a rationalist and anti-caste approach and challenged hereditary social and religious hierarchies.
- **Mahatma Gandhi** regarded untouchability as a grave moral wrong and promoted temple-entry movements, social integration and the **Harijan Sevak Sangh**, although his approach to untouchability differed from the more radical annihilation-of-caste framework associated with B.R. Ambedkar.

Constitutional and Legal Framework:

Article 17 and Fundamental Rights:

- **Article 17** abolishes untouchability and prohibits its practice “**in any form**”, making enforcement of any disability arising from untouchability a punishable offence.
- Article 17 forms part of the **Right to Equality under Articles 14–18** and is distinctive because its prohibition operates against **private individuals as well as State authorities**.
- The Constitution does not provide an exhaustive definition of “untouchability”, allowing courts to interpret the concept according to its **social manifestations and constitutional purpose**.

Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955:

- Parliament enacted the **Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955**, subsequently renamed the **Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955**, to give statutory effect to Article 17.
- The law penalises the practice and enforcement of disabilities arising from untouchability, including discrimination relating to **religious, social and public facilities**.

SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989:

- The **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989** provides a specialised legal framework for preventing atrocities, establishing special courts and providing relief and rehabilitation to victims.
- Section 7(1)(d) of the Act specifically addresses an insult against a Scheduled Caste member when it is committed **on the ground of untouchability**, making the connection with the social practice legally significant.

Institutional Safeguards:

- The **National Commission for Scheduled Castes**, established under **Article 338**, monitors constitutional and legal safeguards for Scheduled Castes and possesses powers associated with a civil court while investigating specified matters.

Key Judicial Pronouncements:

Surya Narayan Choudhary v. State of Rajasthan, 1988:

- The Rajasthan High Court held that requiring Dalit devotees to undergo **ritual purification as a condition for temple entry** violated **Articles 14, 15 and 17**, because such a discriminatory condition was imposed specifically on Dalits.

Hitesh Verma v. State of Uttarakhand, 2020:

- The Supreme Court clarified that every insult or humiliation of an SC/ST person does not automatically constitute an offence under the **SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989**; the conduct must satisfy the statutory requirements and, where relevant, demonstrate a connection with the victim’s caste identity.

Sukanya Shantha v. Union of India, 2024:

- The Supreme Court struck down **caste-based discriminatory provisions in prison manuals** and adopted a broad understanding of untouchability.
- The Court linked caste discrimination with notions of **purity and pollution**, emphasising that constitutional equality cannot permit stigma to be attached to a person's **existence, touch or presence**.
- The judgment is important for contemporary debates because it demonstrates that untouchability is not restricted to traditional physical exclusion and can operate through **institutional and symbolic practices**.

Gunjan @ Girija Kumari v. State (NCT of Delhi), 2026:

- The Supreme Court reaffirmed that offences under Sections **3(1)(r) and 3(1)(s)** of the SC/ST Act require the alleged caste-based insult or intimidation to occur at a **place within public view**.
- The judgment clarifies an important evidentiary requirement under the statute and demonstrates that allegations must satisfy the specific ingredients prescribed by Parliament.

Challenges in Eliminating Untouchability:***Persistence of Covert Discrimination:***

- Traditional practices such as denying access to wells or temples have declined in many areas, but discrimination can persist through **housing segregation, social networks, educational institutions, workplaces and marriage preferences**.
- Digital platforms can also reproduce social boundaries through **caste-based matrimonial preferences and algorithmic reinforcement of existing social choices**.

Graded Inequality:

- Caste operates through a hierarchy involving an **ascending scale of privilege and a descending scale of social status**, creating inequalities even within historically disadvantaged communities.
- In **State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh, 2024**, the Supreme Court held that Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are not necessarily homogeneous for the purpose of affirmative action and permitted **sub-classification** based on constitutionally relevant evidence.

Criminal Justice Gaps:

- Low reporting, delays in investigation, witness vulnerability, inadequate legal awareness and weaknesses in prosecution can reduce the deterrent impact of protective legislation.
- **Burking or dilution of offences**, hostile witnesses and inadequate investigation of caste-based motives can further weaken accountability.

Economic Dependence:

- **Landlessness, occupational dependence and unequal access to assets** can increase vulnerability to social boycotts and coercion, particularly in rural areas.
- Economic empowerment is therefore essential because formal legal equality cannot fully protect individuals who remain structurally dependent on socially dominant groups.

Measures Needed:

Strengthen Law Enforcement:

- Effective implementation of **Section 4 of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act** is important for holding public servants accountable when they wilfully neglect statutory duties relating to prevention, registration or investigation of offences.
- States should strengthen **Exclusive Special Courts**, professional investigation and witness-protection mechanisms to improve conviction and reduce prolonged litigation.

Promote Economic Empowerment:

- Anti-caste policy should combine legal protection with **asset creation, entrepreneurship, education and access to institutional credit**.
- Government procurement and entrepreneurship initiatives for SC-owned enterprises should be implemented effectively to promote **economic independence and social mobility**.

Strengthen Constitutional Morality:

- **Constitutional morality** should be integrated into education and public institutions to challenge inherited assumptions of purity, pollution and birth-based hierarchy.
- Social reform must focus not merely on punishment after discrimination occurs but also on changing the **social psychology that sustains caste prejudice**.

Encourage Social Integration:

- **Inter-caste marriages, common public spaces, inclusive education and equal access to institutions** can weaken caste boundaries.
- State support for inter-caste couples should combine financial assistance with effective protection against **honour-based violence and social coercion**.

Conclusion:

- The Haldwani controversy demonstrates that the constitutional struggle against untouchability remains relevant even when discrimination appears in **symbolic, indirect or ritualised forms**.
- Article 17 must therefore be understood alongside **dignity, equality, fraternity and constitutional morality**, rather than merely as a prohibition on physical exclusion.
- As **B.R. Ambedkar** argued, caste survives as a social and mental system rather than merely as a visible institution; consequently, its eradication requires simultaneous transformation of **social attitudes, economic structures and institutional practices**.
- The ultimate objective should be a society where **constitutional equality replaces caste-based notions of purity and pollution**, and where dignity is attached to every individual irrespective of birth.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Constitutional Linkages:

- **Article 14:** Equality before law and equal protection of laws.
- **Article 15:** Prohibition of discrimination on specified grounds, including caste.
- **Article 17:** Abolition of untouchability.

- **Article 21:** Protection of life and personal liberty, including the constitutional value of dignity.
- **Article 46:** Directive to promote the educational and economic interests of weaker sections, particularly Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- **Article 338:** Constitutional status and safeguards for the National Commission for Scheduled Castes.

UPSC Mains Conclusion:

- “The constitutional abolition of untouchability can become a social reality only when legal equality is complemented by economic empowerment, institutional accountability and a transformation of caste-based social attitudes.”

Global Coral Reef Decline Accelerates as Frequent Marine Heatwaves Shrink Recovery Windows and Threaten Ocean Biodiversity

Recent Developments:

- The **Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN)** released the seventh edition of its *Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2025* report, providing the most comprehensive assessment yet of coral-reef conditions from **1980 to 2024**. The assessment draws upon monitoring data from more than **120 countries, territories and economies**.
- The report found that global **hard coral cover declined by about 9.5%** when the 2020–2024 average was compared with the 1980–2009 reference period. Average hard coral cover fell from around **30.2% to 27.3%**, while the estimated 2024 level stood at about **25.8%**.
- Major disturbances are now occurring approximately every **four to six years** in many regions after 2010, compared with roughly once every decade historically. Consequently, coral reefs are receiving progressively shorter periods for ecological recovery.
- In **2024**, about **87% of reefs experienced unprecedented heat stress**, while **42.6% experienced heat stress severe enough to create a risk of widespread bleaching and mortality**.
- The fourth global mass coral bleaching event, which began in **2023**, reached unprecedented levels of heat stress during 2024 and was considered the most extensive global bleaching episode recorded up to that period.

What are Coral Reefs?:

Biological Characteristics:

- **Corals are marine invertebrates** belonging to the phylum **Cnidaria**, the same broad animal group that includes sea anemones and jellyfish.
- Individual corals are composed of numerous tiny organisms called **polyps**, which secrete calcium carbonate skeletons around themselves.
- Over long periods, colonies of polyps accumulate these skeletal structures and form extensive **carbonate reef ecosystems**.
- Reef-building corals generally live in association with microscopic photosynthetic algae called **zooxanthellae**, which provide energy to corals through photosynthesis and contribute to their characteristic colours.
- Coral reefs occur mainly in **shallow, warm and sunlit tropical and subtropical marine environments**, although some coral communities can survive outside these conditions.

Major Types of Coral Reefs:

- **Fringing reefs** develop directly along coastlines and islands, with relatively little separation between the reef and shore.
- **Barrier reefs** develop offshore and remain separated from the coast by deeper water or lagoons.
- **Atolls** are ring-shaped reef structures generally surrounding a lagoon and are commonly associated with subsiding volcanic islands.

Coral Reefs in India:

- Major coral-reef ecosystems in India occur around the **Gulf of Kachchh, Gulf of Mannar, Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Malvan** along the Maharashtra coast.
- **Lakshadweep** is particularly associated with atoll-type coral formations, while the Andaman and Nicobar Islands contain extensive fringing and other reef formations.
- India's coral ecosystems are important for **coastal protection, fisheries, tourism, biodiversity conservation and the livelihoods of coastal communities**.

Ecological and Socio-Economic Significance:

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services:

- Coral reefs occupy only a very small fraction of the ocean floor but support approximately **one-quarter of marine species**, making them among the most biodiversity-rich marine ecosystems.
- Reefs provide **feeding, shelter, nursery, resting and breeding habitats** for numerous fish, molluscs, crustaceans and other marine organisms.
- They function as natural **coastal barriers** by reducing wave energy and helping protect shorelines from erosion, storm surges and extreme weather events.
- Coral reefs support **fisheries, tourism and recreation**, thereby contributing to food security, employment and local economies.
- Globally, reef ecosystems support the livelihoods and well-being of **close to one billion people**, particularly in coastal and island regions.

Coral Bleaching:

Meaning and Process:

- **Coral bleaching** occurs when environmental stress, particularly unusually high sea-surface temperatures, causes corals to expel the symbiotic algae living within their tissues.
- The loss of these algae removes much of the coral's colour and causes the coral to appear **white or pale**, while simultaneously reducing an important source of energy.
- A bleached coral is **not necessarily dead** because it can recover if environmental conditions improve and the symbiotic algae return. However, prolonged or repeated bleaching can result in starvation, disease and mortality.

Degree Heating Weeks and Heat Stress:

- **Degree Heating Weeks (DHW)** are used to measure the accumulated thermal stress experienced by coral reefs over time.
- Heat stress of approximately **4°C-weeks** is associated with significant bleaching, while around **8°C-weeks or more** can produce widespread bleaching and mortality.

- The increasing frequency of such heat-stress events is particularly dangerous because reefs may not have sufficient time to rebuild coral biomass between successive disturbances.

Major Drivers of Coral Reef Decline:

Climate Change and Marine Heatwaves:

- **Marine heatwaves** are currently the strongest global driver of coral-cover decline because prolonged temperature anomalies disrupt coral-algal symbiosis and increase bleaching and mortality.
- Climate change is increasing the **frequency, intensity and geographical extent of marine heatwaves**, converting bleaching from an episodic disturbance into a recurring ecological pressure.

Ocean Acidification:

- Increasing atmospheric **carbon dioxide absorption by oceans** reduces seawater pH and alters carbonate chemistry.
- Lower carbonate-ion availability makes it more difficult for reef-building corals to produce and maintain their calcium carbonate skeletons.
- Ocean warming and acidification therefore operate simultaneously, weakening both coral survival and reef-building capacity.

Pollution and Sedimentation:

- **Agricultural runoff, sewage, plastics, heavy metals and other pollutants** can reduce coral health and resilience.
- Excess nutrients can promote algal growth, while sediment deposited on reefs can reduce light penetration and physically smother coral colonies.

Unsustainable Fishing and Physical Damage:

- **Overfishing** can remove herbivorous fish that control algal growth, allowing algae to compete with corals for space.
- Destructive fishing, coral mining, coastal construction, dredging and poorly managed tourism can cause direct physical damage to reef structures.

Why Shorter Recovery Periods Matter:

Ecological Tipping Risks:

- Coral reefs possess considerable **ecological resilience**, but recovery requires adequate time between major disturbances.
- When bleaching events occur repeatedly before colonies and reef communities recover, coral populations can progressively decline and be replaced by algae or less complex communities.
- The GCRMN assessment indicates that repeated disturbances after 2010 have shortened recovery windows, increasing the possibility of **persistent rather than temporary degradation**.
- The report found that four of its ten assessed regions showed long-term declines in hard coral cover, four showed no net change and two showed increases, demonstrating substantial **regional variation in reef resilience**.

Conservation and Policy Measures:

Global-Level Measures:

- The primary long-term response must be **rapid reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions**, because local conservation alone cannot prevent climate-driven marine heatwaves.
- Implementation of the **Paris Agreement**, protection of marine ecosystems and reduction of ocean pollution should therefore operate together rather than as isolated interventions.
- The **Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network** and the **International Coral Reef Initiative** provide important scientific and institutional platforms for monitoring, assessment and coordinated conservation.

India-Specific Measures:

- India should strengthen **coral-reef monitoring**, early-warning systems and climate-resilient marine protected areas around vulnerable reef ecosystems.
- Conservation strategies should integrate **fisheries management, pollution control, coastal-zone regulation and sustainable tourism**.
- Restoration initiatives should prioritise scientifically appropriate methods such as **coral nurseries, transplantation and assisted restoration**, while recognising that restoration cannot substitute for reducing the underlying climate stress.
- Community participation through **coastal livelihood programmes, sustainable fishing practices and citizen-based reef monitoring** can improve conservation outcomes.

Challenges in Coral Reef Conservation:

Climate and Local Stressors:

- Coral reefs are simultaneously exposed to **global climate stress and local anthropogenic pressures**, making it difficult to isolate or address individual causes.
- Even healthy reefs can experience bleaching during extreme marine heatwaves, while pollution and overfishing can reduce their ability to recover.

Restoration Limitations:

- Coral restoration can rebuild local populations but cannot compensate for continuing **ocean warming, acidification and repeated mass bleaching** at a global scale.
- Conservation therefore requires a shift from isolated restoration projects towards **ecosystem resilience and climate-risk reduction**.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Facts for Prelims:

- **GCRMN**: Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network.
- **ICRI**: International Coral Reef Initiative.
- **GCRMN 2025 report**: Seventh global assessment of coral reefs.
- **Assessment period**: 1980–2024.
- **Reference period**: 1980–2009.
- **Global relative decline in hard coral cover**: Approximately **9.5%**.
- **Major reef types**: Fringing reefs, barrier reefs and atolls.

- **Major Indian coral regions:** Gulf of Kachchh, Gulf of Mannar, Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Malvan.
- **DHW:** Degree Heating Weeks, a measure of accumulated coral heat stress.

Mains Perspective:

- The coral-reef crisis demonstrates that **climate change is no longer merely an atmospheric or terrestrial problem but a systemic threat to marine ecosystems, food security and coastal economies.**
- The central policy challenge is to combine **global emission reduction with local ecosystem management**, because coral resilience depends both on limiting thermal stress and reducing additional human pressures.
- **Conclusion:** Protecting coral reefs requires moving from reactive restoration after bleaching events towards preventive, climate-resilient ocean governance that safeguards biodiversity, coastal protection and the livelihoods dependent on healthy marine ecosystems.

Jan Ganga Strengthens People's Participation in Namami Gange for Integrated River Rejuvenation and Sustainable Ganga Governance

Recent Developments:

- The Government has emphasised **Jan Ganga** as the public-participation pillar of the **Namami Gange Programme**, seeking to transform river conservation from a primarily government-led programme into a **people-driven movement** based on **Jan Bhagidari**.
- As of **February 2026**, a total of **524 projects** had been sanctioned under the Namami Gange Programme, of which **355 projects, or about 68%, had been completed**. The projects cover sewage management, pollution abatement, riverfront development, ecological restoration, biodiversity conservation and other interventions.
- The programme entered **Phase II up to March 2026**, with a stronger emphasis on basin-level river rejuvenation, ecological sustainability, pollution control and community participation.
- Recent government initiatives have increasingly combined **scientific monitoring with public outreach**, including cleanliness campaigns, youth engagement and community-based biodiversity conservation. A 2025 campaign reached approximately **7 lakh students across 5 Ganga-basin States**, demonstrating the growing role of youth in river conservation.

Namami Gange Programme:

Background and Objectives:

- The **Namami Gange Programme** was launched in **June 2014** as a **Flagship Integrated Conservation Mission** for effective pollution abatement, conservation and rejuvenation of the National River Ganga and its tributaries.
- The programme initially received an approved outlay of **₹20,000 crore** for the period up to March 2021 and was subsequently extended up to **March 2026** with an additional outlay of **₹22,500 crore**.
- Its objective extends beyond conventional river cleaning to restoring the **ecological integrity, water quality, biodiversity, flow regime and overall health of the Ganga river system**.
- The programme follows a **river-basin approach**, recognising that pollution and ecological degradation of the main river are closely connected with tributaries, drains, wetlands, groundwater, land use and human activities throughout the basin.

Major Intervention Areas:

- **Pollution abatement:** Treatment of municipal sewage, interception and diversion of drains, industrial-effluent management and solid-waste management.
- **Ecological restoration:** Afforestation, wetland conservation, biodiversity protection, habitat restoration and maintenance of ecological flows.
- **Riverfront management:** Development and improvement of ghats, crematoria and riverfront infrastructure while seeking to reduce ecological pressure.
- **Scientific monitoring:** Use of water-quality monitoring, geographical information systems, aerial surveys and digital platforms for identifying pollution hotspots and prioritising interventions.
- **Public participation:** Community awareness, cleanliness drives, educational programmes and grassroots participation through the **Jan Ganga** framework.

Jan Ganga and Community Participation:

Concept and Significance:

- **Jan Ganga** represents the people-centred dimension of the Namami Gange Programme and is based on the principle of **Jan Bhagidari**.
- Its objective is to make citizens active stakeholders in river conservation by promoting **awareness, participation, behavioural change and local ownership**.
- Community participation is important because river pollution is generated not only by industrial and municipal systems but also through everyday activities such as waste disposal, sanitation practices and unsustainable resource use.
- A people-driven approach can therefore complement infrastructure-based interventions and improve the long-term sustainability of river-rejuvenation efforts.

Cleanliness and Public Campaigns:

- **Ganga Swachhta Pakhwada**, observed annually during **16–31 March**, mobilises students, volunteers, community organisations and other stakeholders for cleanliness and awareness activities across the Ganga basin.
- Such campaigns seek to convert river cleanliness from an occasional government campaign into a **regular civic responsibility**.
- Public participation also helps spread awareness about responsible waste disposal, sanitation, plastic reduction and protection of riverbanks.

Plantation and Riverbank Restoration:

- Plantation campaigns such as **Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam** encourage citizens to participate in tree planting and contribute to ecological restoration.
- Vegetation along riverbanks can support **soil stabilisation, reduction of erosion, habitat restoration and improvement of riverine ecological conditions**.
- Community participation can make plantation programmes more sustainable because local residents can monitor and protect planted areas after government agencies complete initial interventions.

Youth and Educational Institutions:

- **University Ganga Clubs, eco-clubs and educational institutions** involve students through lectures, field visits, competitions, volunteering and environmental-awareness programmes.

- Youth engagement can create long-term environmental responsibility because students become potential **community ambassadors and local conservation leaders**.
- Recent government outreach has demonstrated the scale of this approach, with approximately **7 lakh students** engaged during a 2025 basin-wide cleanliness and awareness campaign.

Cultural and Awareness Programmes:

- **Ganga Utsav** uses cultural activities, exhibitions, performances, public dialogues and educational initiatives to strengthen the relationship between communities and the river.
- Linking environmental conservation with cultural heritage can increase public participation while reinforcing the idea that river protection is both an **ecological responsibility and a social responsibility**.
- Other public campaigns can similarly connect sanitation, environmental stewardship and community action with the cultural significance of the Ganga.

Grassroots Conservation Networks:

- **Ganga Praharis** and **Ganga Seva Doots** contribute at the grassroots level by spreading awareness, supporting biodiversity conservation, encouraging sustainable practices and facilitating community participation.
- Community-based conservation can also support wildlife protection by enabling local people to identify threats to aquatic species and sensitive habitats.
- Recent biodiversity programmes have incorporated trained community members as **Nest Guardians** to protect vulnerable nesting sandbars from predation, trampling and human disturbance.

Key Achievements under Namami Gange:

Project Implementation:

- As of **February 2026**, **524 projects** had been sanctioned and **355 projects** had been completed, indicating substantial expansion of river-rejuvenation infrastructure.
- Sewerage management remains a central component because **untreated domestic wastewater** is one of the major sources of pollution entering the river system.
- By July 2025, **212 sewerage infrastructure projects** with a planned treatment capacity of **6,540 million litres per day** had been taken up, while **136 sewage-treatment projects** with a capacity of **3,780 million litres per day** had been completed and made operational.

Water Quality Improvement:

- Government monitoring has reported improvement in several indicators of river health, particularly **dissolved oxygen**, which is an important indicator of aquatic ecosystem conditions.
- The government reported that dissolved oxygen levels along almost the entire main-stem Ganga were within acceptable limits of the notified primary bathing-water criteria and were generally supportive of the river ecosystem.
- However, improvements are not uniform across the entire basin, and several stretches continue to require targeted pollution-control interventions.

Biodiversity Conservation:

- Namami Gange integrates biodiversity conservation with pollution abatement through programmes for **Gangetic dolphins, gharials, turtles, Hilsa, otters and other aquatic species**.

- Restoration of aquatic habitats can improve ecological connectivity and strengthen the resilience of riverine ecosystems.
- Biodiversity outcomes are therefore an important measure of river rejuvenation alongside conventional indicators such as sewage-treatment capacity and water quality.

Afforestation and Ecosystem Restoration:

- Forestry interventions under the programme have contributed to restoration of approximately **33,024 hectares** in the Ganga basin.
- Afforestation and riverine vegetation can reduce soil erosion, improve habitat quality and strengthen ecological functions within the river basin.
- Such interventions demonstrate the shift from a narrow **river-cleaning approach** towards broader **ecosystem restoration**.

Institutional Framework:

Multi-Level Governance:

- The **National Mission for Clean Ganga** functions as the principal implementation agency for the Namami Gange Programme under the broader institutional framework of the National Ganga Council.
- The governance structure involves multiple levels, including the **National Ganga Council, Empowered Task Force, National Mission for Clean Ganga, State-level institutions and District Ganga Committees**.
- Urban local bodies and State pollution-control authorities are also crucial because sewage generation, solid-waste management and industrial pollution largely require action at the local and State levels.
- The multi-level framework reflects the federal nature of river governance because the Ganga basin extends across several States and involves multiple administrative jurisdictions.

Technology and Scientific Monitoring:

- Recent interventions increasingly employ **geospatial technology, aerial surveys and digital monitoring** to identify drains and pollution hotspots.
- High-resolution aerial surveys along the Ganga main stem in Uttar Pradesh have been integrated into a **live geographical-information-system-based Drain Dashboard** for pollution monitoring and prioritisation of remediation measures.
- Such technology can improve evidence-based decision-making by enabling authorities to identify pollution sources, monitor interventions and allocate resources according to ecological priorities.

Broader Pillars of Ganga Rejuvenation:

Nirmal Ganga and Aviral Ganga:

- **Nirmal Ganga** focuses on reducing pollution and ensuring cleaner river water, while **Aviral Ganga** focuses on maintaining ecological flow and the river's natural functioning.
- River rejuvenation therefore requires both **water quality and adequate flow**, because a polluted or excessively depleted river cannot sustain a healthy aquatic ecosystem merely through sewage treatment.

Gyan Ganga and Arth Ganga:

- **Gyan Ganga** promotes research, scientific mapping, knowledge generation and evidence-based policy formulation for river management.
- **Arth Ganga** seeks to create an economic connection between river conservation and local livelihoods by promoting sustainable economic activities associated with the river and its communities.
- Together, these pillars broaden Namami Gange from a pollution-control programme into an integrated framework combining **ecology, knowledge, participation and sustainable economic development**.

Challenges and the Way Forward:

Key Challenges:

- **Untreated sewage, industrial pollution, solid waste, excessive water abstraction and ecological degradation** continue to place pressure on the Ganga river system.
- Infrastructure creation alone cannot ensure river rejuvenation unless sewage-treatment plants remain operational, connected sewer networks function effectively and untreated wastewater is prevented from entering rivers.
- The Ganga basin also faces challenges related to **inter-State coordination, urbanisation, agricultural runoff, groundwater stress and maintaining environmental flows**.
- Community participation can become symbolic unless local institutions receive adequate resources, responsibilities and mechanisms for monitoring outcomes.

Way Forward:

- India should move from a project-oriented approach towards **outcome-based river-basin management**, with measurable indicators for water quality, biodiversity, ecological flow and community participation.
- **Decentralised governance** should be strengthened by empowering District Ganga Committees, urban local bodies and community organisations.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on the **reuse of treated wastewater, circular economy approaches, nature-based solutions and sustainable urban drainage systems**.
- Community participation should be linked with measurable conservation outcomes rather than limited to awareness campaigns.
- Scientific monitoring, transparent public data and independent evaluation can improve **accountability, adaptive management and evidence-based policymaking**.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Prelims Facts:

- **Namami Gange Programme:** Launched in **2014** as a flagship integrated conservation mission.
- **Implementing institution:** National Mission for Clean Ganga.
- **Latest project status:** 524 projects sanctioned and 355 completed as of February 2026.
- **Major pillars:** Nirmal Ganga, Aviral Ganga, Jan Ganga, Gyan Ganga and Arth Ganga.
- **Jan Ganga:** Focuses on **public participation and people-river connect**.
- **Arth Ganga:** Connects river conservation with **sustainable economic activities and livelihoods**.
- **United Nations recognition:** Namami Gange was selected among the **Top 10 World Restoration Flagships** under the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration in 2022.

Mains Perspective:

- **Core argument:** River rejuvenation cannot be sustained through engineering infrastructure alone because pollution sources, ecological degradation and unsustainable resource use are embedded within the wider river basin.
- **Governance principle:** **Jan Bhagidari** can convert citizens from passive beneficiaries into active environmental stakeholders, thereby improving the durability of conservation outcomes.
- **Way forward:** The next phase of Ganga rejuvenation should combine **scientific river-basin management, ecological-flow restoration, effective sewage treatment, biodiversity conservation, technological monitoring and meaningful community participation.**
- **Conclusion:** **Jan Ganga** represents a shift from treating river conservation as a government service to recognising it as a shared societal responsibility. The long-term success of Ganga rejuvenation will depend on integrating **Nirmal Ganga, Aviral Ganga, Jan Ganga, Gyan Ganga and Arth Ganga** into an accountable, science-based and community-driven model of river governance.

Interim Government of 1946 Marked India's Transition from Colonial Administration to Indian-Led Executive Governance Before Independence

Recent Developments:

- **2 September 1946** marks the formation of the **Interim Government of India**, constituted under the leadership of **Jawaharlal Nehru** as Vice-President of the Viceroy's Executive Council. Nehru also assumed responsibility for **External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations**, making the arrangement a crucial stage in India's transition from colonial administration to self-government.
- The Interim Government emerged from the **Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946**, which sought to establish a constitutional framework for transferring power while preserving Indian unity. The Mission proposed an interim executive alongside a Constituent Assembly to frame the future Constitution.
- The experiment was politically significant but internally difficult because the **Indian National Congress and All-India Muslim League** had conflicting approaches to constitutional power-sharing, provincial grouping and the future political structure of India.
- The League eventually joined the Interim Government on **26 October 1946**, with **Liaquat Ali Khan** taking charge of Finance. The resulting Congress-League tensions affected the functioning of the administration and demonstrated the growing political impasse preceding Partition.

What was the Interim Government of 1946?

Background and Genesis:

- The end of **World War II**, Britain's economic difficulties, growing Indian political mobilisation and events such as the **Royal Indian Navy Mutiny of 1946** increased pressure on the British Government to accelerate the transfer of power.
- Prime Minister **Clement Attlee** announced in February 1946 that a **Cabinet Mission** would be sent to India to address the constitutional deadlock.
- The Cabinet Mission consisted of **Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and A. V. Alexander**. It arrived in India in March 1946 and subsequently presented proposals for India's constitutional future.

Cabinet Mission Plan, 1946:

- The **Cabinet Mission Plan** rejected the Muslim League's demand for a separate Pakistan at that stage and proposed a weak Union dealing mainly with **foreign affairs, defence and communications**, while provinces retained substantial autonomy.
- The proposed constitutional arrangement had **three levels**, namely the Union, groups of provinces and individual provinces. Provinces were to be organised into three sections: **Section A** comprising mainly Hindu-majority provinces, **Section B** comprising Muslim-majority provinces in the north-west, and **Section C** comprising **Bengal and Assam**.
- The Plan envisaged a **389-member Constituent Assembly**, while also proposing the establishment of an Interim Government to administer India during the transition towards a new constitutional order.
- It further proposed the lapse of **British paramountcy over princely states**, thereby creating the need for a new political arrangement between the future Indian Union and the princely states.

Nature and Objectives of the Interim Government:

- The Interim Government was a **provisional executive administration** intended to manage the affairs of British India while constitutional negotiations and constitution-making proceeded.
- It was designed to function increasingly like a **cabinet government**, rather than merely operating as a collection of departmental members subordinate to the Viceroy.
- Its principal objectives were to **administer the country, prepare for the transfer of power, provide governing experience to Indian leaders and facilitate the work of the Constituent Assembly**.

Constitutional and Legal Framework:

- A key correction to the commonly circulated account is that the Interim Government operated within the constitutional framework of the **Government of India Act, 1935**, through the restructured **Viceroy's Executive Council**. Contemporary records concerning the Cabinet Mission explicitly refer to the Government of India Act, 1935 in connection with the formal establishment of the interim arrangement.
- **Lord Wavell**, the Viceroy, remained the formal head and President of the Executive Council, while Indian political leaders increasingly exercised substantive executive responsibilities.
- **Jawaharlal Nehru** served as Vice-President of the Executive Council and was effectively the principal political head of the Interim Government. His responsibilities included **External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations**.

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Political Crisis and Entry of the Muslim League:

Direct Action Day and Communal Tensions:

- Differences between the Congress and Muslim League intensified over the interpretation of the **grouping provisions** of the Cabinet Mission Plan and the question of political representation.
- The Muslim League withdrew its earlier acceptance of the constitutional arrangement and called for **Direct Action Day on 16 August 1946**, which was followed by severe communal violence, particularly in Calcutta.
- The communal crisis demonstrated that constitutional negotiations were increasingly being shaped by competing political claims and deepening communal polarisation.

Muslim League Joins the Interim Government:

- Despite the initial League boycott, the Viceroy proceeded with the formation of the Interim Government under Nehru, which formally took office on **2 September 1946**.

- The **Muslim League joined on 26 October 1946**, after concluding that remaining outside the executive structure could reduce its influence over the emerging political order.
- To accommodate the League, changes were made in the composition of the Executive Council, and **Liaquat Ali Khan** became the Finance Member.
- Control over the Finance portfolio gave the League an important institutional position because major government proposals required financial approval. Consequently, disagreements over fiscal policy became an important manifestation of the broader Congress-League political conflict.

Composition and Major Indian Leaders:

Key Portfolios:

- **Jawaharlal Nehru:** Vice-President of the Executive Council, External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations.
- **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel:** Home, Information and Broadcasting.
- **Dr. Rajendra Prasad:** Food and Agriculture.
- **Sardar Baldev Singh:** Defence.
- **Jagjivan Ram:** Labour.
- **C. H. Bhabha:** Works, Mines and Power.
- **Asaf Ali:** Railways and Transport.
- **C. Rajagopalachari:** Education and Arts.
- **Liaquat Ali Khan:** Finance after the Muslim League entered the Interim Government.

Significance of the Interim Government:

Beginning of Indian Executive Responsibility:

- The Interim Government represented a major institutional shift because **Indian political leaders assumed responsibility for important departments of the central executive** while British authority formally remained in place.
- It provided Indian leaders with practical experience in **cabinet decision-making, administration, finance, foreign affairs, defence and interdepartmental coordination.**

Foundations of Independent Foreign Policy:

- Nehru's responsibility for external affairs enabled Indian leaders to begin developing an **independent diplomatic outlook** even before formal independence.
- The experience contributed to the later emergence of India's **non-alignment, strategic autonomy and independent foreign policy** after 1947.

Administrative Indianisation:

- The Interim Government accelerated the process of transferring effective administrative responsibility to Indian political leadership.
- Experience in dealing with **civil administration, policing, food shortages, economic management and public order** helped prepare Indian leaders for governance after independence.

Princely States and Political Integration:

- The transition highlighted the importance of developing a coordinated approach towards the **princely states**, whose relationship with British paramountcy was expected to lapse with independence.
- The issue became central after 1947, when the new Indian leadership undertook the political integration of princely states into the Indian Union.

Governing Experience and Developmental Planning:

- Indian leaders obtained practical experience in dealing with **food security, economic constraints, administrative coordination and developmental priorities**.
- This experience was particularly important because independence required the transformation of a colonial administrative structure into a government responsible to the people.

From Interim Government to Independence:

Failure of the Coalition Experiment:

- The Interim Government demonstrated both the possibilities and limitations of political cooperation between the Congress and Muslim League.
- Persistent disagreements over **constitutional authority, communal representation, finance and the future territorial structure of India** weakened collective decision-making.
- The experience reinforced the perception among several Congress leaders that a permanently divided executive at the Centre could produce continuing political instability and administrative paralysis.

Mountbatten Plan and Partition:

- By 1947, the constitutional deadlock had become increasingly difficult to resolve through the Cabinet Mission framework.
- **Lord Mountbatten** replaced Wavell as Viceroy and was tasked with overseeing the transfer of power.
- The **3 June 1947 Plan**, commonly known as the **Mountbatten Plan**, formally accepted the principle of Partition and provided the immediate political framework for the creation of two Dominions.
- The **Indian Independence Act, 1947** subsequently provided the legal basis for the establishment of India and Pakistan as independent Dominions, culminating in independence on **15 August 1947**.

Historical Assessment:

Transitional Constitutional Significance:

- The Interim Government should be understood as a **transitional constitutional arrangement**, not as an independent sovereign government.
- British constitutional authority remained formally significant, particularly through the Viceroy, but the increasing exercise of executive functions by Indian leaders created an important bridge between **colonial rule and parliamentary self-government**.
- Its importance therefore lies less in complete sovereignty and more in the transfer of **political responsibility, administrative experience and institutional legitimacy** to Indian leaders.

Limitations:

- The arrangement could not overcome the fundamental Congress-League disagreement over the constitutional future of India.
- Communal violence, competing claims to political representation and disputes over executive authority weakened the functioning of the government.
- The failure of the coalition experiment occurred against the wider background of the constitutional crisis that ultimately produced **Partition**.

Value Addition for UPSC:***Prelims Perspective:***

- **2 September 1946:** Formation of the Interim Government.
- **Jawaharlal Nehru:** Vice-President of the Viceroy's Executive Council and Member in charge of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations.
- **Lord Wavell:** Viceroy during the initial formation of the Interim Government.
- **26 October 1946:** Muslim League entered the Interim Government.
- **Liaquat Ali Khan:** Finance Member after the League joined.
- **Cabinet Mission:** Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and A. V. Alexander.
- **Cabinet Mission Plan:** Proposed a three-tier constitutional arrangement and a **389-member Constituent Assembly**.
- **16 August 1946:** Direct Action Day.
- **3 June 1947:** Mountbatten Plan announced.
- **15 August 1947:** India became independent.

Mains Perspective:

- **Conclusion:** The Interim Government of 1946 was a decisive bridge between the colonial state and independent India. Although it failed to produce lasting Congress-League cooperation, it gave Indian leaders valuable experience in central administration and demonstrated the practical challenges of transferring power in a deeply divided political environment.

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QUESTIONS

1. Read the following descriptions regarding international climate policy:

Concept X: Critical thresholds in Earth systems beyond which small changes can trigger self-reinforcing and irreversible shifts.

Concept Y: The structural mechanism where global greenhouse gas removals outweigh total global greenhouse gas emissions.

Which of the following correctly identifies Concept X and Concept Y?

- (A) Concept X = Carbon Budgets; Concept Y = Net-Zero Emissions
- (B) Concept X = Tipping Points; Concept Y = Net-Negative Emissions
- (C) Concept X = Peak Warming; Concept Y = Carbon Dioxide Removal
- (D) Concept X = Climate Resilience; Concept Y = Overshoot Pathways

2. Consider the following statements regarding anti-caste movements and historical socio-religious reforms in India:

- (1) Jyotirao Phule established the Satyashodhak Samaj in 1873 to challenge caste exploitation and emphasize education as a tool of social emancipation.
- (2) Swami Dayananda Saraswati founded the Shuddhi Movement, asserting that untouchability was a later social distortion rather than an integral Vedic practice.
- (3) Sri Narayana Guru challenged ritual hierarchy in 1888 through the famous Aruvipuram consecration of a Shiva idol, propagating "One Caste, One Religion, One God for Humankind."
- (4) Periyar E.V. Ramasamy launched the Self-Respect Movement in 1925, advocating a traditional reformist integration of caste within orthodox Hindu social structures.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (A) 1, 2 and 3
- (B) 1, 3 and 4
- (C) 2, 3 and 4
- (D) 1, 2, 3 and 4

3. With reference to marine organisms and reef biology, how many of the following statements are correct characteristics of reef-building hard corals?

- (1) They belong to the phylum Cnidaria, sharing the same major taxonomic clade as sea anemones and jellyfish.
 - (2) Individual coral polyps synthesize calcium carbonate structures to build expansive marine reef foundations.
 - (3) The symbiotic zooxanthellae residing in coral tissues are photosynthetic algae that furnish energy to the host.
 - (4) Coral bleaching occurs when host polyps permanently absorb excess zooxanthellae due to low water salinity.
 - (5) Cold-water deep-sea corals rely exclusively on zooxanthellae photosynthesis for their skeletal formation.
- (A) Only two

- (B) Only three
- (C) Only four
- (D) All five

4. Consider the following statements regarding the key pillars of the holistic river rejuvenation framework under Namami Gange:

- (1) Nirmal Ganga focuses primarily on reducing pollution, intercepting drains, and improving overall water quality.
- (2) Aviral Ganga emphasizes the maintenance of continuous ecological flow and preserving the natural hydrological regime of the river.
- (3) Gyan Ganga seeks to drive research, scientific mapping, and evidence-based knowledge generation for river basin management.
- (4) Arth Ganga aims to link river conservation with sustainable economic activities, local livelihoods, and circular economy practices.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

5. Consider the following statements regarding the 1946 Cabinet Mission Plan:

- (1) It rejected the demand for a sovereign, fully independent state of Pakistan at that stage.
- (2) It proposed a three-tier administrative structure dividing British Indian provinces into Sections A, B, and C.
- (3) Section A was designed to encompass the Hindu-majority provinces, while Sections B and C comprised Muslim-majority provinces in the north-west and east.
- (4) It provided for the immediate total abolition of British paramountcy over princely states prior to the drafting of the Constitution.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

ANSWER KEY

1 – Answer (B), 2 – Answer (A), 3 – Answer (B), 4 – Answer (D), 5 – Answer (A)



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