NOVEMBER 2026

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Topic 1: Poverty Estimation in India & The "Thali Index"

Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper 2 (Issues relating to Poverty and Hunger; Development Processes) & GS Paper 3 (Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources)

1. Context & Key Findings

- World Bank Estimate: The World Bank recently estimated extreme poverty in India at 2.6% of the population using the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2023–2412. The World Bank's extreme poverty benchmark stands at $3.00 a day at 2021 Purchasing Power Parity (PPP)3.
- The "Thali Index": Formulated in 2025 by economists Pulapre Balakrishnan and Aman Raj, the index assesses poverty through actual food affordability24. Pricing a home-cooked vegetarian thali at ₹30 (based on CRISIL's 2023–24 estimates), it revealed that approximately 50% of rural and 20% of urban Indians cannot afford two complete meals a day4. Accounting for subsidised food lowers these figures to 40% rural and 10% urban (roughly 30% nationally)4.

2. Core Conceptual Differences & Issues

- Income Poverty vs. Direct Nutritional Consumption: The World Bank relies on a headcount ratio based on monetary income/expenditure thresholds15. However, in real household budgets, food acts as a *residual expense*—essential overheads such as rent, healthcare, and education are settled first, leaving food intake vulnerable5.
- Absence of an Updated Official Poverty Line: India has not updated its official domestic poverty line since 2011–126. While expert groups like Lakdawala, Tendulkar, and Rangarajan shaped methodology historically, the Rangarajan Committee recommendations were never officially adopted3.
- Multidimensional Poverty Metrics: NITI Aayog's National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) monitors 12 indicators across health, education, and living standards, whereas the UNDP's Global MPI evaluates 10 indicators3.

3. Challenges & Policy Implications

- Risk of Policy Complacency: A 2.6% extreme poverty figure risks creating administrative complacency despite persistent food distress6.
- Food Inflation Vulnerability: Food price inflation accelerated continuously from January to September 2024/25, trebling over that window6.
- Way Forward: The World Bank must disclose the specific commodity basket and prices underpinning its India line27. Domestically, India requires a revised official poverty line anchored to baseline nutritional requirements, alongside structural measures to boost agricultural productivity and stabilize food prices67.

Topic 2: Strategic Autonomy in Space & Satellite Communications (Starlink Policy)

Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper 3 (Awareness in Space, IT, and Communications; Security Challenges; Strategic Autonomy)

1. Context & Operational Mechanism

- The Debate: Deliberations over SpaceX's Starlink entering India have highlighted tensions between commercial access and strategic autonomy (the sovereign capability to act without foreign dependence)8.
- Technological Architecture: Low-Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite internet beams data directly to user terminals without requiring extensive terrestrial tower or cable rollouts9. It is suited for remote frontiers, maritime vessels, defense outposts, and disaster recovery zones, though it offers lower user density per region compared to fiber-optic networks9.

2. Regulatory & Security Framework in India

- Mandatory Ground Gateways: Indian licensing regulations mandate that satellite operators route all domestic traffic through physical ground stations (gateways) located within India10. Inter-satellite links cannot be leveraged to bypass Indian gateways or redirect domestic data traffic through overseas stations10.
- Interception & Surveillance Compliance: Operators must provide security agencies with monitoring access and execute shutdown directives during emergencies10. However, verifying whether data is intercepted or copied abroad remains reliant on operator disclosure10.

3. International Precedents & Strategic Lessons

- Iran & the ITU: Iran lodged protests with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) over unauthorized Starlink transmissions within its borders11. In October 2026, the ITU's Radio Regulations Board urged operations to cease but noted it lacked legal jurisdiction to suspend assigned radio frequencies11.
- Ukrainian Battlefield Experience: While SpaceX collaborated with Kyiv to block Russian terminals, a sudden restriction on terminals moving faster than 160 km/h on October 14, 2026, crippled Starshield-dependent drone sorties and frontline operations11. Service was restored on October 24 amidst geopolitical friction1112.
- Way Forward for India: BharatNet had connected only 30% of gram panchayats with functional broadband as of February 202613. To avoid strategic lock-in, India must maintain stringent gateway routing, mandate multi-vendor redundancy, expand terrestrial fiber coverage, and cultivate domestic LEO constellations1314.

Topic 3: Local Governance & Constitutional Status of Ladakh (LAHDC & Sixth Schedule)

Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper 2 (Devolution of Powers to Local Levels; Fifth & Sixth Schedules; Federal Structure & UT Administration)

1. Context & Administrative Reorganization

- Council Expansion: The Ladakh administration notified elections to expand the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDCs) from two councils (Leh and Kargil, each with 26 constituencies) into eight councils comprising 100 constituencies15.
- Gender Representation & Franchise: For the first time, 36 seats are reserved for women, with 1.87 lakh electors eligible across the newly bifurcated eight districts1516.
- Statutory Nature: LAHDCs are established under an ordinary statute—the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils Act, 1997—and lack direct constitutional entrenchment17.

2. Civil Society Agitation & Core Demands

- KDA & Leh Apex Body: The Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) and Leh Apex Body have spearheaded joint protests demanding full Statehood and inclusion

under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution1518. Formal talks with the Ministry of Home Affairs stalled after the Centre decided on October 22 not to resume negotiations18.

- Boycott Calls & Logistical Friction: Civil society groups called for shutdowns and poll boycotts, citing unilateral delimitation and harsh sub-zero winter conditions ahead of scheduled municipal/panchayat polls (November 21) and council polls (December 4)1618.

3. Constitutional Distinctions

- Sixth Schedule (Article 244(2)): Currently governs 10 Autonomous District Councils across four northeastern states: Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram (AMTM)19. These councils hold legislative, judicial, and financial powers over land, forests, and customary law19.
- Statutory Vulnerability: Statutory powers granted under the 1997 Act can be amended or diluted by legislative action, fueling local demands for constitutional guarantees protecting indigenous land, jobs, culture, and fragile ecology1920.

Topic 4: Electoral Integrity & The Model Code of Conduct (MCC)

Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper 2 (Salient Features of the Representation of the People Act; Powers & Functions of the Election Commission; Civil Service Neutrality)

1. Recent Directive of the Election Commission of India (ECI)

- Closing Regulatory Loopholes: The ECI extended all prohibitions under the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) to re-employed/contractually rehired retired government officials across poll-bound states (directed to Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand ahead of 2027 Assembly polls)2122.
- Context of the Decision: While serving civil servants are bound by State Conduct Rules and existing ECI instructions against political bias, re-engaged retirees previously operated in a regulatory gray area despite wielding executive authority2324.

2. Specific Restraints Imposed

- Campaigning Ban: Re-employed retired officials cannot participate in election campaigning or publicly endorse political parties or candidates25.
- Meeting & Summoning Curbs: Re-employed retirees are prohibited from summoning election-related field officers (from declared districts/constituencies) or convening official meetings/video conferences with them25.

3. Legal Status of the MCC

- Non-Statutory Norms: The MCC is not enacted by Parliament and lacks statutory backing22. It operates as a set of consensus-driven conventions enforced by the ECI through its plenary constitutional superintendence under Article 3242223.
- Application Scope: The MCC applies from the formal date of election announcement until the declaration of results, binding governments, political parties, candidates, and public sector undertakings/bodies funded wholly or partially by the state23.

Topic 5: Agriculture, Livestock Economics & The "Milk Fat" Deficit Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper 3 (Economics of Animal Rearing; Food Processing & Supply Chain Management; Agricultural Pricing)

1. Nature of the Structural Crisis

- Milk Volume vs. Milk Fat Deficit: India faces a specific shortage of milk fat rather than overall milk production, which grew at ~3% annually over the last decade2627. Dairy butter prices surged by over 54% between October 2023 and October 2026, while Skimmed Milk Powder (SMP) rose by only 18%2628.
- Joint Products Dynamics: Raw milk consists of water, milk fat, and Solids-Not-Fat (SNF) (proteins, lactose, and minerals)26. Processing more cow milk to extract fat leaves vast quantities of surplus SNF, which is dried into SMP that domestic markets cannot readily absorb29.

2. Underlying Causes of the Supply-Demand Mismatch

- Shifting Bovine Demographics: Buffalo milk yields ~6.5% fat and 9% SNF, whereas cow milk yields only ~3.5% fat and 8.5% SNF2829. Crossbred cows produce higher daily liquid volume, prompting farmers to prefer them; buffaloes now account for roughly 45% of national milk output, down from 60% thirty years ago2930.
- Regulatory Crackdown on Adulteration: Following the September 2024 Tirupati laddu controversy, FSSAI intensified testing against adulterated ghee (diluted with vegetable oils or animal fats like tallow/lard) and synthetic "analogue paneer"31. This redirected institutional and consumer demand toward pure milk fats31.
- Rationalization of GST Rates: In September 2025, GST on ghee, butter, and cheese was cut from 12% to 5%, ice cream was reduced from 18% to 5%, and paneer taxes dropped from 5% to 0%, accelerating consumer demand2831.

3. Policy Interventions Required

- Value-Based Pricing: Shift cooperative procurement payment formulas strictly to combined fat and SNF content rather than flat liquid volume30.
- Genetic Improvement: Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying must expand artificial insemination programs targeting high-yielding indigenous buffalo breeds32.

Topic 6: Environmental Jurisprudence & The Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006

Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper 3 (Conservation, Environmental Acts & Judiciary; Biosphere Reserves; Tribal Rights)

1. Supreme Court Interpretation on Commercial Plantation

- Judicial Ruling: In a case concerning extensive silk cotton (*Ceiba pentandra*) plantations in the Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve (Tamil Nadu), a two-judge Bench ruled *prima facie* that commercial farming on forest land is not protected under the FRA, 20063334.
- State-Sponsored Encroachment: The Bench held that planned, promoted, or state-sponsored cultivation of cash crops inside reserve forests is

impermissible35. Of the 5,073 hectares under dispute, silk cotton covered approximately 3,638 hectares36.

2. Statutory Demarcation under FRA, 2006

- Minor Forest Produce (MFP) under Section 3(1)(c): FRA recognizes the right to collect, use, and dispose of MFP, defined strictly as non-timber forest produce of plant origin that occurs naturally in forests3435. Deliberately planting cash crops on forest land contradicts the foundational definition of naturally regenerating forest produce35.
- Reference to Central Empowered Committee (CEC): The Supreme Court tasked the CEC with verifying whether silk cotton qualifies as naturally occurring minor forest produce under these specific conditions36.

3. Ecological Profile: Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve

- Geography: Straddles the southern Western Ghats along the border of Kerala and Tamil Nadu; established in 2001 and inducted into UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves in 201637.
- Component Protected Areas: Encompasses the Kalakad-Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (Tamil Nadu), and the Neyyar, Peppara, and Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuaries (Kerala)37.
- Key Flora & Fauna: Inhabited by the indigenous Kani tribe; shelters endangered endemics including the lion-tailed macaque and the Nilgiri tahr37.

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Topic 7: Climate Diplomacy, COP31 & The "Overshoot" Discourse
Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper 3 (UNFCCC; Climate Change Negotiations; Environmental Mitigation & Adaptation Finance)
1. The "Overshoot" Concept at COP31 (Antalya, Türkiye)

- Definition: A 1.5°C "overshoot" denotes exceeding the 1.5°C global warming limit in the near term with the speculative ambition of drawing temperatures back down below 1.5°C by 2100 through future Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR)3839.
- Dilution of Mitigation: The overshoot narrative shifts diplomatic focus away from immediate decarbonization toward hypothetical future technological removals, serving developed countries' desire to prolong fossil fuel reliance3940.

2. Technological and Ecological Limits of CDR

- UNEP Report (Limiting Overshoot): Reversing just 0.1°C of warming requires the permanent extraction of 220 billion tonnes of $CO_2$41.
- Capacity Bottlenecks: Nature-based sinks (soils and forests) sequester ~2.2 billion tonnes of CO_2/year, whereas technological solutions like Direct Air Capture (DAC) remove barely 2 million tonnes/year globally at exorbitant costs reaching up to $600 per tonne4142.
- Land-Grab Risk in the Global South: Current national pledges rely on 1.2 billion hectares of land for CDR, disproportionately offloading land burdens and offsetting obligations onto developing nations41.

3. Climate Finance Deficits & Trade Distortions

- Inflated Reporting vs. Real Grants: While developed nations reported delivering $137 billion in climate finance for 2024, independent estimates evaluate its grant equivalent value at just $33 to $45 billion (one-quarter to one-third)4344. Approximately 65% of public climate finance was provided as debt-creating loans43.
- Adaptation Underfunding: Global adaptation finance fell to $26 billion in 2023, falling drastically short of the estimated $310–365 billion per year required by developing countries by 20354344.
- Unilateral Measures: Mechanisms like the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) penalize core industrial imports (steel, cement, aluminum, iron) from the Global South43. Developed nations have largely

sidelined formal deliberations on the cumulative global carbon budget and historical emissions obligations enshrined under Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement42more_horiz.

UPSC-Style Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to poverty estimation in India, consider the following statements:

1. The World Bank's extreme poverty line is currently set at $3.00 a day based on 2021 Purchasing Power Parity (PPP).
2. The recommendations of the C. Rangarajan Expert Group (2014) currently form the official basis for poverty estimation by the Government of India.
3. The "Thali Index" is calculated by pricing a standardized meal using data from the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q2. With reference to the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), consider the following pairs:

Metric	Number of Indicators Tracked
1. UNDP Global MPI	10
2. NITI Aayog National MPI	12

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched? (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q3. In the context of telecommunication and national security in India, consider the following statements regarding satellite internet operations:

1. Under Indian licensing norms, satellite internet operators are mandatorily required to route all domestic user data through ground gateways situated within India.
2. Inter-satellite optical links are permitted to bypass Indian ground gateways during severe domestic network outages.

3. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has the statutory executive authority to confiscate and cancel the assigned orbital frequencies of commercial satellite constellations that violate member nations' domestic laws.

How many of the statements given above are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

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Q4. With reference to the autonomous councils of Ladakh, consider the following statements:

1. The Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDCs) derive their powers and authority directly from the Sixth Schedule under Article 244(2) of the Constitution.
2. The recent expansion of the hill councils in Ladakh includes the provision of one-third reservation of seats for women.
3. The newly notified election structure increases the number of autonomous hill councils from two to eight.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q5. Consider the following States:

1. Assam
2. Manipur
3. Meghalaya
4. Mizoram
5. Tripura

Under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, Autonomous District Councils exist in which of the States listed above? (a) 1, 2, 3 and 4 only (b) 1, 3, 4 and 5 only (c) 2, 3 and 5 only (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Q6. With reference to the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) enforced by the Election Commission of India (ECI), consider the following statements:

1. The MCC comes into operation from the date of the issuance of the formal election notification by the President or Governor.
2. The ECI has directed that retired government officials who have been re-employed by State governments are also bound by MCC restrictions.
3. The Model Code of Conduct was given statutory status through an amendment to the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 2 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q7. Under the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), re-employed retired government officials in poll-bound States are specifically prohibited from which of the following activities?

1. Participating in any election campaign or publicly aligning with a political party.
2. Convening meetings or video conferences with election-related field officers of poll-bound constituencies.
3. Continuing to draw their contractual salary or monthly pension during the MCC period.

Select the correct answer using the code given below: (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q8. Consider the following statements regarding the economics of the dairy sector in India:

1. Unlike buffalo milk, standard cow milk has a lower percentage of milk fat but a higher proportion of Solids-Not-Fat (SNF).
2. The production of Skimmed Milk Powder (SMP) is a joint product outcome of extracting fat from cow milk.
3. In India, the share of buffaloes in national milk production has increased significantly over the last three decades due to their superior calving intervals.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q9. Consider the following statements regarding the Goods and Services Tax (GST) rates on dairy products in India:
Statement-I: The domestic retail demand for genuine ghee, butter, and paneer observed an upward surge following GST rationalization in September 2025. *Statement-II:* The GST Council reduced the tax rate on ghee, butter, and cheese from 12% to 5%, while exempting paneer completely (0% GST).
Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements? (a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I (b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct but Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I (c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect (d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct

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Q10. With reference to the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA), consider the following statements:

1. Section 3(1)(c) of the FRA vests the ownership, access, and right to collect minor forest produce that occurs naturally in forests.
2. Commercial cash crop farming sponsored or promoted by the State inside reserve forest land is protected under the livelihood rights of the FRA.
3. The Act defines minor forest produce to include all non-timber forest produce of plant origin, including bamboo and tendu leaves.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q11. Which of the following protected areas form part of the Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve?

1. Kalakad-Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve
2. Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary
3. Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary
4. Peppara Wildlife Sanctuary

Select the correct answer using the code given below: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2 and 4 only (c) 1, 3 and 4 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q12. In the context of international climate negotiations under the UNFCCC, the term "Overshoot" refers to:
(a) The phenomenon where global carbon emissions exceed the annual carbon capture capacity of terrestrial forests and oceanic sinks. (b) Exceeding the 1.5°C global mean warming threshold in the intermediate term before bringing temperatures back down by the end of the century through carbon removal. (c) The condition where developed countries surpass their certified emission reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol. (d) The excess transfer of carbon offsets from developing nations to developed nations under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.

Q13. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report *Limiting Overshoot*, reversing 0.1°C of global warming requires the permanent removal of approximately how much carbon dioxide from the atmosphere?
(a) 2.2 billion tonnes (b) 22 billion tonnes (c) 220 billion tonnes (d) 1,200 billion tonnes

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Q14. With reference to international climate finance commitments, consider the following statements:

1. Under Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement, developed country parties are obligated to provide financial resources to assist developing country parties with mitigation and adaptation.
2. The majority of public climate finance reported by developed nations has been transferred as non-repayable grants.
3. The European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) imposes an import levy based on the embedded carbon emissions of commodities such as steel, cement, and aluminum.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q15. Consider the following pairs regarding indigenous communities and protected areas in India:

Community / Species	Region / Biosphere Reserve
1. Kani tribe	Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve
2. Lion-tailed macaque	Western Ghats
3. Nilgiri tahr	Agasthyamalai Landscape

How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched? (a) Only one pair (b) Only two pairs (c) All three pairs (d) None of the pairs

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Part 3: Answer Key & Detailed Explanations

Answer Key

Q. No.	Correct Option
Q1	(b)
Q2	(c)
Q3	(a)
Q4	(b)
Q5	(b)
Q6	(a)
Q7	(a)
Q8	(b)
Q9	(a)
Q10	(b)
Q11	(d)
Q12	(b)
Q13	(c)
Q14	(b)
Q15	(c)

Detailed Explanations

Q1. Correct Answer: (b)

- Statement 1 is correct: The World Bank's international extreme poverty line is established at $3.00 a day based on 2021 purchasing power parity (PPP)3.
- Statement 2 is incorrect: India has not officially revised or adopted an official poverty line since 2011–12; the Rangarajan Committee recommendations were never formally adopted by the Government36.
- Statement 3 is correct: The Thali Index was developed by economists Pulapre Balakrishnan and Aman Raj using consumption expenditure data from the HCES 2023–24 to estimate how many standard meals a household's food spending can purchase24.

Q2. Correct Answer: (c)

- Statement 1 is correct: The UNDP's Global Multidimensional Poverty Index assesses 10 indicators across health, education, and standard of living3.
- Statement 2 is correct: NITI Aayog's National Multidimensional Poverty Index tracks 12 indicators, tailoring the metric to India's socio-economic priorities3.

Q3. Correct Answer: (a)

- Statement 1 is correct: Indian telecom regulations strictly require all satellite internet providers to route domestic subscriber traffic through designated Indian ground stations (gateways)10.
- Statement 2 is incorrect: The routing conditions explicitly prohibit satellite operators from using inter-satellite links to bypass ground stations in India or to route Indian data through overseas stations10.
- Statement 3 is incorrect: The ITU's Radio Regulations Board has clarified that it lacks the legal mandate or regulatory authority to suspend or cancel the radio frequency assignments of operating satellites11. Hence, only one statement is correct.

Q4. Correct Answer: (b)

- Statement 1 is incorrect: The LAHDCs are established under an ordinary state legislation—the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils Act, 1997—and are not created under the Sixth Schedule or Article 244(2) of the Constitution1719.
- Statement 2 is correct: The notified expansion includes 36 reserved seats for women across the 100 council constituencies15.
- Statement 3 is correct: The administrative reorganization expands local representation from two councils (Leh and Kargil) to eight councils1516.

Q5. Correct Answer: (b)

- Under Article 244(2) and the Sixth Schedule, Autonomous District Councils exist exclusively in four northeastern states, often abbreviated as AMTM: Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram (covering 10 councils)19. Manipur is governed under regular constitutional provisions and the Fifth Schedule does not apply there either19.

Q6. Correct Answer: (a)

- Statement 1 is incorrect: The MCC comes into force immediately upon the announcement of the election schedule by the Election Commission, not upon the formal notification by the President/Governor23.
- Statement 2 is correct: The ECI specifically directed that retired officials who have been re-hired or re-employed by State governments are subject to the same MCC restrictions and prohibitions as serving government employees2125.
- Statement 3 is incorrect: The MCC does not possess statutory backing; it is enforced by the Commission under its plenary powers derived from Article 324 of the Constitution22.

Q7. Correct Answer: (a)

- Statements 1 and 2 are correct: The ECI directive explicitly bars re-employed retirees from taking part in election campaigns, aligning with parties/candidates, summoning election officers, or holding video conferences/meetings with officials in poll-bound jurisdictions25.

- Statement 3 is incorrect: The MCC does not suspend legal contractual salaries, emoluments, or pensions; it only restricts the political conduct and executive authority of re-employed personnel25.

Q8. Correct Answer: (b)

- Statement 1 is incorrect: Standard cow milk has both lower fat (3.5% vs 6.5%) and lower SNF (8.5% vs 9.0%) than buffalo milk2829.
- Statement 2 is correct: Milk solids consist of fat and Solids-Not-Fat (SNF) as joint products; extracting fat from cow milk inevitably generates large quantities of SNF, which is converted into Skimmed Milk Powder (SMP)2629.
- Statement 3 is incorrect: Buffaloes now contribute approximately 45% of India's national milk production, down from 60% three decades ago, as farmers increasingly prefer cows due to higher daily liquid milk yields and shorter calving cycles2930.

Q9. Correct Answer: (a)

- Both statements are correct, and Statement-II directly explains Statement-I: In September 2025, the GST rate on ghee, butter, and cheese was reduced from 12% to 5%, and paneer was reduced to 0%, lowering costs and spurring domestic retail demand2831.

Q10. Correct Answer: (b)

- Statement 1 is correct: Section 3(1)(c) of the FRA, 2006 recognizes the right of forest-dwelling communities to ownership, access to collect, use, and dispose of minor forest produce34.
- Statement 2 is incorrect: The Supreme Court held that the FRA protects forest dependence and naturally occurring produce, but does not protect commercial crop farming or state-promoted cash crop plantations inside reserve forests3335.
- Statement 3 is correct: Minor forest produce is defined under the FRA as non-timber forest produce of plant origin, encompassing bamboo, brushwood, tendu leaves, honey, wax, and related products3446.

Q11. Correct Answer: (d)

- The Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve (straddling Kerala and Tamil Nadu) encompasses the Kalakad-Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu, along with the Neyyar, Peppara, and Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuaries in Kerala37.

Q12. Correct Answer: (b)

- In climate modeling and UNFCCC parlance, a "1.5°C overshoot" refers to a scenario in which global warming temporarily surpasses the 1.5°C threshold in the coming decades before returning below 1.5°C by 2100 through massive deployment of carbon dioxide removal technologies3839.

Q13. Correct Answer: (c)

- According to the UNEP report *Limiting Overshoot*, reversing just 0.1°C of warming requires the permanent removal of 220 billion tonnes of CO_2 from the atmosphere41.

Q14. Correct Answer: (b)

- Statement 1 is correct: Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement stipulates that developed country parties shall provide financial resources to assist developing country parties in continuation of their existing obligations under the Convention45.
- Statement 2 is incorrect: Approximately 65% of public climate finance reported by developed nations was delivered in the form of loans, thereby increasing the debt burdens of developing countries43.
- Statement 3 is correct: The EU's CBAM places a carbon tariff on carbon-intensive industrial imports, specifically targeting iron, steel, cement, and aluminum43.

Q15. Correct Answer: (c)

- Pair 1 is correctly matched: The Kani tribal community natively inhabits the forests of the Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve37.
- Pair 2 is correctly matched: The endangered lion-tailed macaque is endemic to the rainforests of the Western Ghats, including Agasthyamalai37.

- Pair 3 is correctly matched: The Nilgiri tahr is an endangered mountain ungulate endemic to the high-altitude montane grasslands of the Western Ghats, sheltered across the Agasthyamalai landscape37. All three pairs are correc