MANTHAN

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Contents

1. The 'no-detention' policy for students of Classes 5 and 8, why it has been contentious

- The Ministry of Education recently allowed students in Classes 5 and 8 in around 3,000 central schools, including Kendriya Vidyalayas and Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, to be held back if they fail to clear examinations

- If the student does not pass the exam in the first instance, she will be given a shot at a re-exam within two months.

- Failing to clear that will result in the student being held back in that class.

- The Centre's decision comes five years after it amended the Right to Education Act, allowing the states and the Centre to take a call on detaining students in Classes 5 and 8. Since then, some states have chosen to scrap it.

What was the 'no-detention' policy and why was it introduced?

- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act of 2009 was meant to provide free and compulsory education to all children aged 6 to 14.

- Section 16 of the Act prohibited holding back or expelling a child. It said: "No child admitted in a school shall be held back in any class or expelled from school till the completion of elementary education," meaning till Class 8.

- The rationale was that repeating a class could be demotivating for a child and result in her dropping out.

- The 'no-detention' aspect was meant to ensure that a student completes at least elementary education without abandoning school.

- It also factored in the possibility that a student may have failed an exam because of inadequacies in the education system.

- Key to this concept was the 'continuous and comprehensive evaluation' (CCE) at the elementary level.

- It meant a student's understanding and application of knowledge would be assessed through continuous evaluation.

- The Act also added that no child shall be required to pass any board examination until completion of elementary education.

Why was the RTE amended?

- A Bill to amend the RTE Act was introduced in the Lok Sabha in 2017, replacing section 16 with a section that specified there would be a regular examination at the end of the academic year in Classes 5 and 8.

- If the child fails the exam, they will be given additional instruction and a re-exam within two months.

- Failing this, the "appropriate government" may allow schools to hold the child back.

- States and the Centre would decide on holding back students in schools under their purview.

- When the amendment Bill was introduced in Parliament, the statement of objects and reasons read that section 16 of the Act was "not showing healthy results."

- "It is seen that children are routinely being promoted from one class to the higher one without any linkage to the learning they have attained.
- There are instances where the children's attendance has been very less and consequently, they were not able to learn meaningfully.
- This defeats the purposes of the Act," it read.
- The Bill was referred to a standing committee that recommended removing the no-detention policy. It was then passed in 2019.

What were the arguments for and against no-detention?

- In 2012, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) formed a sub-committee, led by Haryana Education Minister Geeta Bhukkal, to review the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) and the no-detention policy under the Right to Education (RTE) Act.
- The committee highlighted two major issues in government schools: declining learning levels, as evidenced by Pratham's Annual Status of Education Report, and migration to private schools.
- Some sub-committee members, including Prof. Nargis Panchpakesan, opposed detention, arguing that systemic issues, not the students, were responsible for poor learning outcomes.
- They noted the policy benefitted marginalized groups by reducing dropout rates.
- However, others contended that the policy negatively impacted academic performance, with states like Madhya Pradesh and Punjab advocating for board exams in Classes 5 and 8. Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh supported the policy, suggesting improved CCE implementation instead.
- In 2016, CABE resolved to scrap the no-detention policy, citing students' lack of seriousness toward studies.
- Concurrently, the TSR Subramanian committee recommended retaining the policy until Class 5, noting its role in reducing dropout rates and increasing the gross enrollment ratio (GER), especially among marginalized groups.
- The committee's analysis found that no-detention correlated with improved pass rates in Classes 10 and 12 across states.
- Opponents of scrapping the policy argued there was insufficient evidence linking it to declining learning outcomes, which were influenced by factors like inadequate infrastructure and poor teaching quality.
- Despite these debates, CABE's eventual resolution signaled a shift toward modifying the policy to balance inclusiveness with academic rigor.

What states/UTs retain the no-detention policy?

- Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Manipur, Mizoram, Odisha, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Ladakh, Lakshadweep, Chandigarh, and Andaman and Nicobar Islands (and Haryana and Puducherry, where a final decision on the policy has not been taken) continue to implement the no-detention policy.
- Tamil Nadu School Education Minister Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi also said the state's schools will continue it.
- Meanwhile, Delhi, Punjab, MP, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Bihar and Gujarat have scrapped the policy.
- For Delhi, 2023-24 was the first academic year in which it stood scrapped. Close to 20% of Class 8 students who appeared for their exams failed – 46,662 students of the total 2,34,894.

- Of the 28,126 students who appeared for the Class 5 exam, 262 students (around 0.93% of those who appeared) failed.

Right to Education (RTE) Act

- The Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 is a landmark legislation in India that ensures free and compulsory education for children. Here are the key highlights of the act:

Objectives

- To provide free and compulsory education to all children aged 6 to 14 years in India.
- To ensure equitable education and bridge gaps caused by socio-economic disparities.

Key Features

Free and Compulsory Education

- Education is provided free of cost in government schools.
- Compulsory for the state to ensure children attend school.

Inclusivity

- Private schools are required to reserve 25% of their seats for economically disadvantaged groups under the EWS (Economically Weaker Sections) quota.

Infrastructure and Teacher Norms

- Schools must meet prescribed norms, such as proper infrastructure, drinking water, toilets, and a specific student-teacher ratio.
- Teachers must have proper qualifications and receive periodic training.

Curriculum and Assessment

- Schools must follow a curriculum consistent with Constitutional values.
- A continuous and comprehensive evaluation system replaces traditional exams up to Class 8.

Prohibition of Discrimination and Corporal Punishment

- Discrimination based on gender, caste, or disability is prohibited.
- Corporal punishment is strictly banned.

Monitoring Mechanism

- The act establishes the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) for effective implementation.

Challenges in Implementation

- **Quality of Education:** Despite access, learning outcomes remain a concern in many government schools.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** Some schools still lack essential facilities.
- **EWS Reservations in Private Schools:** Compliance and integration challenges persist.

Amendments

- The RTE Amendment Act, 2019 abolished the "no detention policy," allowing states to hold back students in Classes 5 and 8 if they fail in re-examinations.

Significance

- The RTE Act strengthens Article 21A of the Indian Constitution, making education a fundamental right.
- It plays a pivotal role in achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) by fostering inclusive and equitable education.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. The Ministry of Education recently allowed students in Classes 5 and 8 in around 3,000 central schools, including Kendriya Vidyalayas and _____ to be held back if they fail to clear examinations.

2. Under the new policy, if a student does not pass the exam in the first instance, they will be given a shot at a _____ within two months.

3. The 'no-detention' policy was introduced under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act of _____.

4. The rationale for the no-detention policy was to ensure that a student completes at least _____ education without abandoning school.

5. The RTE Act of 2009 prohibited holding back or expelling a child until the completion of _____ education.

6. The amendment to the RTE Act in _____ allowed states and the Centre to decide on holding back students in Classes_____.

7. In 2012, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) formed a sub-committee, which identified two major issues in government schools: declining learning levels and _____ to private schools.

8. In 2016, CABE resolved to scrap the no-detention policy, citing students' lack of _____ toward studies.

9. States like _____ and _____ continue to implement the no-detention policy, while others like Delhi and Punjab have scrapped it.

10. The Right to Education (RTE) Act ensures that education is _____ of cost in government schools and mandates that it is compulsory for children aged _____ years.

2. MISSION MAUSAM

- With its diverse geography and climate, India is heavily influenced by weather and monsoon patterns.

- Recognizing the critical need for accurate weather forecasting, especially in a country where agriculture is a primary livelihood, the Union Cabinet under the Modi Government 3.0 approved Mission Mausam, a landmark initiative by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), with a budget of ₹2,000 crores over two years.

- Designed to position India as a global leader in weather and climate sciences, the mission aims to make the nation 'Weather Ready' and 'Climate Smart', meeting the global standards.

- It aims to improve weather and climate services, ensuring timely and precise observation, modeling, and forecasting information for multiple sectors, including agriculture, disaster management, and rural development.

- Spearheaded by the Ministry through its premier institutions—the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the National Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF), and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM)—the initiative is further supported by allied MoES bodies such as the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) and the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT).
- Through collaboration with national and international research institutions, academia, and industry, Mission Mausam aspires to revolutionize India's weather and climate services while cementing its global leadership in this critical field.
- The initiative leverages cutting-edge technology, including high-resolution models and supercomputing systems, to provide accurate forecasts on various timescales—ranging from short-term (hours) to seasonal predictions.

Why Is Mission Mausam Needed?

- **Agrarian Economy:** Climate change has caused erratic rainfall patterns, which have increased farmers' vulnerability. Accurate monsoon forecasts help optimise sowing periods, irrigation planning, and crop yield predictions.
- **Disaster Preparedness:** India faces frequent extreme weather events such as cyclones, floods, and droughts. Enhanced prediction capabilities can save lives and reduce economic losses.
- **Rural Development:** Improved weather services can support rural communities by aiding in water resource management, livestock protection, and infrastructure planning.

Objectives

The primary objectives of Mission Mausam are:

- To enhance India's capability in weather forecasting across various scales—short-term, medium-term, extended-range, and seasonal.
- To develop high-resolution models for improved accuracy in predicting monsoon behaviour.
- To strengthen observational networks with advanced radars, satellites, and automated weather stations.
- To provide actionable advisories for agriculture, water resources, energy, health, and disaster management sectors.
- To build capacity through research collaborations with national and international institutions.

Implementation Strategy

Mission Mausam adopts a multi-pronged approach to achieve its objectives:

- **Infrastructure Development:** Installation of Doppler Weather Radars (DWRs), Automatic Weather Stations (AWS), and rain gauges across the country.
- **Supercomputing Power:** Leveraging high-performance computing systems like Pratyush and Mihir for advanced climate modelling.
- **Collaborative Research:** Partnerships with global organizations like the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) to enhance forecasting techniques.
- **Public Outreach:** Dissemination of user-friendly advisories through mobile apps (*e.g.*, Mausam app), SMS services, and media channels.

Current Status

- Over 37 Doppler Weather Radars have been installed across India to strengthen real-time monitoring capabilities.
- The Mausam mobile app provides location-specific weather forecasts for 450 cities in India.

- Seasonal prediction models have shown significant improvement under the National Monsoon Mission framework.
- The Ministry has initiated specialised programs on urban flooding prediction and cyclone tracking.

Focusing On The North-East Region

The North-East region of India faces unique challenges due to its topography and climatic conditions:

- Frequent floods during monsoons disrupt livelihoods.
- Landslides triggered by heavy rainfall pose significant risks to infrastructure.

Mission Mausam prioritizes this region by:

- Deploying additional weather observation systems tailored to hilly terrains.
- Providing localized forecasts to mitigate the impact of extreme events.
- Collaborating with state governments to integrate weather data into disaster management plans.

Challenges

Despite significant progress, Mission Mausam faces several challenges:

- **Geographical Diversity:** India's varied topography requires complex region-specific models to develop.
- **Climate Change Uncertainty:** Rapid changes in global climate patterns make long-term predictions more challenging.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** Remote areas still need more observational infrastructure like radars or AWS.
- **Awareness Levels:** Ensuring farmers and rural communities effectively utilise forecast information remains a key hurdle.
- Mission Mausam marks a transformative milestone in India's efforts to address climate variability and its far-reaching socio-economic impacts.
- By enhancing forecasting capabilities and ensuring the dissemination of accurate and actionable information to stakeholders, the mission supports sustainable development while safeguarding lives, livelihoods, and critical infrastructure.
- Its implementation, particularly in vulnerable regions like the Northeast, holds the potential to significantly bolster India's resilience against climate-induced challenges such as extreme weather events and resource scarcity.
- As the mission progresses, its focus on integrating cutting-edge technology, fostering research collaborations, and driving public awareness campaigns will ensure widespread adoption and impact.
- Mission Mausam is poised to not only mitigate risks but also unlock opportunities for climate-adaptive economic growth, playing a pivotal role in shaping a safer, more resilient, and prosperous future for India.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. Mission Mausam, approved by the Union Cabinet under the Modi Government 3.0, aims to position India as a global leader in _____ and _____ sciences.
2. The mission was allocated a budget of ₹_____ crores over two years to enhance weather and climate forecasting capabilities.
3. The initiative aims to make India '_____ Ready' and '_____ Smart,' aligning with global standards in weather and climate services.

4. Mission Mausam is spearheaded by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) through institutions like the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and the Indian Institute of _____ Meteorology (IITM).

5. One of the objectives of Mission Mausam is to develop high-resolution models for improved _____ in predicting monsoon behaviour.

6. To enhance weather forecasting accuracy, Mission Mausam plans to strengthen observational networks with advanced _____, satellites, and automated weather stations.

7. The initiative leverages high-performance computing systems like _____ and Mihir for advanced climate modelling.

8. Mission Mausam is particularly focused on improving weather forecasting and disaster management in the _____ region, where extreme events like floods and landslides are common.

9. Over _____ Doppler Weather Radars have been installed across India to strengthen real-time monitoring capabilities under Mission Mausam.

10. The _____ mobile app provides location-specific weather forecasts for over 450 cities in India as part of Mission Mausam's public outreach efforts.

3. PM Modi Attends Arabian Gulf Cup As Guest Of Honour, Says It Celebrates 'Spirit Of Football' In Region

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the opening ceremony of the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup in Kuwait as the 'Guest of Honour' at the invitation of Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Amir of Kuwait.

- The event marked a significant moment in strengthening the longstanding ties between India and Kuwait.

- The Prime Minister was joined by the Amir, the Crown Prince, and the Prime Minister of Kuwait to witness the grand inauguration of this prestigious football tournament.

- The biennial Arabian Gulf Cup, hosted by Kuwait, is one of the region's most prominent sporting events, featuring participation from eight countries, including Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations, Iraq, and Yemen.

- Kuwait holds the distinction of being the most successful team in the tournament's history, with the highest number of victories among the participating nations.

- During the event, Prime Minister Modi highlighted the importance of sports as a medium to foster friendship and cultural exchange.

- His presence underscored the growing collaboration and mutual respect between India and Kuwait.

- The 26th edition of the Arabian Gulf Cup is a celebration of regional unity and sporting excellence, with Kuwait taking center stage as the host of this iconic football event.

What is the Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer?

- The Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer is conferred by the Kuwaiti government on Heads of State, Sovereigns of foreign countries, and on members of foreign royal families as a sign of friendship and goodwill.

- Before PM Modi, recipients include Queen Elizabeth II of England, former American Presidents George HW Bush and Bill Clinton, King Salman of Saudi Arabia, former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, among others
- The award was instituted in 1974, in the memory of Mubarak Al Sabah — also known as Mubarak al-Kabeer or Mubarak the Great — who ruled Kuwait from 1896 to 1915. Under his reign, Kuwait got more autonomy from the Ottoman Empire. In 1899, Mubarak signed a deal with Britain to guard his kingdom from Turkey, effectively becoming a British protectorate. Mubarak is known for playing a major role in shaping the future of Kuwait.
- The design of the award changed in 1992, after Kuwait was liberated from Iraq in the year before.

Significance of the award to PM Modi

- PM Modi, after receiving the award, dedicated it to "the long-standing friendship between India and Kuwait, to the Indian community in Kuwait and to the 1.4 billion people of India."
- Before Modi, the last Indian PM to visit Kuwait was Indira Gandhi in 1981.
- Kuwait is among the top trading partners of India, with bilateral trade valued at $10.47 billion in 2023-24. It is also India's sixth largest crude supplier, meeting three per cent of the country's energy needs. Indian exports to Kuwait reached $2 billion for the first time, while investments by the Kuwait Investment Authority in India exceed $10 billion.
- India and Kuwait have enjoyed friendly relations, with links dating back to pre-oil Kuwait when maritime trade with India was the backbone of its economy. In fact, the Indian rupee remained legal tender in Kuwait until 1961.

Arabian Gulf Cup

- The Arabian Gulf Cup, also known as the Gulf Cup of Nations, is a regional football (soccer) tournament involving teams from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and occasionally other neighboring nations. Here are some key details:

History

- The tournament was first held in 1970 in Bahrain.
- It is managed by the Arabian Gulf Cup Football Federation (AGCFF).
- The competition initially featured teams from six Gulf nations, later expanding to include Yemen and Iraq.

Participating Teams

Traditionally, the following nations participate:

- Bahrain
- Iraq
- Kuwait
- Oman
- Qatar
- Saudi Arabia
- United Arab Emirates
- Yemen

Format

- The tournament is typically played every two years.
- It consists of a group stage followed by knockout rounds, including semi-finals and a final.

Records

- Kuwait holds the record for the most titles, with 10 wins.
- Other multiple-time winners include Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Qatar.

Fill in the Blank:

1. Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the opening ceremony of the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup in _____ as the 'Guest of Honour' at the invitation of Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Amir of Kuwait.

2. The 26th edition of the Arabian Gulf Cup is being hosted by _____.

3. The Arabian Gulf Cup is a biennial football tournament that features participation from eight countries, including Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations, Iraq, and _____.

4. The Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer was instituted in _____ in memory of Mubarak Al Sabah, who ruled Kuwait from 1896 to 1915.

5. The Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer is conferred by the Kuwaiti government on Heads of State, Sovereigns of foreign countries, and members of foreign _____ families.

6. _____ is the most successful team in the history of the Arabian Gulf Cup, with the highest number of victories.

7. PM Modi dedicated the Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer to the long-standing friendship between _____ and Kuwait, the Indian community in Kuwait, and the 1.4 billion people of India.

8. The Arabian Gulf Cup was first held in _____ in Bahrain.

9. India's bilateral trade with Kuwait was valued at $10.47 billion in _____.

10. The Indian rupee remained legal tender in Kuwait until the year _____.

4. Goa Liberation Day

- On December 19, 1961, India annexed Goa in a quick military operation, after years of diplomatic efforts to secure its independence from Portugal failed.

Goa under the Portuguese

- Goa became a Portuguese colony in 1510, when Admiral Afonso de Albuquerque defeated the Sultan of Bjiapur, Yusuf Adil Shah.

- In 1947, when the rest of India became independent from the British, Goa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu continued as Estado da Índia, or the Portuguese states of India.

- However, an independence movement had been gaining ground here, in step with the liberation movement in the rest of the country.

- Tristão de Bragança Cunha, known as the father of Goan nationalism, founded the Goa National Congress at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress in 1928.

- In 1946, socialist leader Ram Manohar Lohia led a historic rally in Goa. Alongside these were groups, such as the Azad Gomantak Dal, who thought an armed resistance was the only way forward.

After India's independence

- The historical events surrounding Goa's liberation from Portuguese rule, emphasizing its significance in India's post-independence history.

- Despite India gaining independence in 1947, Goa, along with Daman and Diu, remained under Portuguese control until 1961.

- This prolonged rule resulted from Portugal's refusal to negotiate, with dictator Antonio de Oliveira Salazar declaring these territories as integral parts of Portugal and even seeking NATO's intervention against any Indian military action.
- India's leadership, under Prime Minister Nehru, initially sought a diplomatic resolution to avoid international conflict.
- However, Salazar's obstinacy forced India to adopt military action.
- The Indian Army successfully liberated Goa on December 19, 1961, marking the end of 451 years of Portuguese colonial rule.
- This event is celebrated annually as Goa Liberation Day with cultural pride and national enthusiasm.
- Goa's liberation was influenced by the broader 19th-century Indian freedom movement, with many Goans participating in Satyagraha.
- The integration of Goa into the Indian Union also highlights its distinct cultural and religious identity, shaped by centuries of Portuguese influence.
- Liberation Day symbolizes the resilience and determination of Goans in their struggle for freedom.
- The day is commemorated with fervor through various events and programs, such as the Youth and Women's Parliaments in 2021, showcasing Goa's vibrant spirit and unique heritage.
- Goa Liberation Day stands as a testament to the region's historical journey, celebrating its rich culture, enduring legacy, and the unwavering perseverance of its people in the face of colonial domination.

Goa

- Goa, India's smallest state by area, is located on the western coast along the Arabian Sea.
- Known for its beaches, heritage architecture, vibrant nightlife, and Portuguese influence, Goa is a popular tourist destination.

1. Geography

- **Location:** Western India, bordered by Maharashtra to the north, Karnataka to the south and east, and the Arabian Sea to the west.
- **Capital:** Panaji (Panjim).
- **Largest City:** Vasco da Gama.
- **Official Language:** Konkani.

2. History

- Goa was a Portuguese colony for over 450 years before being annexed by India in 1961.
- It retains a mix of Indian and Portuguese culture, evident in its architecture, cuisine, and festivals.

3. Tourism

- **Beaches:** Popular spots include Baga, Calangute, Anjuna, and Palolem beaches.
- **Heritage:** The Basilica of Bom Jesus (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) and Se Cathedral are key attractions.
- **Wildlife Sanctuaries:** Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary and Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary.

4. Culture and Festivals

- **Cuisine:** Famous for seafood, Vindaloo, Bebinca (dessert), and Feni (local spirit).
- **Festivals:** Carnival, Shigmo, Christmas, and Ganesh Chaturthi are celebrated with enthusiasm.

5. Economy

- Tourism is the backbone of Goa's economy.
- Mining (iron ore) and agriculture are also significant.
- The state has a growing IT sector.

Portuguese in India

- Portuguese in India has a significant historical and cultural presence, particularly due to the colonization of parts of India by Portugal from the early 16th century until the mid-20th century.
- Portuguese explorers, traders, and missionaries first arrived on the west coast of India in 1498, led by Vasco da Gama.
- The Portuguese established a colonial presence in India, including Goa, Daman and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli.
- **Goa:** Goa was the most important Portuguese colony in India and remained under Portuguese control until 1961, when it was annexed by India.
- The Portuguese influence is still visible in Goa through architecture, religion, cuisine, and language.
- The state of Goa has many churches, forts, and other structures that reflect Portuguese colonial architecture.
- **Portuguese Language:** While Portuguese is no longer widely spoken in India, it is still used in some parts, particularly in Goa.
- The language holds cultural significance, and there are efforts to preserve it through education and cultural programs.
- Many Goans, especially older generations, can still speak Portuguese.
- In the past, Portuguese was the official language of Goa until it was replaced by Konkani and Marathi after the annexation.
- **Cultural Influence:** Portuguese colonization left a profound impact on Indian culture, especially in Goa.
- The Portuguese introduced Christianity, and the majority of people in Goa practice Christianity, particularly Catholicism.
- Portuguese food, including dishes like "prawn balchão" and "vindaloo," remains an integral part of Goan cuisine.
- **Religious Influence:** The Portuguese were instrumental in spreading Catholicism throughout their territories.
- Many churches built during the colonial era, including the Basilica of Bom Jesus and Se Cathedral, are UNESCO World Heritage Sites today.
- **End of Portuguese Rule:** After India gained independence in 1947, Portugal continued to hold on to its territories in India.
- However, in 1961, India launched a military operation to annex Goa, and Portuguese India was incorporated into the Indian Union. This marked the end of Portuguese colonial rule in India.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. Goa was annexed by India on _____ after a military operation, ending 451 years of Portuguese colonial rule.

2. Goa became a Portuguese colony in _____, when Admiral Afonso de Albuquerque defeated the Sultan of Bijapur, Yusuf Adil Shah.

3. After India gained independence in 1947, Goa, along with _____ and Daman and Diu, remained under Portuguese control.

4. _____ is known as the father of Goan nationalism and founded the Goa National Congress in 1928.

5. In 1946, socialist leader _____ led a historic rally in Goa calling for its independence from Portugal.

6. The dictator _____ of Portugal declared Goa, along with other territories, as integral parts of Portugal and sought NATO's intervention against any Indian military action.

7. India's leadership, under Prime Minister _____, initially sought a diplomatic resolution to Goa's liberation.

8. Goa Liberation Day is celebrated on _____ every year with cultural pride and national enthusiasm.

9. Goa's capital is _____, while its largest city is _____.

10. The _____ is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the key heritage attractions in Goa.

5. Union Minister Bhupender Yadav Releases India State of Forest Report 2023

- Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav released the 'India State of Forest Report 2023 (ISFR 2023) at Forest Research Institute, Dehradun.

- The ISFR is brought out by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) on a biennial basis since 1987.

- FSI carries out in-depth assessment of the forest and tree resources of the country based on interpretation of Remote Sensing satellite data and field based National Forest Inventory (NFI), and the results are published in the ISFR.

- The India State of Forest Report 2023 is 18th such report in the series.

- The report contains information on forest cover, tree cover, mangrove cover, growing stock, carbon stock in India's forests, instances of forest fire, Agroforestry, etc.

- To present a detailed picture of the forest health at country level, special thematic information on forest cover and important characteristics of forests have been reported in the ISFR.

- As per the present assessment, the total Forest and Tree cover is 8,27,357 sq km, which is 25.17 percent of the geographical area of the country. The Forest Cover has an area of about 7,15,343 sq km (21.76%) whereas the Tree Cover has an area of 1,12,014 sq km (3.41%).

- The Minister expressed happiness over the fact that as compared to 2021, there is an increase of 1445 sq km in the total forest and tree cover of the country.

- He also highlighted the near real time fire alerts and forest fire services provided by FSI using advance technology.

Major Findings

- The Forest and Tree cover of the country is 8,27,357 sq km which is 25.17 percent of the geographical area of the country, consisting of 7,15,343 sq km (21.76%) as forest cover and 1,12,014 sq km (3.41%) as tree cover

- As compared to assessment of 2021, there is an increase of 1445 sq km in the forest and tree cover of the country which includes 156 sq km increase in the forest cover and 1289 sq km increase in tree cover.

- Top four states showing maximum increase in forest and tree cover are Chhattisgarh (684 sq km) followed by Uttar Pradesh (559 sq km), Odisha (559 sq km) and Rajasthan (394 sq km).

- Top three states showing maximum increase in forest cover are Mizoram (242 sq km) followed by Gujarat (180 sq km) and Odisha (152 sq km).

- Area wise top three states having largest forest and tree cover are Madhya Pradesh (85,724 sq km) followed by Arunachal Pradesh (67,083 sq km) and Maharashtra (65,383 sq km).

- Area wise top three states having largest forest cover are Madhya Pradesh (77,073 sq km) followed by Arunachal Pradesh (65,882 sq km) and Chhattisgarh (55,812 sq km).

- In terms of percentage of forest cover with respect to total geographical area, Lakshadweep (91.33 percent) has the highest forest cover followed by Mizoram (85.34 percent) and Andaman & Nicobar Island (81.62 percent).

- The present assessment also reveals that 19 states/UTs have above 33 percent of the geographical area under forest cover.

- Out of these, eight states/UTs namely Mizoram, Lakshadweep, A & N Island, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Manipur have forest cover above 75 percent.

- The total mangrove cover is 4,992 sq km in the country.

- The total growing stock of India's forest and trees outside forests is estimated as 6430 million cum, of which 4479 million cum is inside the forests and 1951 million cum outside the forest area.

- There is an increase of 262 million cum of total growing stock as compared to the previous assessment which includes an increase of 91 million cum inside the forest and 171 million cum outside the forest area.

- The extent of bamboo bearing area for the country has been estimated as 1,54,670 sq km. As compared to the last assessment done in 2021 there is an increase of 5,227 sq km in bamboo area.

- The total annual potential production of timber from trees outside forest has been estimated as 91.51 million cum.

- In the present assessment total carbon stock in country's forest is estimated to be 7,285.5 million tonnes. There is an increase of 81.5 million tonnes in the carbon stock of country as compared to the last assessment.

- Regarding status on achievement of target under NDC related to carbon sequestration, the current assessment shows that India's carbon stock has reached 30.43 billion tonnes of CO_2 equivalent; which indicates that as compared to the base year of 2005, India has already reached 2.29 billion tonnes of additional carbon sink as against the target of 2.5 to 3.0 billion tonnes by 2030.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. The India State of Forest Report 2023 (ISFR 2023) was released by the Minister for Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, _____.

2. The India State of Forest Report is published by the _____ on a biennial basis.

3. The total Forest and Tree cover in India, according to the ISFR 2023, is _____ sq km, which is _____ percent of the geographical area of the country.

4. As compared to the 2021 assessment, the total increase in forest and tree cover is _____ sq km, which includes an increase of _____ sq km in forest cover.

5. The top four states showing the maximum increase in forest and tree cover are _____, _____, _____, and _____.

6. _____ has the highest percentage of forest cover with respect to total geographical area, with 91.33% forest cover.

7. The total _____ cover in India is estimated to be 4,992 sq km, as per the ISFR 2023.

8. The total growing stock of India's forests and trees outside forests is estimated at _____ million cubic meters, with _____ million cubic meters inside forests.

9. As per the report, the total carbon stock in India's forests is estimated to be _____ million tonnes, showing an increase of _____ million tonnes compared to the previous assessment.

10. The total bamboo-bearing area in India is _____ sq km, showing an increase of _____ sq km compared to the last assessment.

6. National Farmers' Day

- Farmers, the lifeblood of the nation and revered as 'Annadatas', are the foundation of India's prosperity.
- Their relentless toil feeds the nation, sustains the rural economy, and ensures the strength of every household.
- National Farmers' Day, observed on 23rd December, celebrates their invaluable contribution.
- This day marks the birth anniversary of Shri Chaudhary Charan Singh, India's fifth Prime Minister, renowned for his deep understanding of rural issues and unwavering advocacy for farmers' welfare.
- It is a moment to honour our farmers' unwavering dedication and recognise their pivotal role in shaping the nation's progress.
- Recognising the vital role of farmers, the Government of India has introduced a suite of initiatives designed to support their socio-economic upliftment and ensure sustainable agricultural growth.
- These programmes, including the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN), Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), and Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PM-KMY), are aimed at providing financial security, risk mitigation, and long-term social security for farmers.
- By addressing both immediate challenges and long-term needs, these schemes underscore the government's commitment to nurturing the backbone of the nation and fostering a sustainable agricultural future.

Role of Farmers in Nation-Building

- India's agricultural sector, employing nearly half of the nation's population, remains a cornerstone of the country's economy and a key driver of nation-building.
- It contributes 17.7% to the Gross Value Added (GVA) at current prices in FY 2023-24.
- With approximately 54.8% of the country's 328.7 million hectares classified as agricultural land and a cropping intensity of 155.4% (as per the Land Use Statistics for 2021-22), farmers are the bedrock of this essential sector.

- Their role extends far beyond mere cultivation; they are the architects of rural development and nation-building, providing food security and sustaining the livelihoods of millions.

- Through their hard work and innovation, they play a pivotal role in shaping a resilient and prosperous India.

- In 2023-24, the country achieved a record total foodgrain production of 332.2 million tonnes, surpassing the previous year's output of 329.7 million tonnes.

- This remarkable growth is a testament to the resilience and unwavering dedication of Indian farmers, who have continuously strived to ensure food security for the nation.

- Their efforts go beyond mere crop cultivation; they are the bedrock of rural livelihoods, shaping the economic landscape of countless communities.

- The success of Indian agriculture is deeply intertwined with the wellbeing of these 'Annadatas', who embody the spirit of hard work, innovation, and sacrifice.

Key Schemes for Farmers in India

- Launched over the years, these key agricultural schemes reflect the Government of India's commitment to supporting farmers and enhancing their livelihoods.

- PM-KISAN, PMFBY, PM-KMY, and other initiatives like the Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS), Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme, and Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) demonstrate a holistic approach to addressing the diverse needs of the agricultural sector.

- These schemes aim to provide financial assistance, insurance, affordable credit, and infrastructure development, empowering farmers with the resources needed for sustainable agricultural practices and economic security.

Unprecedented Budget Allocation

- Since 2014, the government has significantly bolstered its commitment to agriculture by substantially increasing the budget allocation.

- In the 2013-14 fiscal year, the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare had a budget of Rs. 21,933.50 crore.

- Over the years, this allocation has been raised more than five and a half times, reaching a remarkable Rs. 1,22,528.77 crore for the fiscal year 2024-25.

- This unprecedented increase reflects a strategic shift towards prioritizing the agricultural sector, addressing challenges faced by farmers, and ensuring sustainable development. The enhanced budget aims to improve rural infrastructure, promote modern farming techniques, facilitate access to credit, and provide financial support for various agricultural schemes and initiatives.

- Such a substantial allocation not only fosters farmer welfare but also aims to bolster agricultural productivity and rural prosperity, highlighting the government's unwavering commitment to the growth and development of the agricultural sector.

Namo Drone Didi

- The Namo Drone Didi Scheme, approved for 2024-25 to 2025-26 with an outlay of ₹1,261 crore, aims to empower 15,000 Women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) by providing drones for agricultural rental services, including fertiliser and pesticide application.

- The scheme offers 80% Central Financial Assistance of the cost of drones, accessories, and ancillary charges, up to a maximum of ₹8 lakh.

Soil Health Card Scheme

- Launched in 2015, the Soil Health Card Scheme aims to improve soil health and promote efficient fertiliser use.

- Over 24.60 crore cards have been issued since launch, with 36.61 lakh generated in 2023-24.

- A strong laboratory network supports the scheme. In order to develop the soil fertility map, government plans to test 5 crore soil samples by 2025-26.

Formation & Promotion of 10,000 FPOs

- In 2020, the government launched a scheme with a Rs. 6,865 crore budget to form and promote 10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs).

- So far, 9,411 FPOs have been formed involving 26.17 lakh beneficiary farmers, aiming to enhance collective farming and improve market access.

Kisan Kavach

- Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh unveiled Kisan Kavach, Bharat's first anti-pesticide bodysuit, designed to protect farmers from the harmful effects of pesticide exposure.

- This groundbreaking innovation is a major step forward in ensuring farmer safety and empowers the agricultural community through science and technology.

- The event also marked the distribution of the first batch of Kisan Kavach suits to farmers, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding farmers.

Clean Plant Programme

- The Union Cabinet approved the Clean Plant Programme (CPP) with an outlay of Rs. 1,765.67 crore.

- The CPP aims to enhance the quality and productivity of horticulture crops by providing disease-free planting material, benefiting the dissemination and adoption of climate-resilient varieties with yield enhancement.

Digital Agriculture Mission

- The Union Cabinet approved the Digital Agriculture Mission with an outlay of Rs. 2,817 crore, including the central share of Rs. 1,940 crore.

- This mission is conceived as an umbrella scheme to support digital agriculture initiatives, including creating Digital Public Infrastructure, implementing the Digital General Crop Estimation Survey (DGCES), and other IT initiatives by the Central Government, State Governments, and academic and research institutions.

Credit Guarantee Scheme for e-NWR Based Pledge Financing (CGS-NPF)

- The Government of India launched the Credit Guarantee Scheme for e-NWR Based Pledge Financing (CGS-NPF), providing a ₹1,000-crore corpus to support post-harvest financing for farmers.

- Under this scheme, farmers can access credit by pledging their produce stored in Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) accredited warehouses, backed by electronic negotiable warehouse receipts (e-NWRs).

National Mission on Edible Oils – Oilseeds (NMEO-Oilseeds)

- The Union Cabinet approved the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oilseeds (NMEO-Oilseeds) with a total outlay of Rs. 10,103 crore.

- The mission aims to boost domestic oilseed production and achieve self-reliance in edible oils, to be implemented over a seven-year period from 2024-25 to 2030-31.

National Mission on Natural Farming

- The Union Cabinet approved the National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF) as a standalone Centrally Sponsored Scheme.

- The scheme has a total outlay of Rs. 2,481 crore (Government of India share – Rs. 1,584 crore; State share – Rs. 897 crore), focusing on promoting chemical-free, natural farming practices across the country.

- The initiatives and schemes introduced by the Government of India are a testament to the unwavering commitment to farmers' welfare and the sustainable growth of the agricultural sector.

- Through schemes like PM-KISAN, PMFBY, and the Namo Drone Didi, the government not only ensures financial security but also enhances productivity and market access for farmers.

- The remarkable achievements in foodgrain production, coupled with the expansion of infrastructure and digital initiatives like the Digital Agriculture Mission and the Clean Plant Programme, are setting a strong foundation for a resilient and prosperous agricultural ecosystem.

- As we celebrate National, it is crucial to continue these efforts, ensuring that the 'Annadatas' remain empowered, secure, and integral to India's development journey.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. National Farmers' Day is observed on _____ to celebrate the contribution of farmers and to mark the birth anniversary of Shri Chaudhary Charan Singh.

2. The key government schemes aimed at providing financial security, risk mitigation, and long-term social security for farmers include PM-KISAN, PMFBY, and PM-KMY, among others. These schemes reflect the government's commitment to _____.

3. In the fiscal year 2023-24, India's agricultural sector contributed _____% to the Gross Value Added (GVA) at current prices.

4. The Namo Drone Didi Scheme, with an outlay of ₹_____ crore, aims to empower 15,000 Women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) by providing drones for agricultural rental services.

5. The government aims to test _____ crore soil samples by 2025-26 under the Soil Health Card Scheme to develop a soil fertility map.

6. The Clean Plant Programme (CPP) has an outlay of ₹_____ crore and aims to enhance the quality and productivity of horticulture crops.

7. The Digital Agriculture Mission has an outlay of ₹_____ crore and includes initiatives like the Digital General Crop Estimation Survey (DGCES).

8. The National Mission on Edible Oils – Oilseeds (NMEO-Oilseeds) aims to boost domestic oilseed production with a total outlay of ₹_____ crore.

9. The formation and promotion of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) is supported by a scheme with a budget of ₹_____ crore.

10. The National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF) focuses on promoting _____, free, natural farming practices across the country.

7. Former Supreme Court judge V. Ramasubramanian appointed NHRC chairman

- President of India appointed retired Supreme Court Justice V. Ramasubramanian as the Chairperson of National Human Rights Commission.
- The post of NHRC chief was lying vacant since June this year.
- President also appointed Priyank Kanoongo and retired Justice Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi as the Members of the NHRC-India.
- A high-power committee led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi met to select the next chairperson of NHRC.
- Both Leaders of the Opposition (LoPs), Mallikarjun Kharge in the Rajya Sabha and Rahul Gandhi in the Lok Sabha also attended the meeting.
- A well-known scholar in Tamil and a master of the art of writing judgments, Justice Ramasubramanian was born on June 30, 1958, and obtained his bachelor's degree in science from Vivekananda College in Chennai before graduating in law from the Madras Law College and enrolling as a member of the Bar on February 16, 1983.
- After 23 years of practice as a lawyer in the High Court and other judicial fora, he was elevated as an additional judge of the Madras High Court on July 31, 2006 and as a permanent judge on November 9, 2009.
- In 2016, he got transferred to the High Court of Judicature at Hyderabad for the States of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, and after the bifurcation, he served in the Telangana High Court.
- On June 22, 2019, he was sworn in as the Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court, and later, on September 23, 2019, he ascended to the Supreme Court of India
- During his Supreme Court tenure, which ended upon his retirement on June 29, 2023, Justice Ramasubramanian authored 102 judgments.
- His judicial contributions include participation in significant cases such as the 2016 Demonetization policy and the validity of circumstantial evidence in bribery cases. His career reflects a commitment to upholding justice across various levels of the judiciary.
- Justice Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, was elevated as a Permanent Judge of the Orissa High Court in 2013.
- Over nearly 11 years, he disposed of over 152,000 cases and authored nearly 1,500 reported judgments, significantly contributing to public trust in the judiciary.He was appointed as the Chief Justice of the High Court of Jharkhand in July, 2024.
- Priyank Kanoongo, has been a dedicated advocate for child rights and education in India. He was appointed as the Chairperson of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) in 2018 and was reappointed for a subsequent term starting October 17, 2021.

National Human Rights Commission of India

- National Human Rights Commission of India (abbreviated as NHRC) is a statutory body constituted on 12 October 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Ordinance of 28 September 1993.
- It was given a statutory basis by the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 (PHRA).

- The NHRC is responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights, which is defined by the act as "rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants and enforceable by courts in India"

Composition

The NHRC consists of the chairperson and five members (excluding the ex-officio members)

- A Chairperson, who has been a Chief Justice of India or a Judge of the Supreme Court.
- One member who is, or has been, a Judge of the Supreme Court of India and one member who is, or has been, the Chief Justice of a High Court.
- Three Members, out of which at least one shall be a woman to be appointed from amongst persons having knowledge of, or practical experience in, matters relating to human rights.
- In addition, the Chairpersons of National Commissions viz., National Commission for Scheduled Castes, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, National Commission for Women, National Commission for Minorities, National Commission for Backward Classes, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights; and the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities serve as ex officio members.
- The sitting Judge of the Supreme Court or sitting Chief Justice of any High Court can be appointed only after the consultation with the Chief Justice of India.

Human Rights Day

- Human Rights Day (HRD) is celebrated annually around the world on 10 December every year.
- The date was chosen to honor the United Nations General Assembly's adoption and proclamation, on 10 December 1948, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the first global enunciation of human rights and one of the first major achievements of the new United Nations.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. The newly appointed Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is retired Supreme Court Justice _____.
2. The NHRC was constituted on _____, under the Protection of Human Rights Ordinance of 28 September 1993.
3. Justice V. Ramasubramanian served as the Chief Justice of the _____ High Court before being elevated to the Supreme Court.
4. The NHRC Chairperson is selected by a high-power committee, which includes the Prime Minister and the _____ of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.
5. The Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), which provides the statutory basis for the NHRC, was enacted in the year _____.
6. During his tenure in the Supreme Court, Justice V. Ramasubramanian authored _____ judgments.
7. Justice Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi was appointed as the Chief Justice of the High Court of _____ in July 2024.
8. Priyank Kanoongo, an advocate for child rights, has also served as the Chairperson of the _____ since 2018.
9. Human Rights Day is celebrated annually on _____ to commemorate the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly.
10. The NHRC chairperson must be a former Chief Justice of India or a Judge of the _____.

8. Joint committee of Parliament, to be set-up for 'One Nation, One Election' Bills

- Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal moved a motion in Parliament for the Bills on the 'One Nation, One Election' proposal to be referred to a joint committee for further examination.
- The JPC to examine the Bills will have 21 members from the Lok Sabha and 10 members from the Rajya Sabha, including Congress leaders Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Manish Tewari, BJP's Bansuri Swaraj and Anurag Singh Thakur, and NCP's Supriya Sule.

Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC)

- A Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) is set up by the Parliament for a special purpose, like the detailed scrutiny of a subject or Bill.
- As the name suggests, it has members from both the Houses and from the ruling parties and the opposition.
- It is dissolved after its term ends or its task has been completed.
- Some examples of joint committees include one on the Waqf Amendment Bill, 2024, set up in August this year, and on The Personal Data Protection Bill of 2019.
- Others are mandated to investigate alleged irregularities, such as of a financial nature.

JPC setup

- A JPC is set up after one House of Parliament has passed a motion and the other has agreed to it. Members of the JPC are decided by the Parliament.
- The number of members can vary.

JPC work

- The mandate of a JPC depends on the motion constituting it.
- For example, "The terms of reference for the JPC on the stock market scam asked the committee to look into financial irregularities, to fix responsibility on persons and institutions for the scam, to identify regulatory loopholes and also to make suitable recommendations,".
- To fulfil its mandate in investigating an issue, a JPC can scrutinise documents and summon people for questioning. It then submits a report and makes recommendations to the government.
- The proceedings and findings of the committee are confidential, except in matters of public interest. The government can decide to withhold a document if it is considered prejudicial to the safety or interest of the State.
- The Speaker has the final word in case of a dispute over calling for evidence.

JPC Power

- While the recommendations of a JPC have persuasive value, they are not binding on the government.
- The government can choose to launch further investigations based on what the JPC has said, but it can't be forced to do so.
- "The government is required to report on the follow-up action taken on the basis of the recommendations of the JPC and other committees.

What JPCs have been set up so far?

A few JPCs have earlier been set-up, having investigative powers:

- to examine matters relating to Allocation and Pricing of Telecom Licenses and Spectrum
- on Pesticide Residues in and Safety Standard for Soft Drinks, Fruit Juice and other Beverages
- on Stock Market Scam and Matters Relating thereto
- to enquire into irregularities in Securities and Banking Transactions
- to enquire into Bofors Contract
- to examine the Constitutional and Legal Position Relating to Office of Profit."

Indian parliamentary committees

Standing Committees

These are permanent committees constituted every year or periodically and work on a continuous basis.

A. Financial Committees

Public Accounts Committee (PAC)

- Examines the appropriation and finance accounts of the government.
- Ensures expenditure conforms to Parliament's decisions.

Estimates Committee

- Examines budget estimates to suggest economies in public expenditure.

Committee on Public Undertakings (COPU)

- Reviews the performance and working of public sector undertakings.

B. Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSCs)

- There are 24 DRSCs, each focusing on specific ministries or departments (*e.g.*, Health, Education, Defense).
- They examine demand for grants, bills, and policies of their respective ministries.

C. Committees to Inquire

Committee on Privileges

- Looks into breaches of parliamentary privileges.

Committee on Ethics

- Investigates cases of ethical misconduct by members.

D. Committees to Scrutinize and Control

Committee on Government Assurances

- Ensures implementation of promises made by ministers.

Committee on Subordinate Legislation

- Examines rules and regulations made by the executive under delegated powers.

Committee on Papers Laid on the Table

- Ensures papers presented in the house are authenticated and comply with rules.

Committee on Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

- Examines issues related to SC/ST welfare.

E. Housekeeping Committees

Business Advisory Committee

- Schedules legislative business for the house.

Rules Committee

- Frames and amends rules for parliamentary procedures.

Committee on Absence of Members

- Examines cases of members' absenteeism.

Ad hoc Committees

These are temporary committees constituted for a specific purpose and dissolved after the task is completed.

A. Inquiry Committees

- Investigate specific issues, such as the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) for scams or controversies.

B. Select and Joint Committees

- Examine specific bills in detail.

C. Conference Committees

- Resolve differences between Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on legislation.

Other Notable Committees

Petitions Committee

- Examines public petitions and grievances.

Privileges Committee

- Handles matters related to breaches of parliamentary privileges.

Committee on Empowerment of Women

- Focuses on issues affecting women's rights and empowerment.
- Committee on Food Management in Parliament House Complex Looks after food services for members.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. A Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) is set up by the Parliament for a special purpose, such as the detailed scrutiny of a _____ or a subject.

2. A JPC has members from both the _____ and _____, including representatives from the ruling party and the opposition.

3. The JPC is dissolved after its _____ ends or its task is completed.

4. To set up a JPC, one House of Parliament must pass a _____, and the other must agree to it.

5. The recommendations of a JPC have _____ value but are not binding on the government.

6. The Speaker has the final word in case of a dispute over _____ for evidence by the JPC.

7. A few JPCs with investigative powers have been set up to examine issues such as the allocation and pricing of _____ licenses and spectrum.

8. Standing Committees, such as the _____ Accounts Committee (PAC), are permanent committees that work on a continuous basis.

9. Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSCs) focus on specific _____ or departments, like Health, Education, and Defense.

10. Ad hoc Committees are _____ committees constituted for a specific purpose and dissolved after completing their task.

9. OpenAI unveils new o3 model

- OpenAI has introduced o3, its most advanced AI model to date, marking a significant evolution in artificial intelligence capabilities.
- Succeeding the o1 model, which emphasized deliberate reasoning, the o3 model is designed to deliver responses in a more logical, step-by-step manner.
- OpenAI CEO Sam Altman described o3 as a foundational milestone for the next phase of AI development, with the potential to handle highly complex tasks that require advanced reasoning skills.
- The o3 model surpasses o1 in several benchmarks, showcasing remarkable improvements in complex coding abilities, scientific problem-solving and advanced mathematics.
- It is reported to be three times more effective than o1 in tackling the ARC-AGI test, a rigorous benchmark assessing AI's ability to solve novel problems without relying on pre-existing knowledge.
- This capability highlights o3's strength in addressing challenging math and logic problems it encounters for the first time, demonstrating a leap in adaptability and intelligence.
- OpenAI has prioritized safety in launching the o3 model, beginning with a phase of public safety testing to ensure responsible deployment.
- This cautious approach underscores the company's commitment to aligning technological advancement with ethical considerations.
- Early benchmark results suggest that the o3 model could represent a pivotal step forward in AI, potentially transforming how complex tasks are approached across various fields.
- In summary, the o3 model offers significant advancements in reasoning, coding, and problem-solving capabilities compared to its predecessor.
- With its improved logical processing and success in overcoming challenges like the ARC-AGI test, o3 signals a new era for AI applications.
- As OpenAI proceeds with measured testing, the model holds promise for reshaping the AI landscape by addressing increasingly sophisticated and previously unattainable challenges.

What is o3 and how is it different from o1?

- o3 is a frontier AI model that has been developed to offer advanced reasoning and intelligence across a range of complex tasks.
- It has been announced alongside a smaller version, o3 Mini.
- The o3 model has been designed to solve some challenging problems in coding, general intelligence, and math.
- OpenAI has highlighted some notable benchmarks that show how o3 is capable of tackling reasoning of more complex problems, something that has never been done before by older models.
- While o1 scored a 48.9 per cent in SWE-bench verified, the o3 model achieved 71.7 per cent accuracy.

- The SWE-bench verified is a set of tests to assess the coding ability of a model.

- Similarly, when it comes to programming (Codeforces), o1 scored 1891, while o3 scored 2727, much beyond the predecessor.

- Also, o3 surpassed o1 in mathematical reasoning by securing 96.7 per cent on the AIME 2024, compared to 83.3 per cent scored by 01.

- Similarly, o3 showcased unparalleled performance in science benchmarks. Especially on GPQA Diamond, a test that has PhD-level questions, o3 scored 87.7 per cent accuracy, in contrast to o1's 78 per cent.

- On the other hand, the EpochAI Frontier Math benchmark is among the toughest mathematical benchmarks with problems that have never been published before. The o3 model scored 25.2 per cent in this test, while older AI models from across the industry have only managed to cross 2 per cent.

Is this the best reasoning model?

- Perhaps the most significant aspect of the o3 model is its scores in the ARC-AGI benchmark.

- ARC-AGI stands for Abstraction and Reasoning Corpus for Artificial Intelligence, and it was developed by French software engineer and AI researcher Francois Chollet.

- The test showcases an AI model's ability to learn new skills from limited examples.

- While traditional benchmarks test pre-trained knowledge or pattern recognition skills, the ARC-AGI has tasks that challenge models to learn from rules and transformations that it has never done before.

- This is usually a task that humans can manage naturally, something that AI has always struggled with.

- ARC-AGI is particularly tough as its tasks require direct reasoning skills, and models cannot rely on solutions previously memorised or templates.

- This pushes the model to adapt to entirely new challenges with each test.

- Each task as part of ARC-AGI is unique, as one may require the model to trace patterns, while others may require them to reason about numerical patterns. With its expansive tasks and diversity, ARC AGI is a reliable barometer to see if an AI model can think and learn like humans.

- On the other hand, the o3 Mini is an affordable alternative to the o3 model.

- According to OpenAI, the mini version is ideal for tasks that need higher accuracy amid resource constraints.

- The o3 mini brings adaptive thinking, allowing users to adjust reasoning efforts based on the complexity of a task.

- The model's low-effort reasoning offers speed and efficiency needed for simple tasks, and for complex tasks, it uses higher effort for accuracy.

- The high-effort mode matches the larger o3 model but at a significantly lower cost.

- According to OpenAI, the flexibility of the o3 Mini model makes it best suited for developers and researchers.

When will o3 be available?

- Both o3 and o3 mini are currently limited to researchers through OpenAI's safety testing program.

- Reportedly, the 03-mini model will be available towards the end of January 2025. The full o3 model will be available after the safety testing.

Open AI

- OpenAI is a leading artificial intelligence research and deployment company.
- It aims to ensure that artificial general intelligence (AGI) benefits all of humanity.
- OpenAI conducts cutting-edge research in AI, develops innovative technologies, and applies AI to solve pressing global challenges.

Aspects of OpenAI

- **Research:** OpenAI focuses on advancing the state of the art in machine learning, deep learning, and AI-related disciplines.
- This includes innovations in language models (*e.g.*, GPT), robotics, reinforcement learning, and more.

Products

- **ChatGPT:** An AI-powered conversational assistant.
- **DALL·E:** A model that generates images from textual descriptions.
- **Codex:** AI technology for programming assistance, integrated into GitHub Copilot.
- **Ethical AI:** OpenAI emphasizes AI safety, ethics, and alignment to ensure AI behaves in ways aligned with human values.
- **Collaborations:** OpenAI partners with organizations and governments worldwide to address challenges like climate change, healthcare, and education using AI.
- **Open Science:** Initially publishing research papers and sharing code to foster collaboration, OpenAI has recently adopted more measured approaches to balance transparency with safety considerations in releasing potentially powerful models.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. OpenAI's newest AI model, _____, is designed to offer advanced reasoning and intelligence for complex tasks.

2. The o3 model succeeds the _____ model, which focused on deliberate reasoning.

3. OpenAI CEO _____ described o3 as a foundational milestone for the next phase of AI development.

4. The o3 model is reported to be three times more effective than o1 in tackling the _____ test, which assesses AI's ability to solve novel problems.

5. In terms of coding ability, o3 scored _____ on SWE-bench verified, compared to o1's score of 48.9 percent.

6. On the AIME 2024 math reasoning benchmark, o3 achieved an accuracy of _____ percent, surpassing o1's score of 83.3 percent.

7. The o3 model scored _____ percent on the GPQA Diamond test, which includes PhD-level science questions.

8. The o3 model scored _____ percent on the EpochAI Frontier Math benchmark, a tough mathematical test with previously unpublished problems.

9. The _____ benchmark is a rigorous test that measures an AI model's ability to learn new skills from limited examples, challenging its reasoning capabilities.

10. The _____ version of the o3 model is an affordable alternative designed for tasks that require higher accuracy in resource-constrained environments.

10. Ghadar Party

- The Ghadar Party was a revolutionary organization founded by Indian immigrants in the early 20th century, primarily based in the United States and Canada.
- Its name, "Ghadar," means rebellion, symbolizing its primary goal of overthrowing British colonial rule in India through armed struggle.
- The party played a significant role in fostering revolutionary sentiments among Indians and contributing to the broader struggle for India's independence.

Formation and Ideology

- **Establishment:** The Ghadar Party was formed on November 1, 1913, in San Francisco, USA, under the leadership of Sohan Singh Bhakna, with prominent members like Lala Har Dayal, Tarak Nath Das, and others.
- **Ideology:** The party was secular and inclusive, appealing to Indians across caste, religion, and regional lines. Its ideology centered around:
  - Expelling British imperialists through armed rebellion.
  - Promoting unity among Indians for a common cause of freedom.

Publication of Ghadar Newspaper

- The party published the newspaper "Ghadar" in multiple languages, including Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, and others, to inspire revolution and raise awareness among Indians about colonial oppression.
- The paper was distributed globally, reaching Indians in Southeast Asia, Canada, and India, spreading revolutionary ideas.

Mobilizing the Indian Diaspora

- The Ghadar Party galvanized support among Indian immigrants, particularly Punjabi farmers and laborers in North America.
- They raised funds, recruited volunteers, and encouraged Indians abroad to return to India to participate in the fight for independence.

Role in the Komagata Maru Incident (1914)

- The Komagata Maru, a ship carrying Indian immigrants, was denied entry into Canada, leading to a confrontation with British authorities.
- The incident highlighted racial discrimination under colonial rule and fueled revolutionary fervor among Indians.

First World War Activities

- The Ghadarites believed the outbreak of World War I in 1914 presented an opportunity to revolt against the British, as they were preoccupied with the war.
- They planned an armed uprising in India, smuggling weapons and coordinating with Indian revolutionaries.
- The February 1915 Mutiny (unsuccessful) was part of their efforts, with leaders like Rash Behari Bose and Kartar Singh Sarabha playing critical roles.

Inspiring Future Movements

- The Ghadar Party's legacy inspired subsequent revolutionary groups like the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA).
- Leaders like Bhagat Singh admired Ghadar Party revolutionaries, particularly Kartar Singh Sarabha, who became a martyr at the young age of 19.

Challenges and Decline

- **British Crackdown:** The British intelligence network effectively dismantled Ghadar Party operations through arrests, surveillance, and suppression.
- **Internal Divisions:** Disagreements among leaders over strategies weakened the movement.
- **Changing Context:** Post-World War I, revolutionary strategies shifted, and the Ghadar Party's activities declined.

India's significant role in World War I

India played a significant role in World War I (1914-1918) despite not being an independent nation at the time, as it was part of the British Empire.

1. Military Contribution

- **Soldiers:** Over 1.3 million Indian soldiers and laborers were recruited to serve in various theaters of war, including Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.
- They fought alongside the British and Commonwealth forces. Indian troops participated in major battles, including the Battle of the Somme, Gallipoli Campaign, and the Mesopotamian Campaign.
- **Casualties:** Approximately 74,000 Indian soldiers lost their lives, and many more were wounded or went missing.
- **Role in the Middle East:** Indian soldiers played a pivotal role in campaigns in the Middle East, including the Mesopotamian Campaign (now Iraq), where they helped secure important territories.
- **African Campaigns:** Indian forces also fought in East Africa, contributing to the Allied efforts against the German forces in colonies like German East Africa (present-day Tanzania).

2. Economic Contribution

- India provided substantial financial resources to support the British war effort. India contributed around ₹1,000 million (approximately £50 million) in war loans, and its resources were crucial in maintaining the Allied war machine.
- Indian industries, such as textiles and chemicals, produced vital materials for the war, including uniforms, ammunition, and other war supplies.

3. Political Impact

- **Nationalist Movements:** India's involvement in World War I had significant political repercussions.
- The war galvanized Indian nationalism, as many in India believed that their sacrifices on behalf of the British Empire would lead to political concessions and greater autonomy.
- However, the post-war period saw increasing disillusionment with British promises, leading to stronger calls for independence.
- **Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms:** In response to demands from Indian leaders, the British government introduced the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms in 1919, which were intended to grant more self-governance to India.
- However, many Indians felt the reforms were insufficient, leading to protests and unrest.

- **Jallianwala Bagh Massacre:** The aftermath of the war saw heightened tension, culminating in the Jallianwala Bagh massacre (1919), where British troops killed hundreds of unarmed Indian protesters.
- This event fueled nationalist sentiments and was a turning point in India's struggle for independence.

4. Women's Role
- Indian women also contributed to the war effort by working in auxiliary roles, such as in nursing and munitions production.
- The Indian Red Cross Society was active in providing medical assistance to soldiers, and some women served as nurses in military hospitals both in India and abroad.

5. Impact on Indian Society
- The war exposed Indians to new ideas and experiences, leading to greater political awareness and a push for self-rule.
- Many Indians, especially soldiers and their families, returned with a sense of empowerment and discontent with British colonial rule.
- Post-war, India faced economic difficulties, with inflation and food shortages leading to unrest.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. The Ghadar Party was founded on _____ (date) in _____ (city), USA, under the leadership of Sohan Singh Bhakna.

2. The name "Ghadar" means _____, symbolizing the party's goal of _____ British colonial rule in India.

3. The Ghadar Party's newspaper, "Ghadar," was published in multiple languages, including _____, _____, and _____.

4. The Ghadar Party played a significant role in the _____ of 1914, where a ship carrying Indian immigrants was denied entry into Canada.

5. The Ghadar Party planned an armed uprising in India during _____ believing that the outbreak of World War I provided an opportunity to revolt against the British.

6. The Ghadar Party's leaders, like _____ and _____, played critical roles in the February 1915 Mutiny.

7. Over _____ million Indian soldiers and laborers were recruited to serve in various theaters of World War I, including _____ and _____.

8. India contributed approximately ₹_____ million (about £50 million) in war loans to support the British war effort during World War I.

9. The _____ Jallianwala Bagh massacre, in which British troops killed hundreds of unarmed Indian protesters, was a turning point in India's struggle for independence.

10. After World War I, the British government introduced the _____ Reforms in 1919 to grant more self-governance to India, but many Indians felt they were _____ (sufficient/insufficient).