

Regional Geography of Japan

Textual Questions And Answers:

1. State the geographical location of Japan.

Ans. Japan lies on the east coast of Asia in the Pacific Ocean. It lies between 24°N latitude in the South to the 46°N latitude in the north and between 123°E longitude in the West and 146°E longitude in the east. It is surrounded by the Sakhalin island, the Kuril island and the Okhotsk Sea in the north, the Taiwan Sea and the East China Sea in the South, the Pacific Ocean in the east and the Japan sea, the Korea Sea and the Russia Sea in the West.

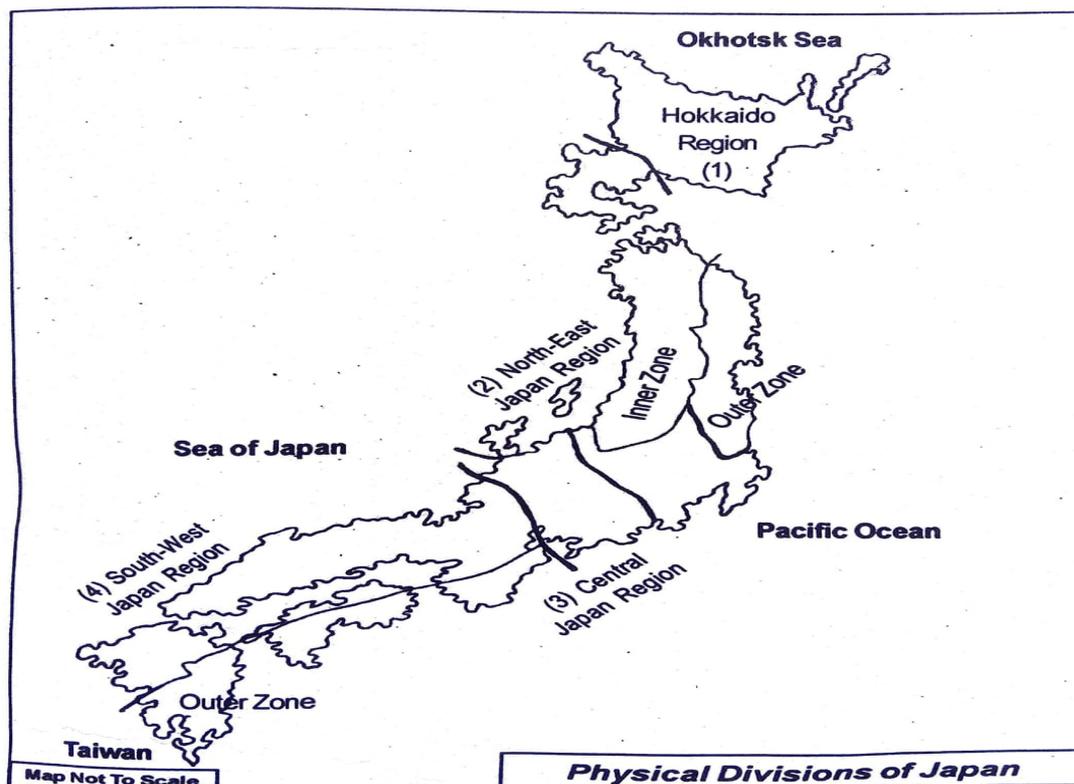
2. Give a geographical description of Japan.

Ans. Japan lies on the east coast of Asia in the Pacific Ocean. Japan is surrounded by seas in all directions. It comprises a number of small and large islands laying in the Pacific Ocean. Among these islands, four islands are the most important. They are Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu. Honshu is the largest among these four islands. Japan lies mostly in the temperate climatic zone. Its north to south length is 2,400 km.

Japan has a total geographical area of 3,77,765 sq.km. Nearly 75% of the land area of Japan is of mountainous type. Many active and extinct volcanoes exist in these mountains. Japan has a population of 128 million as per the estimation of 2007 data. In respect of population, Japan is the tenth largest country of the world. Its capital city is Tokyo.

3. What are the major physical divisions of Japan ? Briefly describe with map the landform of each division.

And. Japan consists of a string of islands lying in the northern part of the Pacific Ocean. Physigraphically, Japan is almost uniform throughout, but minor differences exist based on which the country is divided into the following four physical division :



(i) Hokkaido region : This region mostly consists of the Hokkaido island which is situated in the northern-most

part of Japan. Most part of this area is mountainous. The Hokkaido mountain range is situated in the central part of this region. The highest peak of the Hokkaido mountain range is Achahidak Peak (2,290m). A number of extensive and alluvial lowlands are found in the midst of the parallel mountain ranges. Important plains of this region are Ishikari-Yufutho plain, Tsukushi plain, Konsen plain, etc. Important towns of this region are Sapporo, Kushiro, Muroran, Asahigawa, Hakodate, etc.

(ii) The north-east Japan region : The north-east Japan region is situated in the northern part of the Honshu island. The Western part of this region is marked by numerous folds and faults. This region has two parallel mountain ranges named Auo and Utsu. The height of these ranges varies between 1,500-2,000 m. Coniferous trees, volcanic peaks, lakes, etc. have made this region an attractive place for tourists. This region has two important plateaus named Kitakami plateau and Abukuma plateau. The former is made of old sedimentary rocks while the latter mostly consists of volcanic rocks. The important cities of this region are Aomori, Akita, Morioka, Hachinoha, Sendai, Koriyama, Yamaguta, etc.

(iii) Central Japan region : The central part of Honshu island is known as central Japan. The two mountain ranges named Honshu mountains and Shicito Mariana mountain ranges merge together to form the highest mountain range of Japan. The Eastern part of this particular range is known as Hida mountain. Mount Fuji (3,776m), the holy mountain peak of the Japanese, is

also situated here. Kwanto plain and Naniwa plain are the two important plains of Central Japan. This region is highly suitable for agriculture being fed by the flood plains of the river Tone. The important towns of this region are Yokohama, Tokyo, Nagoya and Toyama.

(iv) South-west Japan region : The south-west Japan region comprises South-west part of Honshu island (i.e. Chugoku-Hanshu), Shikoku and Kyushu island. The mountain ranges of this region are the longest mountain ranges of Japan. Most of the areas of South-west Japan are formed by ancient rocks. The important plains of this region are Kyoto, Nara and Biwa. There are also fertile valleys in between the mountains. The southern part of Kyushu island has many volcanoes. Important cities of this region are Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe, Kita-Kyushu, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Kagoshima, Kumamoto, Okayama and Sakai.

4. Give a brief description of the landforms of Japan.

Ans : Do Your Self.

5. Write briefly about population growth and distribution of Japan.

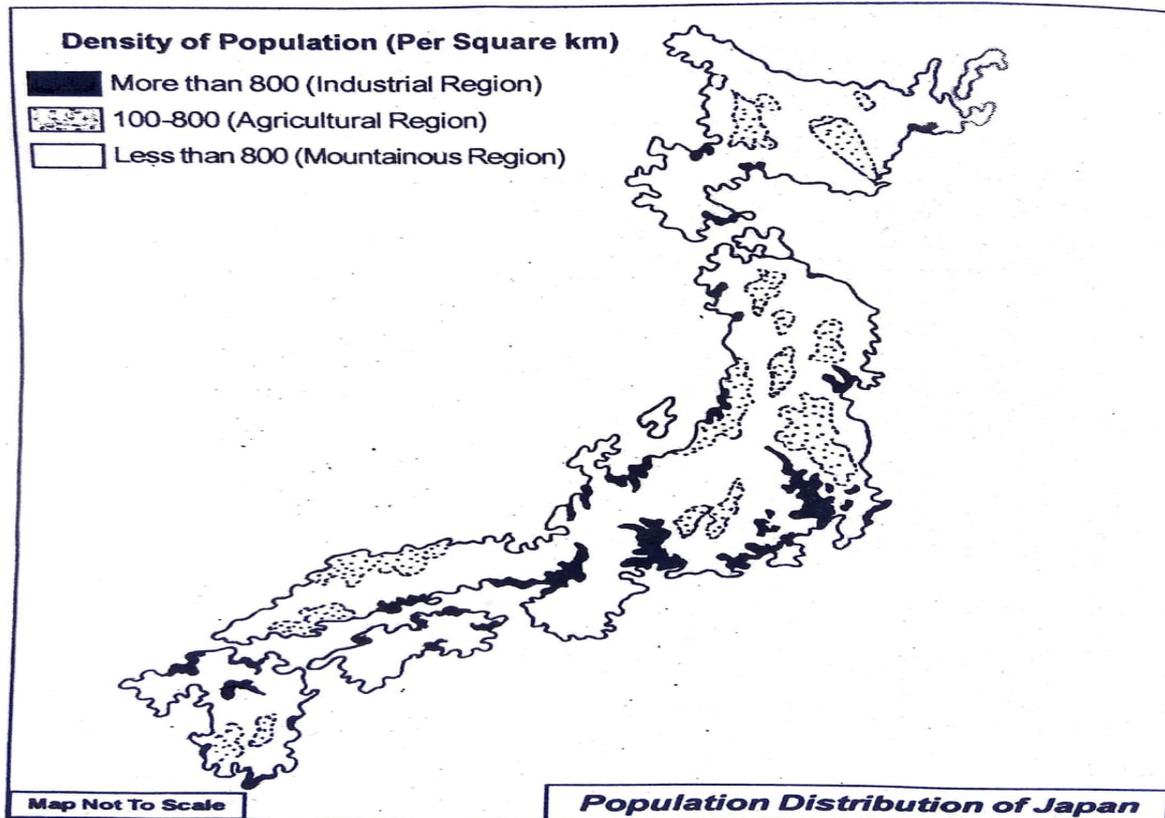
Ans : Japan is inhabited mainly by people of the Mongoloid race. Available records show that Japan had 5 million people in 610 A.D. However, this figure rose to 38 million in 1880; 72 million in 1945; 127 million in 1999 and it reached upto 128 million in 2007. Because of its

declining birth and death rates, the annual average growth rate of its population is 0.4%.

Japan is the tenth most populated country in the world. One of the most significant features of the population of Japan is its uneven distribution. Nearly 75% of the total land area of Japan is mountainous and so these places have very thin population. On the other hand, the river valleys, plains and coastal areas have high density of population. The density of population in the mountainous region of Hokkaido and other is less than 100 as against Japan's average density of population of 338 persons per sq.km.

In fact, Hokkaido region covers 25% of the total land area of Japan, but it has only 5% of the total population of Japan mainly due to its hilly topography. The agricultural regions have a density of 100-800 persons per sq.km.while more than 800 persons live in every sq.km.of the industrialised plains. 20% of the population of Japan is settled in the mountainous regions. The two most densely populated areas of Japan are Tokyo-Yakohama industrial region of Central Japan and Kobe-Osaka industrial region of South-west Japan. The density of population in these two regions is over 10,000 persons per sq.km. Tokyo with a population of 3 crores is the most populated city in Japan. It is also the most populated city in the whole world. The Urban population of Japan has increased to 79% with decrease in agricultural production and migration of people from rural to urban areas. Hence, industrialisation has also

contributed to the regional imbalance in population distribution of Japan.



6. Mention the factors which affect the density of population of Japan.

Ans : Japan has a population of 128 million as per 2007 estimate. This makes Japan the tenth most populated country in the world. The density of population of Japan is 338 persons per sq.km. One of the noticeable features of the Japanese population is its uneven distribution. The density of population of Japan varies from place to place. The main reasons for this variation in density of population are :

(i) Mountainous nature of land : Nearly 75% of the land area of Japan is mountainous in nature. This makes the area unsuitable for human settlement and economic

development. Hence, the density of population in these areas is less than 100 persons per sq.km.

(ii) High state of industrialisation : Today, Japan is one of the most industrialised nations in the world. High industrialisation brings about better employment opportunities leading to migration of people to urban areas and a high concentration of people in the towns and cities.

(iii) Urbanisation : The urban population of Japan is around 79% people have flocked to towns and cities because of the economic advantages of settling down in these places resulting in diminished agricultural production. Therefore, towns and cities of Japan have high density of population.

(iv) Climatic conditions : Climate is one of the important elements that affect the density of population of a country. The northern part of Japan has extreme cold climate and so this region has little population. On the other hand, the coastal regions of most of the islands of Japan have pleasant climate leading to high concentration of population in these areas.

7. Write about the role of agriculture in the economy of Japan.

Ans : Japan is one of the leading industrialised nations of the world. She occupies the second place in terms of industrial production. Nevertheless, agriculture plays a major role in the economy of the country. Nearly 6% of

the population of Japan is engaged in agriculture. About 17% of the total land area of Japan is occupied by agriculture. One of the noticeable features of the agriculture of Japan is the use of modern methods of cultivation leading to high production per hectare. Agriculture affects or influences the economy of Japan in the following ways :

(i) Provides employment : One of the great contributions of agriculture to the national economy of Japan is that it provides a means of livelihood to thousands of people. Employment opportunities remove rural poverty and promote money circulation in the country leading to greater economic progress.

(ii) Less dependent on foreign countries : Though Japan is considered to be a highly industrialised country, Yet she has also made commendable progress in the agricultural sector. Unlike many of the industrialised nations such as England, France, Germany, etc. Japan is almost self-sufficient in most of the food items and this makes Japan less dependent on foreign countries.

(iii) Boosts industrial production : The agricultural operations in Japan are highly mechanised. Most people use modern methods of cultivation as well as a lot of modern mechanical devices for various agricultural operations. This has boosted the industrial production in the country.

8. Show the main agricultural regions of Japan on a map and describe the main characteristics of each region.

Ans : Though nearly 75% of the total land in Japan is mountainous in nature, agriculture is practised in many parts of the country. About 17% of the total area of the country is under permanent agriculture. Agriculture is carried on a commercial basis using modern scientific methods. Nearly 6% of the total population of the country is engaged in the agricultural sector. Some of the main features of the agriculture of Japan are :

(i) Due to the existence of hills, mountains and dense population, farmlands are quite small in size.

(ii) The farmlands are quite scattered as well as fragmented.

(iii) Since the farms are small, intensive agriculture is commonly practised. This type of cultivation is scientifically practised here. To yield maximum production, people use sufficient amount of fertilizers in these lands.

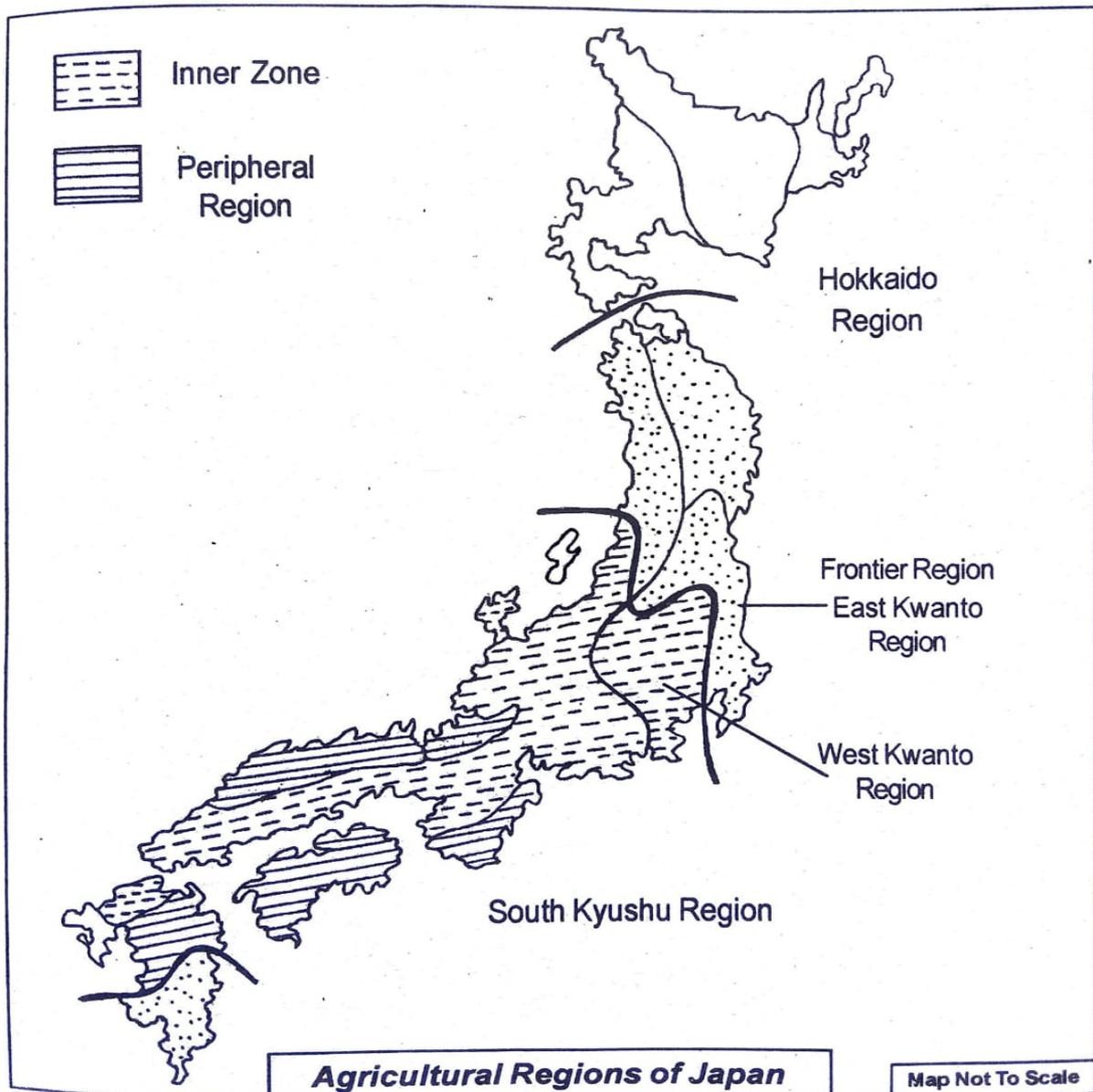
(iv) The main types of agricultural practices carried out in Japan are terrace cultivation, mixed farming, inter-culture farming and shifting cultivation.

On the basis of the extension of farmlands, crop distribution and crop production, two main agricultural regions are identified. They are :

[A] The old Japan region and

[B] Hokkaido region.

[A] The old Japan region : The old Japan region is further subdivision into inner zone, peripheral zone and frontier zone.



(i) Inner zone : This zone is situated in central Japan. The climate of this region is ideal for the annual cultivation of two to three crops. Due to the high density of population, the farmlands are small in size. This region is noted for the commercial cultivation of fruits, vegetables and followers. Cattle rearing is also practised in this zone. At the foothills of this region, terrace cultivation is practised. This region is subdivided into the following divisions :

(a) Sitsi-Kinki division : This small agricultural division is included in the Sugoku hilly region. Rice is cultivated in the summer season in nearly 40% of its plains. Besides, horticulture and cattle rearing are also practised in this zone.

(b) North Kyushu division : The farming of this division is of lower quality. Abundant quality of rice is produced in the plains of this region.

(c) Sukio division : In this region, the highlands are filled with water in artificial ways for the cultivation of rice.

(d) Tokai division : The climate here is relatively warm. Plain areas are limited in this region and so nearly 45% of the farming is confined to Highlands. This region is suitable for the production of orange and tea. Various types of vegetables are also grown here. Animal rearing is also practised in this region.

(e) West Kanto division : This region is characterised by large alluvial plains. Crops are grown twice in a year. Japan's entire production of barley and about one-third production of wheat is done in this region. This division is well-known for mulberry trees.

(f) Tosan division : This hilly and forested division is not suitable for the cultivation of crops. Only some amount of rice is cultivated in the narrow valleys of this zone.

(g) Hakuriko division : This division is recognised as the rice producing region. The yield of rice is quite high and 45% of its rice is grown in winter.

(ii) Frontier zone : This agricultural zone comprises the southern part of Kyushu island and Tohoku. In the southern part of Kyushu island, the farmlands are very small in size and so agriculture is not much developed. Nearly 45% of the people are engaged in cultivation. The main items produced here are fruits and vegetables. Tohoku, situated in the northern part of Honshu island, has extreme cold climate and so cultivation is also not well developed here, not even during summer.

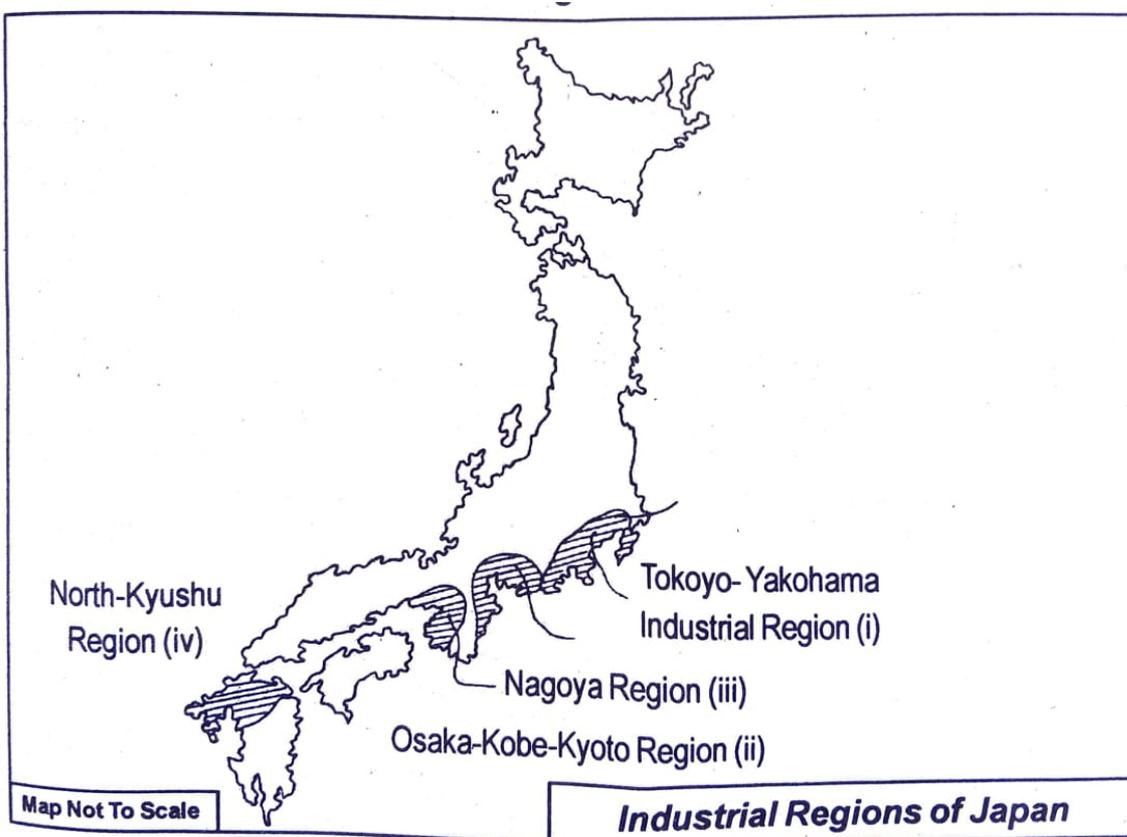
(iii) Peripheral zone : This zone comprises the highlands of southern Chikoku and the coastal areas. One of the significant features here is that jhum cultivation or shifting cultivation is practised predominantly. This zone may be subdivided into four divisions :

(a) The central part of Kyushu, (b) Simon, (c) Southern part of Chikoku, (d) Hida. Cultivation is done to a great extent in the central part of Kyushu island. The main items cultivated here are rice, fruits, vegetables, mulberry, etc. The coastal areas of Simon are not suitable for agriculture. Jhum cultivation is mostly practised in the hilly areas of Chikoku island. Most of the areas of Hida are mountainous and so not much cultivation is done here.

[B] Hokkaido zone : This agricultural zone lies in the northern Part of Japan. The main area for cultivation in this zone is the Ichikari plain. Since this region has extreme cold weather, only one crop is cultivated during summer. The main crop of this zone is rice. Due to the nature of the topography, cold climate and infertile soil, agriculture is not much deployed in this part of Japan. This agricultural zone is divided into three subdivisions- Western Hokkaido, Central Hokkaido and Eastern Hokkaido.

9. What are the chief industrial regions of Japan ? Show these regions in a map and give a brief description of each region.

Ans : Today, Japan is considered to be one of the highly industrialised nations of the world. It ranks second in industrial production in the world. In the development of science and technology, it holds the fourth position in the world. More than 40% of the national income of Japan comes from the industrial sector. More than 33% of the population of Japan is engaged in industrial activities. The industrial belt of Japan extends from Tokyo to Kyushu island-a length of about 1,000 km. This industrial belt is subdivided into the following four industrial regions :



(i) Tokyo-Yakohama region : This region, situated mostly along the Tokyo Bay of the Honshu island, covers the Kanto plain. This region has ideal conditions for the industrial development. Some of the major industries that have developed here are iron and steel, shipbuilding, aircraft, chemical, textile, machinery industries, etc. This region has over 25 big and small towns. The most important among them are Tokyo and Yokohama. More than 30% of the industrial production of Japan comes from this region. Hydroelectricity is also produced here.

(ii) Osaka-Kobe-Kyoto industrial region : This industrial zone is situated in the coastal areas of Osaka Bay. It covers the Kinki plain and so this region is also known as Kinki region. The main factors that have contributed for the development of industries here are excellent

water transport facilities, well-developed transport and communication system, availability of various infrastructural facilities, etc. Industries such as iron and steel, petroleum, shipbuilding, aircraft manufacturing, chemical industries, etc. are the main industries that have been developed here. The important industrial towns of this region are Osaka, Kobe and Kyoto. Osaka is noted for the production of cotton and silk.

(iii) Nagoya industrial region : This industrial zone is situated on the east coast of Honshu between Tokyo-Yokohama and Osaka-Kobe-Kyoto industrial region. This region is noted for the presence of cotton, silk and woollen textile industries. This region is also known as the 'Detroit of Japan' as this zone has become famous for its car manufacturing industries.

(iv) North Kyushu industrial region : This industrial region mostly lies in the northern part of Kyushu island. The main reason for the development of industries here is the availability of coal and other minerals. The chief industries developed here are iron and steel, shipbuilding, cement, tools, machine manufacturing industries, etc. Yawata, Nagasaki and Shimonosoki are the main industrial centres of this region.

10. Write short Notes on :

(a) Islands of Japan.

(b) Physiography of Hokkaido region.

(c) Industrialisation and economic development of Japan.

(d) Terrace cultivation in Japan.

(e) Tokyo Yokohama industrial region.

(f) Coastal areas of Japan.

(g) Honshu island region of Japan.

(h) Mineral resources of Japan.

Ans : (a) Islands of Japan : Japan is made of a series of large and small islands lying in the northern part of the Pacific Ocean. Four big islands named Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu are the main islands that constitute Japan besides other smaller ones. Among these four islands, Honshu is the largest and perhaps the most important. This island is the center of Japan's industries and international trade. All the four islands lie in the temperate climatic zone and so Japan has an excellent temperate climate which favours industrial production, agriculture and human settlement. Japan is surrounded by seas all sides and this has definitely helped its fishing industry, shipbuilding industry and international trade.

(b) Physiography of Hokkaido region : This region comprises Hokkaido island which is situated in the northern part of Japan. The physiography of the region consists of mountains, hills, valleys and few plains.

However, it is chiefly mountainous. Because of its hilly nature, this region has not achieved much industrial or agricultural progress. The Hokkaido mountain range is situated in the central part of this region. A number of extensive alluvial lowlands are found in the midst of the parallel mountain ranges that lie in this region. The important plains of this region are Ishikari-Yufutoh plain, Tsukushi plain, Konsen plain, etc. The important towns of the region are Sapporo, Kushiro, Muroran, Asahigawa, Hakodate, etc. Unlike the towns and cities of Honshu island, these are small.

(c) Industrialisation and economic development of Japan: Today, Japan is considered to be one of the leading industrialised nations of the world. Although she has very little resources, yet she has been able to achieve great industrial and economic progress. In terms of industrial production, Japan holds the second position and regarding development of science and technology she stands fourth. Her current per capita income is around US dollars 33,000. More than 33% of the people of Japan are engaged in the industrial sector. More than 40% of the national income comes from this sector. The factors that have contributed to her remarkable economic and industrial progress have been the hardworking spirit of the Japanese people, a very good transport and communication system, the country's open industrial and foreign trade policies and expansion of international trade. The main industrial belt of Japan extends from Tokyo to Kyushu-a distance of more than 1,000 km. The main industries that quickened the industrial and economic progress of the country are iron

and steel, cotton textile, silk textile, woollen textile, shipbuilding, paper, electrical and other manufacturing industries.

(d) Terrace cultivation in Japan : Japan is mostly a mountainous country. In fact, more than 75% of the total land area of Japan is mountainous in nature. As a result, Japan is forced to opt for terrace cultivation. This is a method of cultivation whereby steps are cut on the slopes of mountainous and hills so as to prevent the erosion of soil and water. A separate drain is provided at the side of the field for the drainage and supply of water. Rice and tea are the main crops cultivated in Japan. These two crops are cultivated by terrace cultivation. The Japanese have developed a unique method of cultivation of rice on hilly slopes and foothills of mountains using a better form of terrace method of cultivation. This method has become very famous all over the world. Terrace cultivation is also ideal for the cultivation of tea. Japan produces mostly green tea. Tea is mostly produced on the Western and Eastern slopes of the mountainous region of central and southern Honshu island.

(e) Tokyo-Yakohama industrial region :Do your Self.

(f) Coastal areas of Japan : Japan consists of four main islands and numerous small islands. Therefore, Japan has an extensive coastal area.If we look at the economy and industries of Japan, we can see that the presence of such an extensive coastal belt has greatly helped the industrial and economic development of Japan.

(i) The presence of a long coastline has helped Japan to become the leading producer of fish in the world.

(ii) The coastal regions became the center of Japan's international trade and business. In fact, most of the industries of Japan are situated in the coastal regions of Japan. Three of the four industrial belts, namely the Tokyo-Yakohama region, Osaka-Kobe-Kyoto region and Nagoya region are situated in the coastal regions of Japan. These regions got developed primarily because of the possibility of bringing adequate resources from outside the country as well as due to the facility for export of manufactured goods.

(g) Honshu island region of Japan : Japan consists of four main islands named Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu besides many small islands. Among these four islands the largest island is the Honshu island. Most of the Japanese population and the bulk of Japanese industries are situated in this island. The western part of this island is characterised by numerous folds and faults. Two parallel mountain ranges named Auo and Utsu lie in this island. The central part of this island has Honshu mountains and Shicito Mariana mountain ranges. The highest portion of this mountain system is known as Hida mountain. Mount Fuji, the holy mountain of the Japanese, is situated in this island. Kwanto plain and Nabi plain are two important plains of this region. River Tone is an important river of this island. Most of the major cities of Japan such as Tokyo, Yakohama, Nagoya, Toyama, Aomori, Akita, Morioka, Hachinoha,

Sendai, Koriyama, Yamagata, etc. are situated in this island.

(h) Mineral resources of Japan : Japan has limited mineral resources. Coal reserves are neither of high grade nor sufficient for the country's requirement. Japan is also poor in iron ore deposits. However, there are valuable copper deposits and fairly good deposits of sulphur in Japan. Therefore, she has to import most of the essential minerals required for the industrial development of the country. Japan is particularly deficient in iron ore and petroleum. Therefore, she has to depend very much on import of these two essential items. However, Japan is very rich in water power. Heavy rainfall, swift flowing streams and the rugged relief conditions have given her great facilities for the development of hydroelectric power.