DATE: DD.MM.2026

1) What is Project 108, recently associated with Bhutan?
   (a) A hydropower development initiative aimed at strengthening Bhutan's renewable energy capacity through the construction of additional hydroelectric power stations.
   (b) A cross-border railway connectivity project intended to improve trade, tourism and transportation links between Bhutan and neighbouring Indian states.
   (c) A religious and educational development programme aimed at establishing an international Buddhist university and promoting Buddhist studies across the Himalayan region.
   (d) A Buddhist heritage initiative involving the construction of 108 Jangchub Chortens along the Mau Chhu River in the Gelephu region.

2) With reference to the Digi Yatra initiative, consider the following statements:
   1. Digi Yatra uses a decentralised, mobile wallet-based platform to facilitate seamless passenger processing at airports.
   2. The use of Digi Yatra is mandatory for all domestic air passengers, and passengers cannot opt for conventional identity verification.
   3. Under the initiative, facial recognition technology (FRT) is used to enable contactless, paperless and seamless processing of air passengers at airports.
   4. All facial recognition data collected at airport checkpoints are permanently stored on airport servers for future identification and security purposes.
   5. Digi Yatra aims to eliminate the need for manual verification and traditional paper-based passenger processing at all airports.

   How many of the above statements are correct?
   (a) Only Two
   (b) Only Three
   (c) Only Four
   (d) All are correct

3) A particular crop is cultivated in well-drained Karewa soils of the Kashmir Valley, particularly around Pampore. It requires a temperate climate with distinct seasonal variations and is commercially propagated through underground corms. Its dried stigmas are used as a spice and contain compounds such as crocin, safranal and picrocrocin, which contribute to its colour, aroma and taste. Which one of the following crops is being described?
   (a) Turmeric
   (b) Saffron
   (c) Cardamom
   (d) Asafoetida

4) With reference to Project 18A, consider the following statements:
   1. It is envisaged as a successor to the Visakhapatnam-class (Project 15B) destroyers, with enhanced stealth features, greater displacement and Integrated Electric Propulsion.
   2. The programme envisages the construction of both surface guided-missile destroyers and nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 and 2

5) Consider the following statements regarding the Shey Phoksundo National Park:

1. It is the largest national park in Nepal and the country's only trans-Himalayan national park
2. The park encompasses Phoksundo Lake, an alpine body of water that is completely devoid of aquatic life.
3. The park serves as a prime habitat for the Snow Leopard, Himalayan Blue Sheep (Bharal), and Musk Deer.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Explanation

1) Answer: (D)

- **Royal Spiritual Initiative:** Conceived and guided by King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, *Project 108* is a major initiative to build **108 *Jangchub Chortens* (Stupas of Enlightenment)**.
- **Strategic Location:** The monuments are positioned along an 11.7-kilometre single-file line by the **Mau Chhu (Aie River)** inside the **Gelephu Mindfulness City (GMC)** SAR, located in southern Bhutan bordering Assam, India.
- **Architectural Geometry:** Each stupa stands **15 metres high**, spaced exactly **108 metres apart** (centre-to-centre), creating a continuous spiritual "line of prayer" through the landscape.
- **Mass Community Labor (*Zhabto*):** Demonstrating Bhutan's ancient practice of voluntary community service (*Zhabto*), around 40,000 volunteers simultaneously raised the external structures of all **108 stupas within a single day** (1 November 2026).
- **Cultural Anchor for GMC:** The project acts as the core cultural anchor for the newly planned Gelephu Mindfulness City, integrating spiritual values, eco-tourism, and sustainable infrastructure near the India-Bhutan border.
- Therefore, **option D** is the correct answer.

2) Answer: (A)

- **Statement 1 – Correct:** Digi Yatra is based on a decentralised, mobile wallet-based architecture.
- **Statement 2 – Incorrect:** Digi Yatra is completely voluntary; passengers can choose conventional identity verification.
- **Statement 3 – Correct:** It employs Facial Recognition Technology (FRT) to facilitate contactless, paperless and seamless passenger processing.

- **Statement 4 – Incorrect:** Facial recognition data is not intended for permanent storage on airport servers. The stated data-retention policy provides for deletion within 24 hours of flight departure.
- **Statement 5 – Incorrect:** Digi Yatra does not seek to eliminate conventional passenger verification channels.
- Therefore, **option A** is the correct answer.

3) Answer: (B)

- **Saffron (*Crocus sativus*):** A perennial flowering plant belonging to the Iridaceae family. It is commercially propagated through underground corms.
- **Geographical Location:** Pampore in the Kashmir Valley is a major saffron-producing region in India.
- **Soil:** Grown in well-drained Karewa soils, which are associated with lacustrine (ancient lake) deposits.
- **Climate:** Requires a temperate climate with distinct seasonal variations. Excessive moisture and waterlogging are unfavourable.
- **Plant Part:** The dried red stigmas of the flower are used as a spice.
- **Chemical Compounds:**
  - **Crocin:** Responsible for colour.
  - **Safranal:** Responsible for aroma.
  - **Picrocrocin:** Responsible for bitter taste.
- **GI Tag:** Kashmir Saffron received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag in **2020.**
- **Agricultural Heritage:** Kashmir's saffron cultivation is associated with traditional agricultural practices and heritage conservation.
- **Therefore option B is the correct answer.**

4) Answer: (A)

- **Statement 1 is correct:** Project 18A (P-18) is the **Indian Navy's Next-Generation Destroyer** (NGD) programme, aimed at developing a**dvanced stealth-guided missile destroyers.**
- It is conceived as a **successor to the Visakhapatnam-class destroyers (Project 15B)**.
- Important proposed features include:
  - **Greater displacement:** Expected to exceed 13,000 tonnes, compared with approximately 7,400 tonnes of the Visakhapatnam class.
  - **Enhanced stealth:** Enclosed mast, optimised hull design, radar-absorbent materials and infrared signature suppression.
  - **Integrated Electric Propulsion (IEP)**: An advanced propulsion arrangement that can support the high electrical-power requirements of modern sensors and weapons.
  - **Indigenous content:** Expected to be approximately 75%.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect:** Project 18A is a **surface-combatant programme focused on next-generation guided-missile destroyers.**
  - It does not include the construction of nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs).
  - India's proposed SSN development programme is separate and is commonly referred to as Project 75 Alpha.
  - Do not confuse it with:
    - **Project 75:** Six Kalvari-class (Scorpene) conventional diesel-electric submarines.

  - **Project 75(I):** Six proposed conventional submarines with Air Independent Propulsion (AIP.
  - **Project 75 Alpha** – nuclear-powered attack submarines
- Hence, only Statement 1 is correct.
- **Therefore, option A is the correct answer.**

5) Answer: (D)

- **Statement 1 is correct:** Established in 1984, Shey Phoksundo National Park (covering 3,555 km^2) is the largest national park in Nepal. Located in the Dolpa and Mugu districts of northwestern Nepal, it is also the country's only trans-Himalayan national park, bridging the high Tibetan plateau and the southern Himalayan slopes.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** Phoksundo Lake, an oligotrophic alpine lake situated at an altitude of approximately 3,611 meters is the park's central feature. Due to its high altitude, extreme temperatures, mineral composition, and lack of organic nutrients, the lake is notable for completely lacking any aquatic life (fish or micro-fauna).
- **Statement 3 is correct:** The park is a vital high-altitude wildlife sanctuary. It harbors key prey-predator dynamics essential to alpine ecosystems, notably protecting the endangered Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*), its primary prey species the Himalayan Blue Sheep or Bharal (*Pseudois nayaur*), and the Himalayan Musk Deer (*Moschus chrysogaster).*
- **Therefore, option D is the correct answer.**