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25 years of India-Germany strategic partnership

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his German counterpart Boris Pistorius held bilateral talks in Berlin to deepen defence cooperation as India and Germany approach 25 years of strategic partnership and 75 years of diplomatic ties in 2026. The discussions focused on expanding collaboration in co-development and co-production of defence equipment, especially in niche and emerging technologies, while reinforcing military-to-military engagement as a key pillar of the partnership. Both sides signed the Defence Industrial Cooperation Roadmap and an Implementing Arrangement on cooperation in UN peacekeeping training, signalling a concrete step toward structured defence collaboration. They also agreed to institutionalise service-level staff talks and enhance joint military exercises, with India inviting German participation in Exercise Tarang Shakti.

Tribunal gives last opportunity to settle Mahanadi dispute

The Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal is nearing its judgment on the water-sharing dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh. Despite multiple opportunities, both States have failed to present a mutually agreed formula. The tribunal has warned that it will proceed on merits if no consensus is reached by the next hearing.



Nature of the Dispute

The conflict arises from upstream-downstream dynamics. Chhattisgarh (upstream) has undertaken extensive construction of barrages and irrigation structures, while Odisha (downstream) alleges reduced water flow, especially during non-monsoon periods. Odisha claims these projects were undertaken unilaterally, affecting its water security.

Historical and Legal Background

The dispute escalated in 2016 when Odisha approached the Supreme Court of India under Article 131, seeking intervention. Subsequently, under the Inter-State Water Disputes Act, 1956, the Centre constituted the tribunal in 2018. Earlier attempts at negotiation, including a tripartite meeting led by the Union government, failed to yield results.

Key Issues Involved

Major concerns include:

- Assessment of total water availability and equitable sharing
- Impact of over 500 anicuts and 30 barrages reportedly built by Chhattisgarh
- Demand for revisiting earlier agreements (e.g., 1983 Odisha–Madhya Pradesh arrangement)
- Lack of consensus on technical parameters and dispute framing

The Mahanadi dispute underscores the limits of ad hoc negotiations in water governance. A transparent, rule-based, and cooperative approach is critical to ensure long-term water security and inter-state trust in India.

Importance of the Mahanadi River

The Mahanadi River (851 km long) is crucial for both States. Its basin spans ~1.41 lakh sq km, with ~46% in Odisha and ~54% in Chhattisgarh. Key infrastructure like the Hirakud Dam supports irrigation, flood control, and hydropower, making the river central to agriculture, industry, and regional livelihoods.

Governance and Political Dimensions

The dispute reflects challenges in cooperative federalism. While both States have expressed willingness for amicable settlement, political contestation and administrative delays persist. Competing demands—industrial use in Chhattisgarh and agricultural dependence in Odisha—add complexity to negotiations.

Implications

The case highlights recurring issues in inter-state river disputes—data sharing, unilateral actions, and delayed adjudication. A sustainable resolution requires scientific water assessment, institutional coordination (e.g., river boards), and adherence to equitable utilization principles. Strengthening cooperative mechanisms is essential to balance development needs with federal harmony.

Government adds 14 seaports for e-visa entry, widens immigration access

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has recently expanded India's e-visa framework by designating 14 additional seaports as Immigration Check Posts (ICPs). This move significantly enhances maritime access for foreign nationals and reflects India's broader effort to strengthen travel infrastructure and facilitate international mobility. With this addition, India now has a total of 114 ICPs across multiple modes of entry, including air, sea, land, rail, and river routes.

Designated Seaports for E-Visa Entry

The newly approved seaports are geographically distributed to improve regional connectivity. In **Gujarat**, ports such as **Alang, Bedi Bandar, Bhavnagar, Porbandar, Hazira, Pipavav, and Mandvi** have been included. In **Tamil Nadu**, **Cuddalore, Nagapattinam,** and **Thoothukudi** have been notified, while **Kakinada and Krishnapatnam** in **Andhra Pradesh** and **Paradip and Dhamra** in **Odisha** have also been added. As a result, e-visa holders can now enter India through 32 designated airports and 33 seaports, marking a substantial expansion of entry points.

E-Visa System: Concept and Process

India's e-visa system, introduced in 2014, is a fully online mechanism that allows foreign nationals to obtain travel authorization without visiting embassies. The process is based on Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA), enabling applicants to apply from anywhere in the world. Once approved, the e-visa permits entry for specific purposes such as **tourism, business, medical treatment, and education, with validity ranging from one month to five years** depending on the category.

Despite the expansion of India's e-visa regime, certain countries such as China, Pakistan, Yemen, and Iran continue to face restrictions due to security and diplomatic considerations, underscoring the strategic nature of India's visa policy. The e-visa requires prior online approval and is currently available to citizens of over 200 countries. The recent inclusion of additional seaports as entry points enhances connectivity and facilitates global mobility, making India more accessible for tourism and business, while also reflecting a calibrated approach that balances openness with national security and geopolitical interests.



Policy Objectives and Governance Approach

The e-visa system represents a balance between facilitation and regulation. While it aims to promote tourism, investment, and people-to-people exchanges, it is also supported by robust digital screening mechanisms to ensure internal security. Policy adjustments, including fee changes and category expansion, are made periodically based on considerations such as national security, bilateral relations, and reciprocity.

India-China Visa Developments

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India's post-LWE future, from red sun to new dawn

India's battle against Left Wing Extremism (LWE), once termed the gravest internal security threat by Manmohan Singh, has undergone a major shift.

Security Gains vs Governance Deficit

From the 2010 Dantewada attack to the 2026 declaration by Amit Shah that Maoist insurgency has effectively ended, the journey reflects strong political will, improved Centre-State coordination, and sustained security operations. While security forces have reclaimed territory, governance must now reclaim trust. Past experiences from regions like Jungle Mahal, Bastar, and Malkangiri show that security creates opportunity, but governance sustains peace. Without credible administration, development remains episodic and fails to address deep-rooted issues.

Lived Realities: Inequality and Marginalisation

The core challenge in LWE-affected regions lies in the lived realities of Adivasi communities, who continue to face persistent development deficits in basic services such as roads, education, healthcare, and banking. This is compounded by a sense of alienation from state institutions and weak delivery of rights, leaving them disconnected from formal governance structures. At the same time, they are often caught in a dual vulnerability—exposed to both insurgent pressures and state security actions—while also bearing disproportionate burdens of undertrial cases and lacking access to timely justice. This situation highlights a deeper paradox: although these communities are constitutionally empowered, they remain practically excluded from the benefits and protections of the system.

The way forward in post-LWE regions lies in moving beyond security-centric approaches toward building lasting legitimacy through humane governance, where policing is sensitive, justice systems are accessible and efficient, and tribal rights and dignity are upheld alongside a continuous administrative presence. Drawing from conflict transformation principles, peace must be anchored in rebuilding trust, strengthening institutions, and ensuring fairness rather than merely suppressing violence. At the same time, harnessing youth aspirations through sports, education, skilling, entrepreneurship, and women-led initiatives can drive deeper social integration. As violence recedes, avoiding policy complacency becomes crucial, with a sustained focus on consistent service delivery and inclusive development. Ultimately, India's LWE experience underscores that while security can end conflict, only responsive governance and dignity-driven development can eliminate alienation and fully integrate these regions into the national growth trajectory.



Economic Transformation as Peace Dividend

Post-LWE regions require community-centred economic models that strengthen forest-based livelihoods through MSP for minor forest produce, promote agroforestry, MSMEs, and eco-tourism, and create local employment opportunities to reduce migration, while ensuring community ownership and fair benefit-sharing; together, these measures enable a shift from extractive development toward more inclusive and sustainable growth.

Governance Framework: From Schemes to Delivery

A structured, region-specific transformation plan is essential, built on:

- Convergence of schemes : Aspirational Districts, Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyaan (PM-JANMAN), Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJUGA) and the Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan.
- Financial backing through Article 275(1) grants and Tribal Sub Plans.
- Adoption of the **AIEEEE model**: Accountability, Innovation, Evidence, Equity, Empathy, Efficiency.

The Indian EXPRESS

The podium that India doesn't need to be on

Concerns over doping have highlighted structural weaknesses in India's sports ecosystem despite improvements in infrastructure. The Athletics Integrity Unit flagged India's inadequate anti-doping programme and categorised its athletes as being at "extremely high" risk, leading to stricter international scrutiny and testing. India's position among the top countries for doping violations in athletics between 2022 and 2025 undermines its aspirations to host the 2036 Olympics and affects its global sporting credibility. The issue is widespread across junior and senior levels, often driven by incentives such as government jobs and monetary rewards.

Existing responses, largely limited to awareness programmes, have proven insufficient. A more comprehensive approach is required, including stronger testing mechanisms, especially out-of-competition checks, and greater investment in anti-doping systems alongside sports infrastructure. Addressing doping at all levels, from grassroots to elite competition, is essential to ensure integrity, sustain athletic progress, and enhance India's standing in global sports.

Editorial to Exam - Most probable question from this editorial

"Doping in sports reflects deeper systemic and institutional challenges rather than isolated violations." Discuss in the context of India's sporting ecosystem and suggest measures to strengthen anti-doping governance.



Common concerns

Recent engagements between India and South Korea have prioritised strengthening trade and technology cooperation amid global uncertainties. Both countries aim to raise bilateral trade to \$50 billion by the decade's end and have outlined a joint vision under their Special Strategic Partnership. Agreements span shipbuilding, maritime logistics, energy security, and sustainability, along with multiple MoUs in economic sectors. Collaboration is expected to leverage Korean technological expertise and India's scale, particularly in areas such as critical minerals and quantum computing, building on existing manufacturing partnerships.

Despite shared democratic values and cultural linkages, bilateral ties remain underdeveloped relative to their economic potential, with trade at \$27 billion and limited people-to-people exchanges. Progress on the CEPA agreement has been slow, and strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific requires further strengthening. Both nations face common challenges from global conflicts, including disruptions in maritime trade and energy supply, underscoring the need for deeper engagement and coordinated responses to external shocks.

Editorial to Exam - Most probable question from this editorial

"India-South Korea relations are yet to realise their potential despite strong economic and strategic complementarities." Examine the factors limiting bilateral ties and suggest measures to enhance cooperation.

thehindu **businessline**

TUESDAY - MARCH 31, 2026

Major undercurrents

Recent global assessments by the International Monetary Fund highlight a deteriorating economic outlook amid war-induced disruptions. High global public debt—projected to reach 100% of GDP by 2029—and limited fiscal space constrain governments' ability to stimulate growth, while central banks are urged to prioritise inflation control. Concerns are particularly acute for the U.S., where public debt stands at 126% of GDP, with large fiscal deficits and rising borrowing costs. The weakening demand for U.S. Treasuries and a shift in creditor composition signal reduced confidence, potentially raising global financial instability.

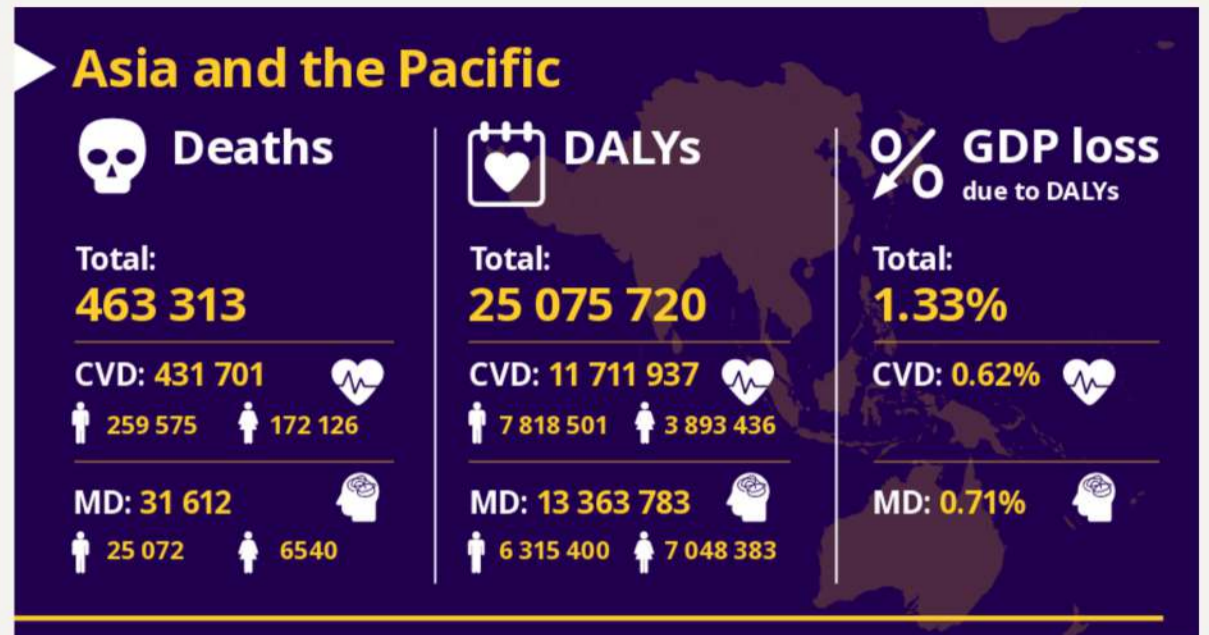
Global growth is expected to remain modest, though contingent on easing conflict conditions. India's growth outlook remains relatively strong at 6.5%, positioning it above major economies like China. However, persistent external shocks may require a calibrated mix of subsidies and price adjustments. The evolving global landscape also reflects broader structural shifts, including changes in trade, finance, and industrial policy, indicating that traditional economic frameworks may be undergoing transformation.

Editorial to Exam - Most probable question from this editorial

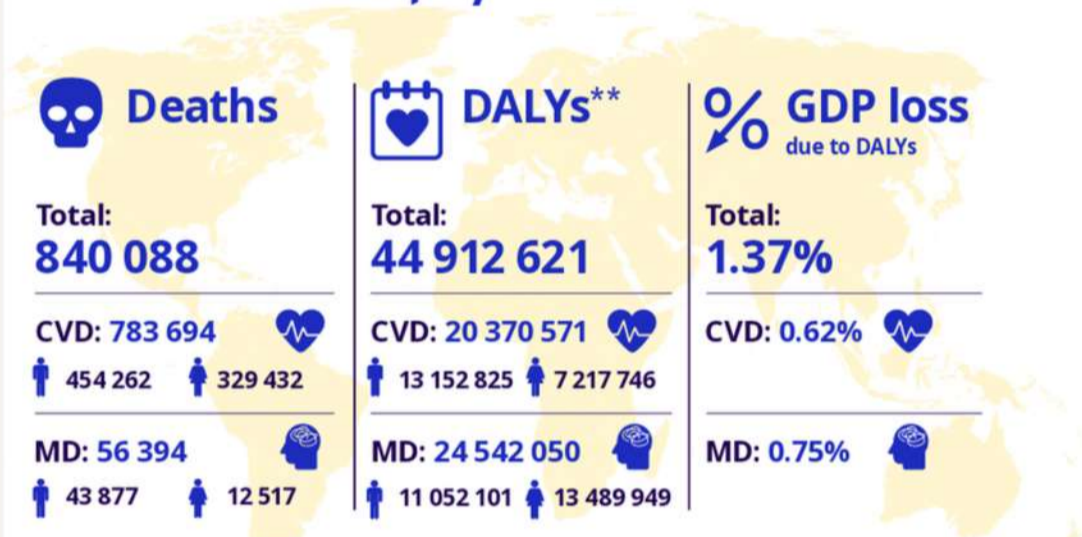
"Rising global debt levels and shifting financial dynamics pose significant challenges to economic stability." Discuss in the context of recent global economic trends, and examine their implications for India's growth and policy choices.

Understanding Kshatriyaisation and its relevance in contemporary India

A recent report by the International Labour Organization highlights that over 8,40,000 deaths annually are linked to work-related psychosocial risks such as long working hours, job insecurity, and workplace harassment. These risks are strongly associated with cardiovascular diseases and mental health conditions, including suicide, indicating a serious and growing global public health challenge.



Global Deaths, DALYs and GDP loss attributable to psychosocial risk factors*



Human and Economic Costs

The report estimates that psychosocial risks result in nearly 45 million Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) lost each year, reflecting a substantial loss of healthy life. Economically, this translates into a loss of about 1.37% of global GDP annually, underlining the significant burden on productivity and overall economic performance.



Understanding the Psychosocial Working Environment

The psychosocial working environment refers to how jobs are designed, organised, and managed, along with workplace policies and interactions. It operates at three levels: the nature of the job (workload, skill alignment), organisational practices (role clarity, autonomy, supervision), and institutional frameworks (employment policies, safety systems, and grievance mechanisms). These factors collectively influence worker well-being and organisational efficiency.

Key Risk Factors and Widespread Exposure

Major risk factors include job strain, effort-reward imbalance, long working hours, job insecurity, and workplace bullying. The report notes that 35% of workers globally work more than 48 hours per week, while 23% have experienced workplace harassment, with psychological violence being the most common. These trends highlight the widespread exposure of workers to harmful conditions.

Changing Nature of Work and Emerging Risks

Transformations such as digitalisation, remote work, and the rise of artificial intelligence are reshaping the work environment. While these changes offer flexibility, they also risk intensifying stress, surveillance, and job insecurity if not properly regulated.

The report emphasises the need for integrating psychosocial risk management into occupational safety and health systems. It calls for coordinated action involving governments, employers, and workers through social dialogue. Addressing root causes—such as poor work design and lack of support—can improve both worker well-being and organisational productivity, making it essential for sustainable economic development.

CSIP SCHOLARSHIP GUIDE

This is your chance to turn preparation into opportunity—attempt these questions seriously and prepare for exciting scholarships that can support your civil service journey.

8 Days to go - 8 model questions

1. The “Finance Commission” in India is constituted under which Article?
2. The “Bretton Woods Conference” led to the creation of which two institutions? (Answer: IMF/World Bank – accept either)
3. The “Chipko Movement” is associated with which state?
4. The “Ryotwari System” was introduced by which British administrator?
5. The “Repo Rate” is decided by which body in India?
6. The “Sundarbans” are primarily formed by the delta of which rivers?
7. The “Kyoto Protocol” is related to which global issue?
8. The “Goods and Services Tax (GST)” was introduced in India in which year?

“A person who is happy is not because everything is right in his life, he is happy because his attitude towards everything in his life is right” - Sundar Pichai, Google CEO

Answers to the Previous Day's Questions

1. Uttarakhand
2. Russia
3. Pacific
4. Odisha
5. Dadabhai Naoroji
6. Wheat
7. Subhas Chandra Bose
8. 1980s
9. Third

PRELIMS CORNER :

1) With reference to ancient India (600-322 BC), consider the following pairs:

Territorial region

- I. Asmaka : Godavari
- II. Kamboja : Vipas
- III. Avanti : Mahanadi
- IV. Kosala : Sarayu

How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All the four

2) Ashokan inscriptions suggest that the 'Pradeshika', 'Rajuka' and Yukta' were important officers at the

- (a) village-level administration
- (b) district-level administration
- (c) provincial administration
- (d) level of the central administration



India's post-LWE future, from red sun to new dawn



(Continued from page 4)

In the districts of West Midnapore and Simdega—once deeply affected by Left Wing Extremism—stories of resilience quietly took root on rough, uneven fields. Fourteen years ago, young tribal girls trained with worn-out hockey sticks and improvised footballs, driven not by facilities but by determination. Supported by grassroots interventions under the Integrated Action Plan, modest infrastructure such as an astroturf hockey academy and a block-level football training centre began to nurture this raw talent. These efforts, combined with local administrative support, created opportunities where none had existed before.

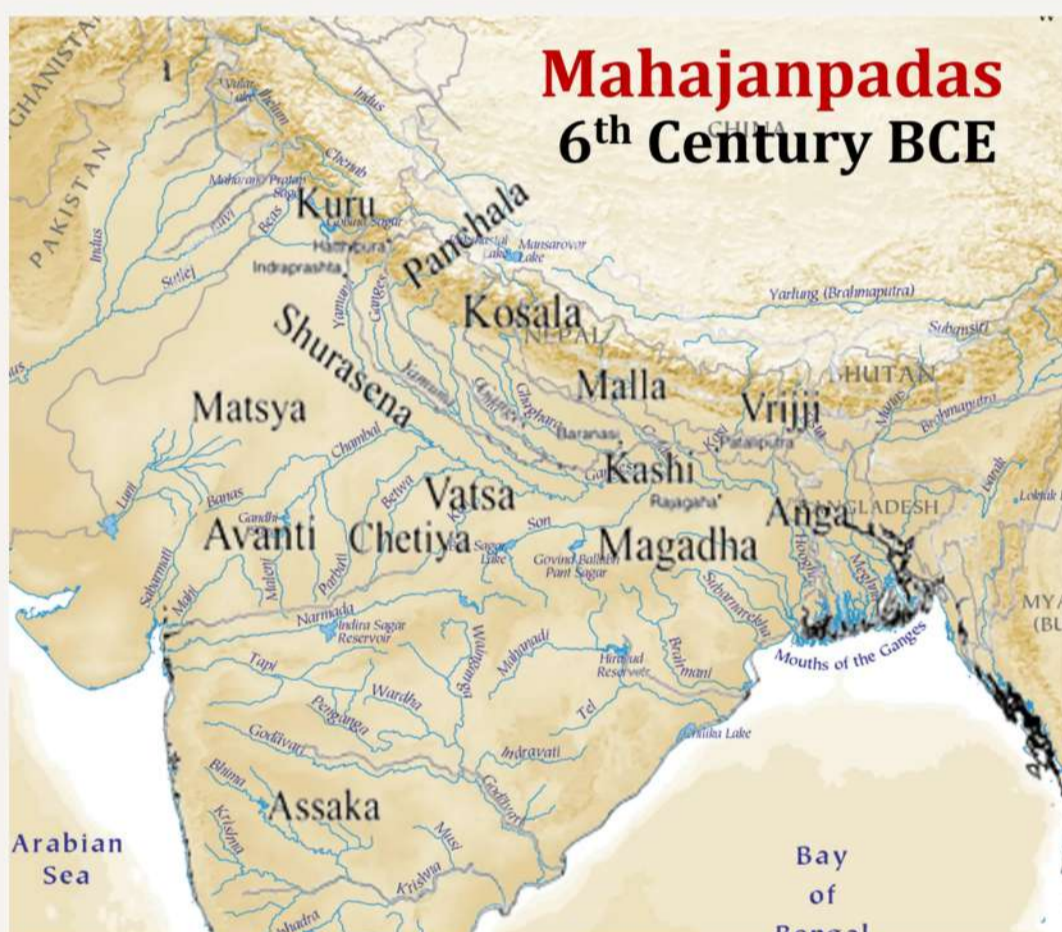
From these humble beginnings emerged inspiring figures like Salima Tete, who rose from Simdega to captain the Indian women's hockey team, and Mamta Hansda, who advanced from a rural training centre in West Midnapore to represent India in senior football. Their journeys reflect how perseverance, when supported by timely institutional backing, can transform adversity into achievement. This case highlights not only individual grit but also the power of targeted development initiatives in unlocking the potential of marginalized communities.

Prelims Corner: Explanations

1) Answer is option b

Asmaka - Godavari: The Asmaka (or Assaka) kingdom was one of the sixteen Mahajanapadas. It was located in South India, on the banks of the Godavari river. Hence pair 1 is correctly matched.

Kamboja - Vipas: The Kamboja region was located in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent, roughly corresponding to parts of modern-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Kashmir. The Vipas river, also known as the Beas, flows through the Punjab region. While both are in the northwest, the core area of Kamboja is generally placed further west than the main course of the Vipas river. Hence pair 2 is not correctly matched.



Avanti - Mahanadi: The Avanti kingdom was located in West-Central India, in the Malwa region of present-day Madhya Pradesh. Its capital was Ujjain. The Mahanadi river flows through Central and Eastern India, primarily in modern-day Chhattisgarh and Odisha. Hence pair 3 is not correctly matched.

Kosala - Sarayu: The Kosala kingdom was located in the Awadh region of present-day Uttar Pradesh. Its capital cities were Ayodhya and Sravasti. The Sarayu river flows through this region, passing by Ayodhya. Hence pair 4 is correctly matched.

2) Answer is option b

The administrative structure of the Mauryan Empire was highly organised, with clear divisions from the central to the local level. The empire was divided into provinces such as **Taxila, Ujjain, Suvarnagiri, and Kalinga**, governed largely by members of the royal family who oversaw law and order and revenue collection.

At the district level, administration was entrusted to key officials like Rajukas, Yuktas, and Pradeshikas, as reflected in the inscriptions of Ashoka.

- Among them, the Rajuka functioned similarly to a modern district collector, responsible for revenue administration, justice, and maintaining order.
- He was assisted by Yuktas, who acted as subordinate officials handling various administrative tasks.
- Pradeshikas were supervisory officers who periodically toured districts to ensure proper governance and implementation of policies.

Below this level, **village administration** was managed by the **Gramani**, while **groups of villages were supervised by Gopa**.

This hierarchical structure indicates that Rajuka, Yukta, and Pradeshika operated primarily at the district level, forming a crucial link between provincial authorities and grassroots governance.

Thus, Ashokan inscriptions clearly associate these officers with district-level administration.

