

## Heatwaves are evaporating the right to play

**P**lay is universal, transcending national, cultural, and socio-economic boundaries. According to UNICEF, play is vital for children to build social connections, develop physical and mental health, and enhance creativity. Enshrined in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the right to play underscores its significance for a child's well-being and development. Playful interactions contribute to the positive mental health of parents, caregivers, and children, offering respite from adverse experiences. They are a means to process and explore the world. Recognising its importance, the United Nations declared June 11, 2024, as International Day of Play.

However, children are often deprived of this right. According to the 'Value of Play' report by The Real Play Coalition (IKEA, the LEGO Foundation, National Geographic and Unilever), globally, one in five children does not have the time to play, and one in 10 children gets no outdoor play. In India, leisure and access to public spaces to play are linked to socio-economic disparities and social identity, including caste, class, disability, and gender. Unfortunately, climate change is emerging as a fierce competitor to these barriers. With extreme weather events and rising temperatures, climate change is limiting the time children get to engage with their peers and the world around them through play.

### India's ranking, South Asia's problem

UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI) report 2021 suggests that with a rank of 26 out of 163 countries, India is among the countries where children are most at climate risk. With floods, heatwaves, and droughts impacting families and children more frequently than ever before, heatwaves, in particular, are making outdoor play increasingly unsafe. India has been experiencing more frequent and severe heat waves, with temperatures soaring to record levels. These extreme conditions not only limit a child's ability



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to play outdoors but also pose significant health risks. A recent analysis by UNICEF revealed that South Asia has the highest percentage of children exposed to extreme high temperatures compared to other regions. In India, heatwaves have also led to school closures and restricted outdoor activities to protect children. This can have long-term impacts on their physical and mental health.

The lack of play opportunities also disproportionately affects children from disadvantaged backgrounds, exacerbating existing inequalities and perpetuating cycles of poverty. Urbanisation and environmental degradation are reducing the availability of safe play spaces, especially in low-income communities where playgrounds are often non-existent or poorly maintained. The houses are often overcrowded and small, limiting opportunities for indoor play. Research shows that limited access to safe play spaces hinders a child's physical and cognitive development, leading to long-term economic impacts such as a less skilled workforce and higher social welfare costs. A global survey on climate anxiety among children and young people has also revealed heightened climate-anxiety and disillusionment with the role of governments in supporting them, with these feelings also impacting their daily lives.

### Adaptive measures

To avoid this long-term impact, we need to focus on implementing bioclimatic design principles in playground infrastructure and integrating urban planning strategies. This involves introducing green spaces and cooling corridors within cities, which will help mitigate urban heat island effect (intensified by an abundance of concrete-based construction) and provide safe-play environments for children.

Further, opening time and access to existing infrastructure and green spaces such as parks should be expanded. In many cities across India, local communities and sometimes municipal

governments themselves enforce park closures during certain times of the day which further limit the opportunities for children to play. There is often user conflict in public parks along the lines of age – older citizens versus children and along socio-economic classes.

A concerted effort is required to address these issues locally and without discrimination. Local communities can also come together to create shaded areas in parks where children can meet and play on warmer days. In addition, long-term solutions should prioritise preserving and adapting vernacular architectural techniques to implement passive heating and cooling methods. This dimension of planning should also find its way into State Action Plans on Climate Change and city master plans. Special attention needs to be given to the needs of low-income communities. Slum rehabilitation colonies, for instance, in outer Delhi, have extremely sparse green cover. The places earmarked for playgrounds often become dumping grounds for solid waste. This leads to children spending more time inside their houses with limited avenues for socialisation and recreation.

### Empowering children

Children, too, can be powerful champions of change. Providing students with hands-on opportunities and platforms to take concrete actions and play advocacy roles, such as participating in biodiversity mapping, air pollution and water quality assessments, can empower them to understand and address environmental issues. Engaging students in local initiatives around climate, such as carbon neutral panchayats in Kerala, could be a promising starting point.

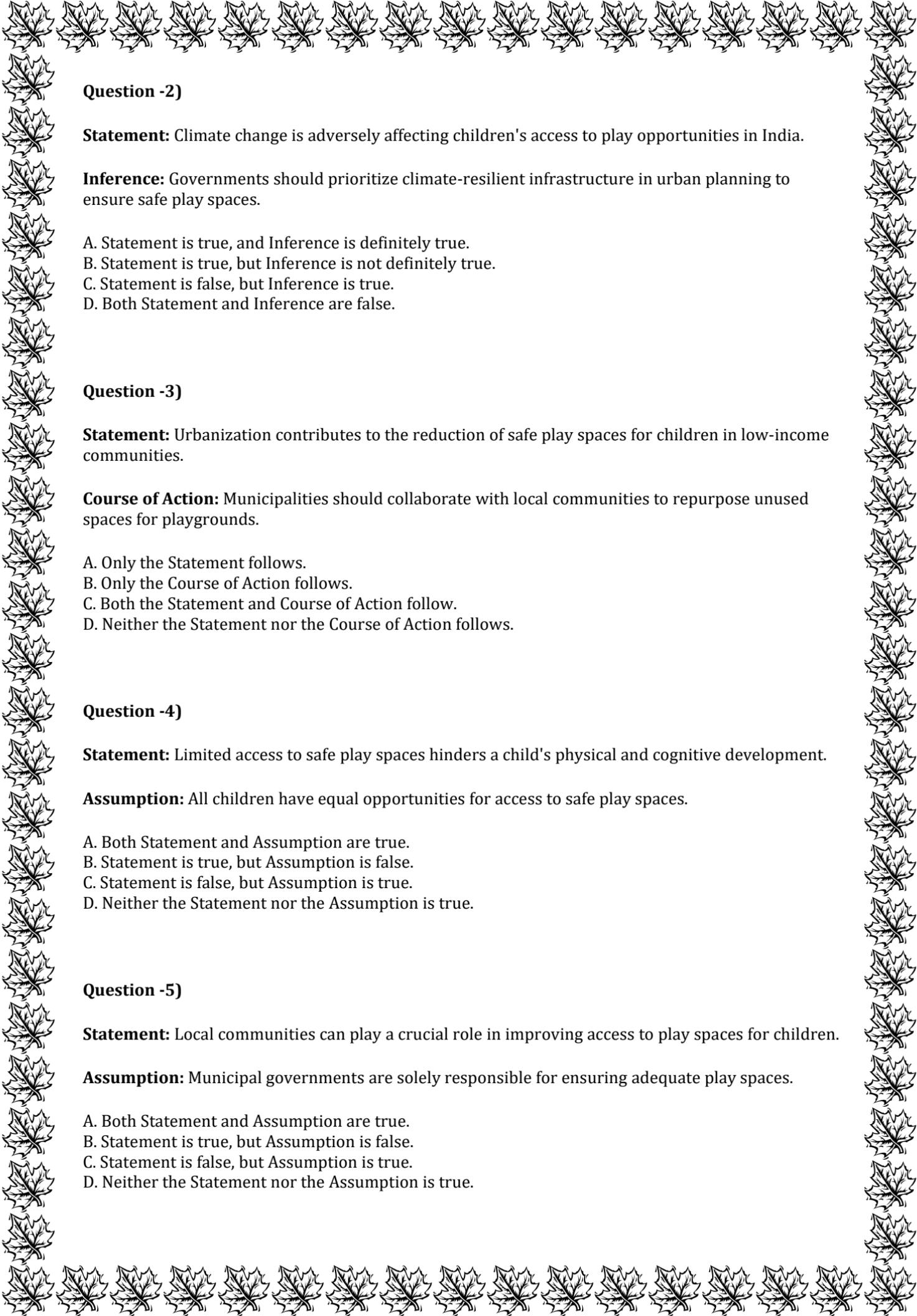
The first International Day of Play may have passed but it is crucial to recognise the adverse effects of climate change on a child's right to play and take action. By addressing this, we not only support children's development and well-being but also foster a generation that is prepared to tackle the challenges of the future.

### Question -1)

**Statement:** Play is considered crucial for children's overall development.

**Assumption:** All forms of play contribute equally to children's physical and mental health.

- A. Both Statement and Assumption are true.
- B. Statement is true, but Assumption is false.
- C. Statement is false, but Assumption is true.
- D. Neither the Statement nor the Assumption is true.



**Question -2)**

**Statement:** Climate change is adversely affecting children's access to play opportunities in India.

**Inference:** Governments should prioritize climate-resilient infrastructure in urban planning to ensure safe play spaces.

- A. Statement is true, and Inference is definitely true.
- B. Statement is true, but Inference is not definitely true.
- C. Statement is false, but Inference is true.
- D. Both Statement and Inference are false.

**Question -3)**

**Statement:** Urbanization contributes to the reduction of safe play spaces for children in low-income communities.

**Course of Action:** Municipalities should collaborate with local communities to repurpose unused spaces for playgrounds.

- A. Only the Statement follows.
- B. Only the Course of Action follows.
- C. Both the Statement and Course of Action follow.
- D. Neither the Statement nor the Course of Action follows.

**Question -4)**

**Statement:** Limited access to safe play spaces hinders a child's physical and cognitive development.

**Assumption:** All children have equal opportunities for access to safe play spaces.

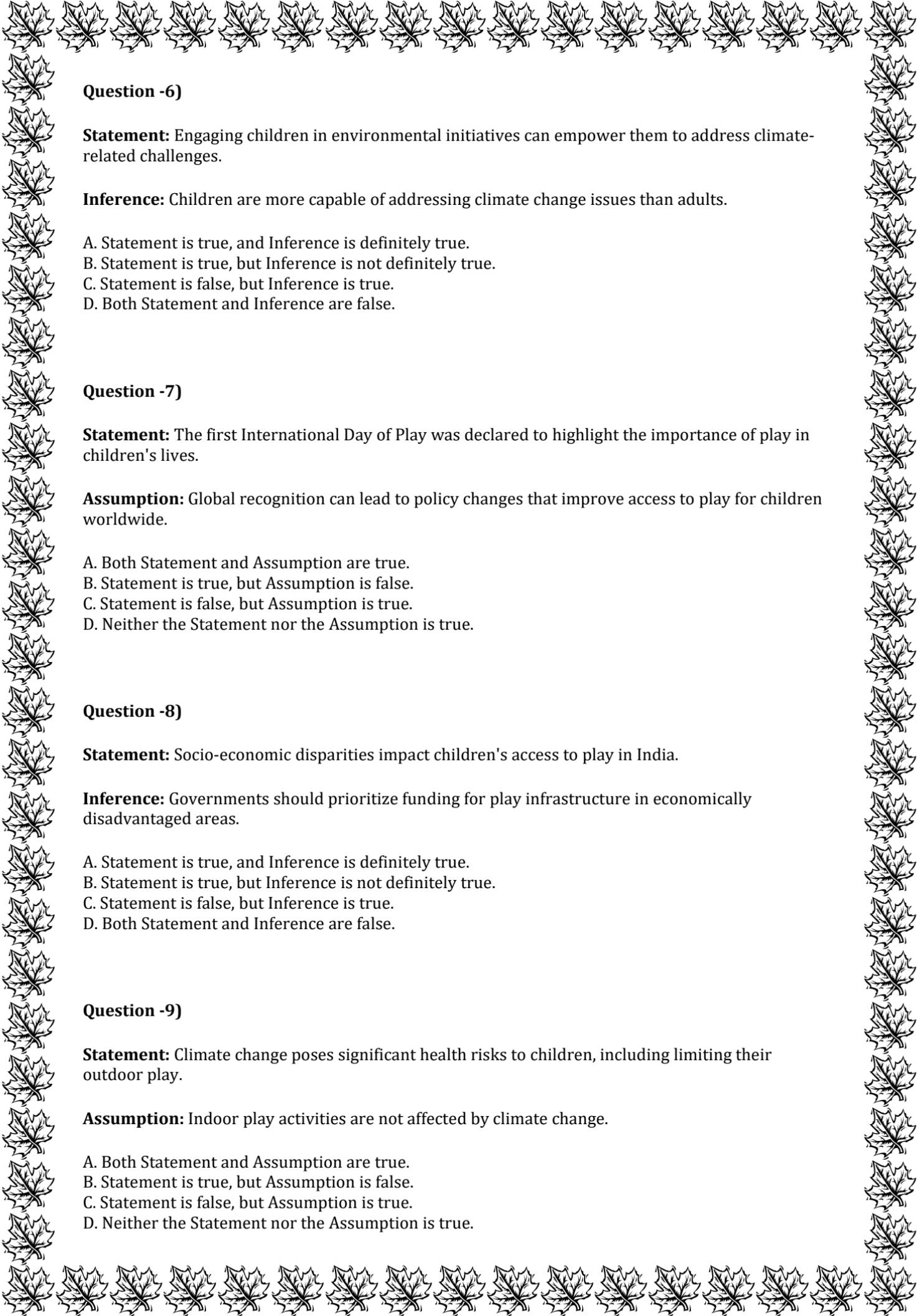
- A. Both Statement and Assumption are true.
- B. Statement is true, but Assumption is false.
- C. Statement is false, but Assumption is true.
- D. Neither the Statement nor the Assumption is true.

**Question -5)**

**Statement:** Local communities can play a crucial role in improving access to play spaces for children.

**Assumption:** Municipal governments are solely responsible for ensuring adequate play spaces.

- A. Both Statement and Assumption are true.
- B. Statement is true, but Assumption is false.
- C. Statement is false, but Assumption is true.
- D. Neither the Statement nor the Assumption is true.



**Question -6)**

**Statement:** Engaging children in environmental initiatives can empower them to address climate-related challenges.

**Inference:** Children are more capable of addressing climate change issues than adults.

- A. Statement is true, and Inference is definitely true.
- B. Statement is true, but Inference is not definitely true.
- C. Statement is false, but Inference is true.
- D. Both Statement and Inference are false.

**Question -7)**

**Statement:** The first International Day of Play was declared to highlight the importance of play in children's lives.

**Assumption:** Global recognition can lead to policy changes that improve access to play for children worldwide.

- A. Both Statement and Assumption are true.
- B. Statement is true, but Assumption is false.
- C. Statement is false, but Assumption is true.
- D. Neither the Statement nor the Assumption is true.

**Question -8)**

**Statement:** Socio-economic disparities impact children's access to play in India.

**Inference:** Governments should prioritize funding for play infrastructure in economically disadvantaged areas.

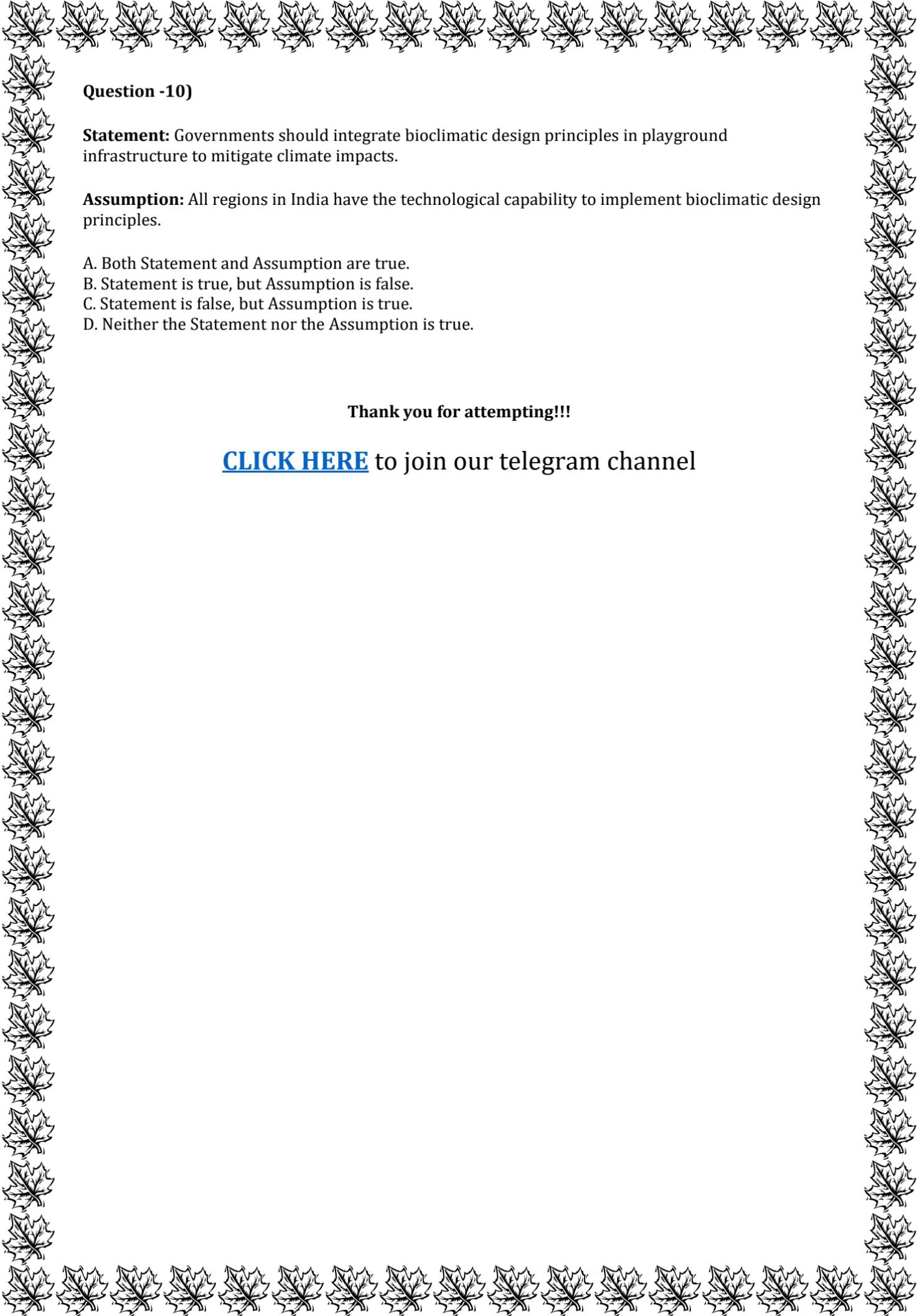
- A. Statement is true, and Inference is definitely true.
- B. Statement is true, but Inference is not definitely true.
- C. Statement is false, but Inference is true.
- D. Both Statement and Inference are false.

**Question -9)**

**Statement:** Climate change poses significant health risks to children, including limiting their outdoor play.

**Assumption:** Indoor play activities are not affected by climate change.

- A. Both Statement and Assumption are true.
- B. Statement is true, but Assumption is false.
- C. Statement is false, but Assumption is true.
- D. Neither the Statement nor the Assumption is true.



**Question -10)**

**Statement:** Governments should integrate bioclimatic design principles in playground infrastructure to mitigate climate impacts.

**Assumption:** All regions in India have the technological capability to implement bioclimatic design principles.

- A. Both Statement and Assumption are true.
- B. Statement is true, but Assumption is false.
- C. Statement is false, but Assumption is true.
- D. Neither the Statement nor the Assumption is true.

**Thank you for attempting!!!**

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