

# DAILY NEWS

# ANALYSIS



28<sup>th</sup> May

## Explained

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## PRACTICE QUESTION

## DNA QUIZ

Playlist Link:



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## 1. AHILYABAI HOLKAR

**Backdrop:** 300th birth anniversary celebrations of Ahilyabai Holkar

**Relevance:** GS I/Art and Culture

### About the news

The Madhya Pradesh government is celebrating the 300th birth anniversary of Ahilyabai Holkar. A nine-month-long campaign (since September 2024) to celebrate her birth anniversary includes folk and dance performances, art exhibitions, theatrical dramas across cities, a state-sponsored film on her life, a commemorative book, etc.

The culmination, on May 31, will see PM Narendra Modi inaugurate the Indore Metro Rail's first phase, along with Datia and Satna airports, as well as give an address to a 'Women Empowerment Grand Conference' in Bhopal. Over two lakh women are expected to attend, including Self Help Group (SHG) members, Ladli Behna scheme beneficiaries, and entrepreneurs.

### Ahilyabai Holkar:

- She was the Holkar Queen of the Malwa kingdom and regarded as one of the most visionary female rulers of India.
- In the 18th century, as the Maharani of Malwa, she was instrumental in spreading the message of dharma and propagating industrialization.
- She is widely known for her wisdom, courage, and administrative skills.

### Early Life

- Born on 31 May 1725 in Chondi, Maharashtra, she came from a humble background and was educated by her father.
- Malhar Rao Holkar (a prominent commander in the Maratha army) arranged her marriage to his son, Khanderao Holkar, in 1733.
- After her husband's death, she was prevented from committing sati by her father-in-law, who instead trained her in administration and warfare.

### Rise to Power

- Following the death of Malhar Rao in 1766 and her son in 1767, Ahilyabai took over the rule of Malwa with the Peshwa's approval and became the ruler of Indore on 11 December 1767.
- She ruled for 28 years with justice, wisdom, and administrative excellence, transforming Maheshwar into a cultural and economic hub.

### Contributions:

#### Cultural Legacy

- Renovation and reconstruction of sacred Hindu sites, especially Jyotirlingas in Somnath, Varanasi, Trimbakeshwar, Gaya, Pushkar, Vrindavan, Nathdwara, Haridwar, Badrinath, and Kedarnath.
  - ◆ Renovation of Kashi Vishwanath Temple in 1780.
- Protected temple idols by installing them in concealed sanctums within temple complexes to safeguard against invasions and iconoclasm.
- She resisted Mughal influence and fostered a unifying cultural identity among her subjects, transcending divisions of caste and religion.
- Ahilya Bai welcomed renowned intellectuals and poets such as Moropant, Shahir Ananta Gandhi, and Khushali Ram to her court, promoting literature and learning.

#### Inclusive Governance and Justice

- **Accessible governance:** She held daily public audiences to hear the grievances of her people.
- **Progressive Social reforms:** E.g., Abolished the law that allowed the state to confiscate the property of childless widows.
- **Inclusive Governance :** Brought marginalized communities like the Bhil and Gond into the mainstream.

#### Economic and Industrial Development

- Promoted the Maheshwari sari weaving, establishing Maheshwar as a textile hub.
- Encouraged trade and cottage industries and boosted the region's economy, and provided sustainable livelihoods.

#### Environmental Stewardship

- Invested in the development of Indore, promoting urban planning, forest conservation, and protection of wildlife.

### Legacy:

- Ahilya Bai Holkar is revered as one of India's most enlightened and benevolent rulers.
- The British historian John Keay honored her with the title "The Philosopher Queen".
- She passed away on August 13, 1795, at the age of 70, leaving behind a legacy of justice, devotion, and good governance.

## 2. HOW FTAS WITH THE US, UK, EU COULD IMPACT INDIA'S FARM TRADE?

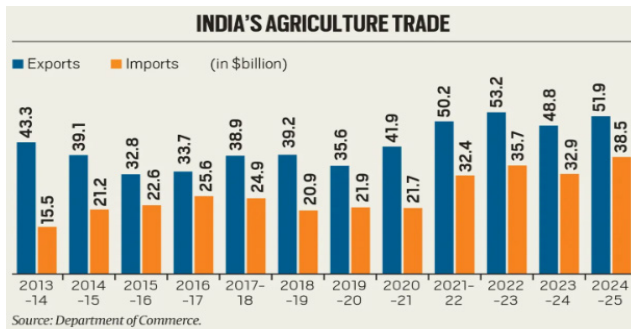
**Backdrop:** India's FTA negotiation with the USA, EU, etc.

**Relevance:** GS III/Agriculture Trade

### About the news:

#### Trends of Agriculture Trade:

- Agriculture exports grew 6.4% in 2024-25 over 2023-24 (From \$48.8 billion to \$51.9 billion)
- Agriculture imports grew 17.2% in 2024-25 over 2023-24 (From \$32.9 billion to \$38.5 billion).
- India's agriculture trade surplus has more than halved from \$27.7 billion to \$13.4 billion between 2013-14 and 2024-25.



#### Agriculture exports:

- It declined between 2013-14 and 2019-20, before recovering and peaking at \$53.1 billion in 2022-23.
- Overall, the increase was from \$43.3 billion in 2013-14 to \$51.9 billion in 2024-25 (120%).

#### Commodity-wise trends:

##### INDIA'S TOP AGRI EXPORT ITEMS (\$ million)

|                     | 2021-22         | 2022-23         | 2023-24         | 2024-25         |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Marine products     | 7772.36         | 8077.98         | 7372            | 7405            |
| Non-basmati rice    | 6133.63         | 6356.71         | 4573.41         | 6527.58         |
| Basmati rice        | 3537.49         | 4787.65         | 5843.3          | 5944.48         |
| Spices              | 3896.03         | 3785.36         | 4248.56         | 4451.54         |
| Buffalo meat        | 3303.78         | 3193.69         | 3743.26         | 4060.54         |
| Sugar               | 4602.65         | 5770.83         | 2824.74         | 2159.4          |
| Fruits & Vegetables | 1692.48         | 1791.05         | 2037.58         | 2065.39         |
| Processed F&V       | 1190.59         | 1417.59         | 1624.22         | 1805.76         |
| Tobacco             | 923.57          | 1213.39         | 1449.54         | 1979.01         |
| Coffee              | 1020.74         | 1146.18         | 1286.28         | 1805.57         |
| Oil meals           | 1031.94         | 1601.72         | 1713.98         | 1344.39         |
| Oilseeds            | 1113.65         | 1337.69         | 1437.02         | 1344.31         |
| Castor oil          | 1175.5          | 1265.64         | 1071.55         | 1152.37         |
| Raw cotton          | 2816.24         | 781.43          | 1116.52         | 809.72          |
| Wheat               | 2122.13         | 1520.46         | 56.74           | 2.03            |
| Other cereals       | 1087.39         | 1194.07         | 517.79          | 270.88          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>        | <b>50240.21</b> | <b>53153.55</b> | <b>48821.68</b> | <b>51940.67</b> |

Source: Department of Commerce.

- **Marine products:** Drop from \$8.1 billion in 2022-23 to \$7.4 billion in the following two fiscals.
  - ♦ Marine exports from India are largely to the US (roughly 35% share), China (20%), and the EU (15%).
- **Rice (Basmati & Non-Basmati):** There are no worries with rice, where the value of both non-basmati and basmati shipments reached record levels in 2024-25.
  - ♦ While export of Basmati rice increased from \$ 5.8 billion in 2023-24 to \$ 5.9 billion in 2024-25, export of Non-Basmati rice increased from \$4.5 billion to \$ 6.5 billion in the same period.
  - ♦ The bulk of India's basmati goes to West Asia, while it is Africa for non-basmati grain.
- **Coffee:** Export of coffee increased from \$1.2 billion in 2023-24 to \$1.8 billion in 2024-25.
  - ♦ Coffee exports got a boost in 2024-25 on the back of drought in Brazil and dry weather, followed by a typhoon in Vietnam.
  - ♦ India mostly exports robusta beans and powder used in instant coffee and espresso blends.
- **Spices:** Export of spices increased from \$4.2 billion in 2023-24 to \$4.4 billion in 2024-25.
  - ♦ India is a preeminent exporter of chilli, cumin, mint products, oleoresins, curry powder/paste, and other non-traditional spices such as turmeric, coriander, fennel, ginger, and garlic.
  - ♦ India is a net importer of the two traditional plantation spices, namely pepper and cardamom.
- **Wheat:** The exports of wheat peaked at \$2.1 billion in 2021-22, but have subsequently been banned or restricted.
- **Sugar:** India continues to export refined/white sugar. However, this is from processing imported raw sugar, the value of which has correspondingly gone up.
  - ♦ Sugar import dipped from \$4.6 billion in 2021-22 to \$2.1 billion in 2024-25
- **Cotton:** India's exports had crossed \$4.3 billion in 2011-12 and \$3.7 billion in 2012-13. Exports have not only collapsed, but the country has turned into a net importer of natural fibre.

#### Agriculture imports:

- It increased from \$15.5 billion in 2013-14 to an all-time high of \$38.5 billion in 2024-25 (↑148%).

### INDIA'S TOP AGRI IMPORT ITEMS (\$ MILLION)

|                     | 2021-22  | 2022-23 | 2023-24  | 2024-25  |
|---------------------|----------|---------|----------|----------|
| Vegetable oils      | 18991.62 | 20837.7 | 14871.66 | 17333.14 |
| Pulses              | 2228.95  | 1943.89 | 3746.78  | 5477.28  |
| Fresh fruits        | 2460.33  | 2483.95 | 2734.97  | 3043.7   |
| Cashew              | 1255.46  | 1805.67 | 1431.39  | 1669.43  |
| Spices              | 1299.38  | 1336.65 | 1455.57  | 1625.42  |
| Sugar               | 169.2    | 292.97  | 1984.88  | 1388.1   |
| Raw cotton          | 559.55   | 1438.69 | 598.66   | 1219.32  |
| Alcoholic beverages | 693.23   | 797.64  | 1328.22  | 1115.51  |
| Natural rubber      | 1032.71  | 937.6   | 739.18   | 1069.05  |
| TOTAL               | 32422.3  | 35686.2 | 32870.03 | 38509.32 |

Source: Department of Commerce.

- **Vegetable Oil:** Import of vegetable oils increased from \$14.8 billion in 2023-24 to \$17.3 billion in 2024-25.
  - ♦ It's only partly offset by exports of oilseeds (mainly groundnut and sesame) and the residual cake/meal after extraction of oil.
  - ♦ **Reasons:** Low per-acre yields relative to rice and wheat, no system of MSP-based government procurement, etc.
- **Pulses:** Imports have grown in recent years; they were valued at \$5.5 billion in 2024-25, pushing past the \$5 billion mark for the first time.
- **Cotton and natural rubber:** There has been a rise in imports of cotton and natural rubber, mainly due to falling domestic production.
  - ♦ India's cotton output has dipped from 398 lakh to 291 lakh bales between 2013-14 and 2024-25.
  - ♦ Rubber production, too, has averaged 8.5 lakh tonnes (lt) in the last 3 years, down from 9-9.1 lt till about 2012-23.
  - ♦ **Other Items:** The other significant agri import items are fruits (almonds, pistachios, walnuts, apples, dates, figs, and raisins, among others), spices (basically pepper and cardamom), and alcoholic beverages.

#### Possible impacts of FTAs with the USA, EU, and UK on India's Farm trade:

- **Likely Surge in Imports:**
  - ♦ Imports of dry fruits, wines, spirits, and processed food items from the EU and the UK.
    - It will hurt domestic producers, especially in the horticulture and beverage sectors.
  - ♦ **Import of GM Crops** like soybean, maize, and cotton from the USA.

- This may challenge domestic regulatory norms and hurt Indian farmers who face cost and yield disadvantages.

- ♦ **Import of Edible Oils and Pulses:** FTAs may further reduce import duties, potentially disincentivizing domestic production.
- **Limited Export Gains:**
  - ♦ Tariff Benefits may not translate into higher exports: Many Indian agri-exports (e.g., rice, spices, and coffee) already face low tariffs or are directed toward markets outside the US/EU/UK (e.g., West Asia, Africa, ASEAN).
  - ♦ For India's Marine Products exports to the US and EU, quality and certification standards remain a hurdle.
- **Domestic Sectoral Impacts**
  - ♦ **Cotton:** FTAs easing access to US GM cotton may worsen the competitiveness of Indian cotton farmers.
  - ♦ **Spices:** India may gain in niche, high-value spice exports, but could also see more competition in domestic markets from imports of plantation spices like pepper and cardamom.

### 3. MADDEN JULIAN OSCILLATION

**Backdrop:** Madden-Julian Oscillation helped trigger the early onset of the monsoon

**Relevance:** GS 1/ Geography

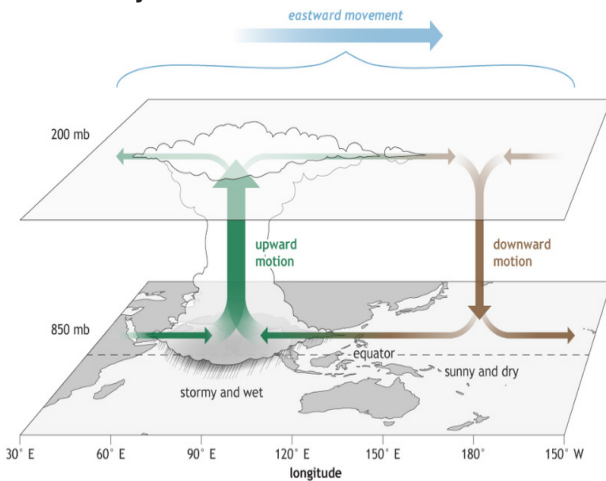
#### About the news:

The southwest monsoon arrived early in both **Kerala (May 24)** and **Mumbai (May 26)** — the latter marking the **earliest onset ever recorded**. This unusual advancement is primarily attributed to the **Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO)**, as reported by the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

#### What is the Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO)?

- The MJO is a major **intra-seasonal climate pattern** in the **tropics** (Between 30 degrees North and 30 degrees South of the equator). Most active over the **Indian and Pacific Oceans**.
- It causes **weekly to monthly fluctuations** in tropical weather, including rain and storms.
- It is an **eastward-moving system** of clouds, winds, and pressure that travels around the equator.
- It significantly **influences global weather**, particularly in tropical and subtropical regions.

- **Recurring Cycle:** Typically reappears every 30 to 60 days.



### Phases of the MJO:

#### 1. Enhanced (Convective) Phase:

- Surface winds converge, causing air to rise.
- Rising air cools and condenses, increasing cloudiness and **heavy rainfall**.
- Associated with **storm activity and monsoon strengthening**.

#### 2. Suppressed Phase:

- Upper-level winds converge, pushing air downward.
- Sinking air warms and dries, leading to **clear skies and less rainfall**.
- Reduces cloud cover and may **weaken monsoon activity**.

### MJO and the Indian Monsoon: Correlation

- The **position and cycle** of the MJO directly impact **monsoon rainfall** over India.
- When over the **Indian Ocean** during monsoon months, it boosts rainfall.
- When lingering over the **Pacific Ocean**, it suppresses rainfall and worsens monsoon performance.
- **Shorter MJO cycles** ( $\approx 30$  days) are **favorable** for a strong monsoon.
- **Longer cycles** (40+ days) can lead to **weaker monsoons**.

### Importance of MJO:

- **Monsoon Forecasting:** Helps predict rainfall onset, strength, and variability.
- **Extreme Weather:** Influences cyclones, storms, floods, and droughts.

- **Agricultural Planning:** Impacts crop sowing decisions and water management.
- **Climate Understanding:** Enhances modeling of global climate patterns and seasonal variability.

## 4. CARGO SHIP COLLAPSE AND OIL SPILL IMPACT

**Backdrop:** Oil spill from the MSC Elsa 3 container ship.

**Relevance:** GS 3/ Environment

### About the news:

- A **Liberian-flagged cargo vessel** sank off the Kerala coast carrying hazardous materials including **calcium carbide** and **diesel**, raising oil spill concerns.
- **Calcium carbide** reacts with seawater to release **acetylene gas**—highly flammable and hazardous.

### What are Oil Spills?

- **Definition:** An oil spill is the release of a liquid petroleum hydrocarbon into the environment, especially the marine ecosystem, due to human activity, and is a form of pollution. The term is usually given to marine oil spills, where oil is released into the ocean or coastal waters, but spills may also occur on land.
- **Sources:** Tankers, offshore platforms, drilling rigs, wells.

### Impacts of Oil Spills

#### 1. Marine Ecosystems

- Oil Coats fur/feathers of marine birds loss of insulation abilities **hypothermia, death**
- Threat to Biodiversity– Accumulation of toxic chemicals in food chain significant risks to higher level predators → Long term health problems and reduction in biodiversity
- Damages fish gills, reproduction, ingestion toxicity.
- Harms **coral reefs, mangroves, estuaries**.
- Obstructs sunlight and disrupt photosynthesis in marine plants and phytoplankton (crucial for oxygen production).

#### 2. Coastal Livelihoods

- Disrupts **fishing, aquaculture, tourism**.
- Economic loss to local communities.
- Cleanup leading to **high financial burden** on state and industry.

### 3. Human Health

- **Oil toxicity:** Oil consists of many different toxic compounds. These toxic compounds can cause severe health problems like heart damage, stunted growth, immune system effects, and even death.

#### Techniques for Oil Spill Cleanup

- **Skimmers:** Mechanical removal of surface oil, Quick deployment essential.
- **In situ burning:** Burning a particular patch of oil after it has concentrated in an area.
- **Containment Booms:** Floating barriers to prevent oil from spreading.
- **Sorbents:** Absorb/adsorb oil. Types: Natural (straw, ash), Synthetic (plastic shavings).
- **Dispersants:** Break oil into smaller droplets. Aids biodegradation.
- **Bioremediation :** Uses oil-degrading bacteria. E.g., Cycloclasticus, Oleispira

#### Legal and Institutional Framework

##### Indian Framework

- **National Green Tribunal (NGT) Act, 2010:** Adjudicates marine pollution cases; enables **compensation**.
- **National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan (NOS-DCP), 1993:** Led by **Indian Coast Guard**.
- **Merchant Shipping Act, 1958:** Adopts **MARPOL** norms to regulate ship-borne pollution.

##### International Frameworks

- **MARPOL Convention:** Regulates ship-originated oil pollution.
- **Bunker Oil Convention (2001):** India ratified in 2015. Ensures **compensation for fuel oil spills**.
- **CLC 1969 & IOPC Fund 1992:** Set liability & compensation for oil spills.

## 5. INDIA'S NEW URBAN WORRY RISING OVER NUTRITION

**Backdrop:** Rising cases of NCDs in Urban India

**Relevance:** GS II/Health Sector

#### About the news:

India is grappling with a paradoxical nutritional landscape. While undernutrition remains a concern in many regions, overnutrition is now rapidly escalating in urban centres. The trend is particularly evident in metropolitan IT corridors, where professionals are

unwittingly becoming the face of a silent metabolic crisis.

#### Overall scenario:

- **WHO's 2024 World Health Statistics:** Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and obesity are increasingly prevalent in the most economically productive segment of society.
- **NFHS-5:** Obesity steadily rises with age, from 7% among men (15-19 years) to 32% among those aged 40 to 49 years.
- **Lancet article (2025):** Childhood obesity has surged by 244% over the past three decades and is expected to climb another 121% in the next three.

#### Causes of Overnutrition in Urban India:

- **Sedentary Lifestyle:** Urban jobs, especially in IT and service sectors, involve long hours of desk work with minimal physical activity.
  - ♦ E.g., A *Nature* study (2025) found 84% of IT employees in Hyderabad had fatty liver disease primarily due to poor lifestyle habits.
- **Unhealthy Dietary Habits:** Increased consumption of **ultra-processed foods** and snacks high in salt and fat.
  - ♦ E.g., Free snack kiosks in corporate offices often stock energy-dense, low-nutrient foods.
- **Irregular Sleep Patterns and Chronic Stress:** Extended working hours, night shifts, and screen time lead to hormonal imbalances and metabolic disorders.
  - ♦ E.g., Tech professionals working in global operations often face circadian rhythm disruptions.
- **Aggressive Marketing of Junk Food:** Widespread advertising of unhealthy food, especially targeting children and youth, shapes consumption patterns.
  - ♦ E.g., Fast food outlets and delivery apps are expanding rapidly in cities like Bengaluru and Chennai, offering 24/7 access to junk food.
- **Lack of Nutrition Awareness:** Many urban consumers are unaware of portion sizes, calorie content, and the long-term effects of poor nutrition.
  - ♦ E.g., According to Tamil Nadu's STEPS Survey (2023-24), **94.2%** of respondents had inadequate fruit and vegetable intake.
- **Urban Food Environments:** Limited access to fresh, affordable produce in urban areas; easy availability of processed food options.

- ♦ E.g., Metro residents often rely on food delivery services that prioritize taste and convenience over nutrition.

### Measures Needed to Tackle Crisis

- **Workplace Health Programs:** Screening, nutrition counselling, and fitness programs in offices.
  - ♦ E.g., Tamil Nadu's **Makkalai Thedi Maruthuvam (MTM)** screened **3.8 lakh employees**, encouraging better lifestyle choices through health walks and nutrition drives.
- **Regulating Processed Food Industry:** Enforce front-of-pack labelling, restrict marketing to children, and limit trans fats, sugar, and salt in processed food.
  - ♦ **E.g., Saudi Arabia's model:** 50–100% tax on sugary and energy drinks, and sodium limits in foods
- **Taxation on Junk Food:** Impose excise taxes on foods high in fat, salt, and sugar (HFSS).
  - ♦ **E.g.,** Mexico and Chile saw reduced sugary drink consumption after implementing similar taxes.
- **Promoting Healthy Food Choices:** Strengthen campaigns like **FSSAI's Eat Right India, Fit India Movement** and implement warning labels and Health Star Ratings.
  - ♦ E.g., Campaigns like **"Aaj Se Thoda Kam"** encourage gradual reduction in sugar, salt, and fat intake.
  - ♦ National Institute of Nutrition, an institution under Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is working in the area of nutritional education such as development of IEC material for healthy eating.
- **Urban Planning for Active Living:** Design walkable cities, green spaces, bike lanes, and community exercise areas.
  - ♦ E.g., Cities like Pune are piloting active mobility corridors to encourage walking and cycling.
- **Incorporating Nutrition in School and College Curriculum:** Early education on healthy eating can build long-term habits.
- **Strengthening Primary Healthcare Screening:** Include obesity and metabolic disorder checks in routine health screening.

### Conclusion:

Tackling Overnutrition requires a multisectoral approach combining policy, regulation, education, and community engagement. Addressing overnutrition is essential to achieving SDG 3.4, which targets a one-third reduction in premature mortality from NCDs by 2030. Without urgent and coordinated action, India risks falling short of this global health commitment.

## ≡ PRACTICE QUESTION ≡

- Q.** Urban India's rising burden of overnutrition and non-communicable diseases poses a silent threat to public health. In this context, discuss the causes of overnutrition in urban India and suggest comprehensive policy measures.

(250 words, 5 marks)

## ≡ DNA QUIZ ≡

1. With reference to Ahilyabai Holkar, recently in news, consider the following statements:
  1. She ruled the Malwa region in the 18th century after receiving formal sanction from the Mughal Emperor.
  2. She renovated the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi in 1780.
  3. She promoted the traditional Maheshwari textile craft, which empowered local artisans.
  4. During her reign, she abolished the law that allowed the state to seize the property of childless widows.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1, 2, and 3 only  
 (b) 2, 3, and 4 only  
 (c) 1, 3, and 4 only  
 (d) 1, 2, 3, and 4
2. With reference to the recent trends in India's agricultural trade between 2013-14 and 2024-25, consider the following statements:
  1. India's agricultural trade surplus has declined by more than 50% over the last decade.
  2. The value of India's agriculture exports in 2024-25 was lower than its peak in 2022-23.
  3. Imports of vegetable oils and pulses have remained stagnant over the last decade due to self-sufficiency in oilseeds and legumes.

4. Cotton exports from India have grown steadily in the last five years due to increased domestic production.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 3 and 4 only

3. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO)?

- 1. The MJO is a major intra-seasonal climate pattern in the tropics.
- 2. It causes weekly to monthly fluctuations in tropical weather, including rain and storms.
- 3. The MJO is a stationary system of clouds, winds, and pressure over the Indian Ocean.
- 4. It significantly influences global weather, particularly in tropical and subtropical regions.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2, and 4 only
- (c) 2, 3, and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, and 4

4. Consider the following statements about Oil spills:

- 1. Oil spills increase the level of dissolved oxygen in water.
- 2. Oil spills can be controlled by Bioremediation as well as by Sorbents.

Which of the above given statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

#### Answer

|        |        |        |        |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. (b) | 2. (a) | 3. (b) | 4. (b) |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|

