

# MANTHAN

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# 1. Golden Globes 2025

- The 82<sup>nd</sup> Golden Globe Awards celebrated a diverse range of films and television, with standout wins across genres. French director Jacques Audiard's *Emilia Perez*, a surreal narco-musical about a Mexican drug lord's transformation into a woman, emerged as a major winner, claiming Best Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy, Best Non-English Language Film, Best Supporting Actress for Zoe Saldana, and Best Original Song. Saldana's win edged out co-star Selena Gomez.
- In comedy, Demi Moore made a remarkable comeback, winning Best Actress in a Comedy for her role in the satirical body horror *The Substance*, a film critiquing societal pressures on aging women. Reflecting on her journey, Moore highlighted how the bold script reignited her passion for acting. Sebastian Stan won Best Actor in a Comedy for *A Different Man*, addressing themes of disability and inclusion, while Kieran Culkin took home Best Supporting Actor for his role in *A Real Pain*, a quirky road trip comedy. *Wicked*, *Anora*, and *Challengers* remain key contenders, with *Challengers* also earning Best Original Score.
- In drama, Brady Corbet's post-Holocaust epic *The Brutalist* won Best Motion Picture - Drama, with Corbet securing Best Director and Adrien Brody taking Best Actor for his portrayal of a Hungarian Jewish architect.
- Television winners included the Japanese epic series *Shōgun*, which dominated with wins for Best Television Series (Drama) and acting awards for Hiroyuki Sanada, Tadanobu Asano, and Anna Sawai.
- The evening highlighted genre-defying narratives, bold performances, and a call for greater representation and inclusion, making the 82<sup>nd</sup> Golden Globes a landmark celebration of global talent.

## Golden Globe Awards

- The Golden Globe Awards are prestigious accolades presented annually by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA).
- They recognize excellence in both American and international film and television across various categories.
- Established in 1944, the Golden Globes are considered a significant precursor to the Academy Awards (Oscars) and the Primetime Emmy Awards.

## Categories:

- **Film:** Best Motion Picture (Drama, Musical, or Comedy), Best Actor/Actress, Best Director, etc.
- **Television:** Best Series (Drama, Musical, or Comedy), Best Actor/Actress in a Series, etc.
- **Dual Focus:** The awards uniquely honor both film and television, unlike the Oscars, which are film-specific, or the Emmys, which focus on television.
- **Timing:** The ceremony usually takes place in January, kicking off the award season in Hollywood.
- **Significance:** Winning a Golden Globe is often seen as an indicator of likely success at the Oscars.
- **Ceremony:** The event is known for its star-studded red carpet, casual atmosphere, and memorable speeches. It is often held at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California.

## Academy Awards (Oscars)

- The Academy Awards, popularly known as the Oscars, are annual awards presented by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) to recognize excellence in the film industry.
- The awards are among the most prestigious in the global entertainment industry.

## Categories

- **The Oscars feature numerous categories, with major ones including:**
  - Best Picture
  - Best Director
  - Best Actor
  - Best Actress
  - Best Supporting Actor
  - Best Supporting Actress
  - Best International Feature Film
  - Best Animated Feature
  - Best Original Score
  - Best Original Song
  - Best Visual Effects
  - Best Cinematography
- The Oscars were first held on May 16, 1929, at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel.
- The awards were originally a small, private dinner event with just 270 attendees.
- The statuette, officially called the Academy Award of Merit, is often referred to as the “Oscar.” Its design features a knight holding a sword, standing on a reel of film.

## Selection Process

- The nominees are selected by members of the AMPAS, divided into branches based on their professions (e.g., actors nominate actors, directors nominate directors).
- Winners are chosen by a vote from the entire Academy membership.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. The 82<sup>nd</sup> Golden Globe Awards saw Jacques Audiard’s film \_\_\_\_\_ win Best Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy.
2. Zoe Saldana won Best Supporting Actress at the Golden Globes for her role in \_\_\_\_\_, edging out co-star Selena Gomez.
3. Demi Moore won Best Actress in a Comedy for her performance in \_\_\_\_\_, a satirical body horror film.
4. Sebastian Stan won Best Actor in a Comedy for his role in \_\_\_\_\_, which addressed themes of disability and inclusion.
5. The Brutalist, a post-Holocaust epic directed by Brady Corbet, won the Golden Globe for Best Motion Picture - \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Hiroyuki Sanada, Tadanobu Asano, and Anna Sawai won acting awards for their performances in the Japanese epic series \_\_\_\_\_ at the Golden Globes.
7. The Golden Globe Awards are presented annually by the \_\_\_\_\_, recognizing excellence in film and television.
8. The Academy Awards, popularly known as the Oscars, are presented by the \_\_\_\_\_ to honor excellence in the film industry.

9. The statuette awarded at the Oscars, officially called the \_\_\_\_\_, depicts a knight holding a sword, standing on a reel of film.
10. The first Oscars ceremony was held on \_\_\_\_\_ at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel.

## 2. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

- The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) celebrated once in two years on 9<sup>th</sup> January is a significant event that honors the contributions of the Indian diaspora to their homeland.
- The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention was first established in 2003 under the government of then Prime Minister Late Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, as a platform to recognize and engage with the overseas Indian community.
- The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is the flagship event of the Ministry of External Affairs. It is held in different cities, to showcase the diversity and progress of different regions of India.
- Since 2015, it has evolved into a biennale event, with theme-based conferences held in the intervening years. This format allows for more focused discussions on specific areas of interest and provides opportunities for networking among the global Indian diaspora.

### 18<sup>th</sup> Pravasi Bharatiya Divas - 2025

- The 18<sup>th</sup> PBD Convention is scheduled for January 8-10, 2025, in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The theme for this year is the “Diaspora’s contribution to a Viksit Bharat” (Developed India).
- This event promises to be a landmark occasion, with several key features:

### Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

- - Joint inauguration by the External Affairs Minister, Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, and Chief Minister of Odisha.
- - A platform for Pravasi youth from Odisha to reconnect with their roots.

### Inauguration of the 18<sup>th</sup> PBD Convention

- Opening by the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, in the presence of the Chief Guest of the convention.
- Prime Minister will remotely flag-off the inaugural journey of the Pravasi Bharatiya Express, a special Tourist Train for the Indian diaspora, which will depart from the Nizamuddin Railway Station in Delhi and would travel to multiple destinations of touristic and religious importance in India for a period of three weeks.
- The Pravasi Bharatiya Express will be conducted under the Pravasi Teertha Darshan Yojana of the Ministry of External Affairs.

### Prime Minister will also inaugurate four exhibitions at the 18<sup>th</sup> PBD Convention as follows

- i. Vishwaroop Ram - The Universal Legacy of Ramayana: This exhibition would present the timeless epic of Ramayana through a curated juxtaposition of traditional and contemporary art forms.
- ii. Diaspora’s Contribution to Technology and Viksit Bharat. This exhibition would acknowledge the contributions of the Indian diaspora to the development of technology in the world.

- iii. Spread and Evolution of Indian diaspora in the world with special focus on Mandvi to Muscat. This exhibition will showcase rare documents of people who had migrated from Mandvi in Gujarat to Muscat in Oman.
- iv. Heritage and Culture of Odisha: The exhibition will showcase the rich heritage and cultural traditions of Odisha through its different art and craft forms and highlight its illustrious legacy.

## Valedictory Session

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- Closing remarks by the President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, along with the presentation of the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards.

- **Diaspora Youth Leadership:** Harnessing youth leadership in a globalized world.
- **Migrant Skills:** Stories of building bridges and breaking barriers.
- **Sustainable Development:** Contributions of the diaspora to green initiatives.
- **Women's Leadership:** Celebrating Nari Shakti and the influence of diaspora women.
- **Cultural Connections:** Stories of belonging and cultural dialogue.

## 17<sup>th</sup> Convention - 2023

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- The 17<sup>th</sup> PBD Convention, held from January 8-10, 2023, in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, focused on the theme "Diaspora: Reliable partners for India's progress in Amrit Kaal".
- This event saw the participation of distinguished guests, including the Presidents of Guyana and Suriname, underlining the global significance of the Indian diaspora.
- A highlight of the PBD is the presentation of the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA).
- This prestigious honor is conferred upon Non-Resident Indians, Persons of Indian Origin, or organizations established and run by them.
- The PBSA recognizes outstanding achievements in various fields and celebrates the accomplishments and commitments of NRIs and PIOs in sectors like education, science and innovation, trade and industry, arts and culture, social work, public service and philanthropy.
- These awards are presented by the President of India during the valedictory session.

## History & Significance

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- This bi-annual celebration, held on January 9<sup>th</sup>, commemorates the day in 1915 when Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Pravasi, returned to India from South Africa to lead the country's freedom struggle.

## Objectives and Impact

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The primary goals of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas are:

- To commemorate the contributions of the Indian diaspora to India's development
- To create a better understanding of India abroad
- To support India's causes and work for the welfare of local Indian communities worldwide
- To provide a platform for overseas Indians to engage with the government and people of their ancestral land.
  - These conventions have proven instrumental in fostering connections between India and its vast overseas community, enabling the sharing of experiences, knowledge, and skills across various fields.
  - Pravasi Bharatiya Divas stands as a testament to India's recognition of its global diaspora as a valuable asset.

- It serves not only as a celebration of shared heritage but also as a strategic platform for harnessing the potential of overseas Indians in India's journey towards becoming a developed nation.
- As India continues to strengthen its position on the world stage, the PBD will undoubtedly play a crucial role in fostering stronger ties with its global community and channeling their expertise towards national development.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated once every \_\_\_\_\_ years on 9<sup>th</sup> January to honor the contributions of the Indian diaspora.
2. The first Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention was established in \_\_\_\_\_ under the government of Prime Minister Late Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
3. Since \_\_\_\_\_, the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas has evolved into a biennale event with theme-based conferences held in the intervening years.
4. The 18<sup>th</sup> Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention in 2025 is scheduled to be held in \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The theme for the 18<sup>th</sup> Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention is "Diaspora's contribution to a \_\_\_\_\_ Bharat."
6. The Pravasi Bharatiya Express, a special tourist train for the Indian diaspora, will depart from \_\_\_\_\_ Railway Station in Delhi.
7. The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA) recognizes outstanding achievements in fields like education, science and innovation, trade and industry, arts and culture, and \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The 17<sup>th</sup> Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention, held in \_\_\_\_\_ in 2023, focused on the theme "Diaspora: Reliable partners for India's progress in Amrit Kaal."
9. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi to India from \_\_\_\_\_ on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1915.
10. One of the objectives of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is to support India's causes and work for the welfare of local \_\_\_\_\_ communities worldwide.

## 3. Gemini 2.0

- Google launched its second-generation Gemini AI model, stating that it could pave the way for new AI agents.
- The Gemini 2.0 model features advancements in multimodality with native image and audio output, introduces tools, and offers more functionalities.
- Describing the new model, Google Chief Executive Officer Sundar Pichai said, "If Gemini 1.0 was about organising and understanding information, Gemini 2.0 is about making it much more useful."
- In addition to the new model, Google introduced a feature called Deep Research.
- This mode uses advanced reasoning and long-context capabilities to function as a research assistant, exploring complex topics and compiling reports on the user's behalf.

## Gemini 2.0: Availability

- Google announced that Gemini 2.0 is being rolled out for developers and “trusted testers” and will soon be integrated into products starting with Gemini and Google Search.
- An experimental Gemini 2.0 Flash model is available to all users on the web version of Gemini AI, with app integration expected soon.
- The company is also testing the Gemini 2.0 model in Search’s AI Overviews for limited users.

## Gemini 2.0 Flash

- Gemini 2.0 Flash is the first publicly available model in the Gemini 2.0 series. Google described it as the workhorse of the series, offering low latency and enhanced performance. The model outperforms the flagship Gemini 1.5 Pro on key benchmarks.
- It supports multimodal inputs like images, video, and audio, along with multimodal outputs, including natively generated images, mixed text, and multilingual text-to-speech audio. Gemini 2.0 Flash can also utilise tools such as Google Search, user-defined functions, and execute code.
- Developers can access Gemini 2.0 Flash as an experimental model via the Gemini API in Google AI Studio and Vertex AI.

## AI agents with Gemini 2.0 Flash

- The Gemini 2.0 Flash model introduces multimodal reasoning, long-context understanding, and native tools, enabling agentic experiences. Google has showcased new prototypes for AI agents, including:
  - An update to Project Astra, previewed at the Google I/O conference.
  - Project Mariner, exploring future human-agent interactions.
  - Jules, an AI-powered coding assistant for developers.

## Gemini 2.0 in AI Overviews

- AI Overviews in Google Search, which provides AI-generated summaries of search topics, now incorporates Gemini 2.0.
- This integration enhances reasoning capabilities, allowing it to handle complex topics, advanced mathematics, multimodal queries, and coding.

## Deep Research

- Deep Research is a new AI mode running on the Gemini 1.5 model.
- It acts as a research assistant, exploring complex topics on behalf of users.
- Upon receiving a prompt, Deep Research creates a multi-step research plan requiring user approval.
- Users can edit the plan, after which the AI analyses information from the web.
- It refines its findings through iterative searches and generates a comprehensive report with links to original sources.
- The feature is rolling out to Gemini Advanced subscribers on the web version and will be available on the Gemini mobile app in early 2025.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. Google launched its second-generation AI model, named \_\_\_\_\_, which aims to pave the way for new AI agents.
2. The Gemini 2.0 model features advancements in \_\_\_\_\_, allowing native image and audio output, and introduces new tools and functionalities.



3. According to Google CEO Sundar Pichai, Gemini 2.0 is focused on making information much more \_\_\_\_\_ compared to its predecessor, Gemini 1.0.
4. Google introduced a feature called \_\_\_\_\_ in Gemini 2.0, which acts as a research assistant by exploring complex topics and compiling reports.
5. The Gemini 2.0 Flash model is described as the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Gemini 2.0 series, offering low latency and enhanced performance.
6. Gemini 2.0 Flash supports multimodal inputs like \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, along with multimodal outputs such as natively generated images and mixed text.
7. Developers can access Gemini 2.0 Flash as an experimental model through the \_\_\_\_\_ in Google AI Studio and Vertex AI.
8. The integration of Gemini 2.0 in \_\_\_\_\_ enhances reasoning capabilities, allowing it to handle complex topics, advanced mathematics, multimodal queries, and coding.
9. Gemini 2.0's new AI agents include Project \_\_\_\_\_, which was previewed at the Google I/O conference, and Project \_\_\_\_\_, exploring future human-agent interactions.
10. The feature Deep Research, which runs on the Gemini 1.5 model, creates a multi-step research plan that requires \_\_\_\_\_ before the AI proceeds with the research.

## 4. Amit Shah launches Bharatpol: how this portal aims to help probe transnational crimes

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the 'Bharatpol' portal which aims to streamline international cooperation for law investigating agencies.
- Bharatpol — broadcast hub for assistance and real-time action against transnational crimes via international police cooperation — was developed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).
- It will allow central and state agencies to easily connect with the Interpol and speed up their investigations.

### What is Bharatpol and why has the CBI developed it?

- The CBI, as National Central Bureau for Interpol (NCB-New Delhi) in India, connects all law enforcement agencies in India to law enforcement agencies in 195 other countries through Interpol.
- Currently, all central agencies and the police forces of various states and Union Territories coordinate with the CBI, Interpol liaison officers (ILOs), and unit officers concerned through letters, emails, and faxes, due to which they often face delays in their investigation.
- With Bharatpol, international police collaboration becomes more seamless.
- The decision to develop this portal was taken amid the rise in transnational crimes, including cyber-crime, financial crimes, online radicalisation, organised crimes, drug trafficking, and human trafficking. In such cases, real-time international assistance is needed for criminal investigations.

## What are the key features of Bharatpol portal?

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There are five key features:

- **Unified Platform:** This portal integrates the CBI as the Interpol (NCB-New Delhi) with all law enforcement authorities in India, down to Superintendents of Police (SPs) and Commissioners of Police (CPs).
- **Simplified Request Mechanism:** This portal allows front-line police officers to easily and promptly request international assistance from 195 Interpol member countries using standardised templates.
- **Rapid Information Dissemination:** This portal enables the CBI as the NCB to rapidly share criminal intelligence and inputs from 195 countries with all law enforcement agencies in India.
- **Increase utilisation of Interpol notices:** This portal will enable easy drafting of Red Corner Notice requests and other colour coded notices of Interpol. This will lead to effective tracking of crime, criminals and proceeds of crime globally.
- **Capacity Building and Training:** This portal also provides access to relevant documents, templates, and training resources, enhancing the capability of frontline officers to conduct investigations abroad and seek foreign assistance effectively through Interpol.

## What did Home Minister Amit Shah say at the launch?

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- Shah said it was time for Indian investigation agencies to use modern technology and techniques to nab fugitives. “We have to keep an eye on global challenges and update our internal systems.
- Bharatpol is a step in that direction...The new portal will allow central and state probe agencies to share and obtain information on their cases from the 195 member nations of the Interpol,” he said.

## What are the key modules of Bharatpol?

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- There are five key modules — Connect, INTERPOL Notices, References, Broadcast, and Resources.
- “Through Connect, all our law enforcement agencies will essentially function as an extension of Interpol’s NCB-New Delhi.
- The system will ensure quick, secure, and structured transmission of requests for Interpol Notices, enabling a scientific mechanism to swiftly locate criminals from India and across the globe, within India,” Shah said.
- Requests for assistance from the 195 member countries of INTERPOL will be available on the Broadcast module, while the Resources module will make it easy to exchange and manage documents and resources.

## INTERPOL

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- INTERPOL (International Criminal Police Organization) is an international organization that facilitates cooperation and collaboration among police forces across different countries.
- Its primary role is to assist in combating transnational crime, enhancing the exchange of criminal intelligence, and promoting global law enforcement cooperation.
- **Mission and Purpose:** INTERPOL’s mission is to help police forces around the world prevent and solve crimes that cross national boundaries, such as terrorism, human trafficking, organized crime, cybercrime, and drug trafficking.
- It provides a platform for sharing data and intelligence, issuing alerts (such as Red Notices), and coordinating international investigations.
- **Headquarters:** INTERPOL’s General Secretariat is located in Lyon, France, with regional offices around the world, including in Buenos Aires, Singapore, and Nairobi.

- **Structure and Membership:** INTERPOL has 195 member countries (as of 2024), making it one of the largest international organizations. Each member country has its own National Central Bureau (NCB), which acts as a liaison between INTERPOL and the country's law enforcement agencies.
- **Red Notices:** One of INTERPOL's most well-known tools is the Red Notice, a request to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition or similar legal action. While the Red Notice is not an international arrest warrant, it helps countries track fugitives globally.
- **Global Databases:** INTERPOL maintains a number of global databases related to crimes, criminals, missing persons, stolen property, and other criminal activities. These databases help law enforcement agencies track suspects, locate stolen goods, and coordinate across borders.
- **Criminal Investigations:** INTERPOL provides investigative support for complex, transnational cases. This could involve sharing intelligence, coordinating international operations, or deploying experts to assist local authorities.
- **Specialized Units:** INTERPOL has several specialized teams to combat various types of crimes, including Cybercrime, Terrorism, Organized Crime, Drug trafficking, and Environmental crime.
- **International Cooperation:** Although INTERPOL itself does not have direct law enforcement powers, it plays a crucial role in facilitating cooperation between police forces. It organizes training programs, conferences, and workshops to enhance global law enforcement practices.
- **Key Projects:** INTERPOL often leads global initiatives like Operation Lionfish (targeting maritime crimes), Operation Triggerfish (focused on online child exploitation), and Operation Pangea (fighting the illegal sale of pharmaceuticals online).

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. The Bharatpol portal was inaugurated by Union Home Minister \_\_\_\_\_ to streamline international cooperation for law enforcement agencies.
2. Bharatpol was developed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to assist in real-time action against \_\_\_\_\_ crimes through international police cooperation.
3. The CBI, as the National Central Bureau (NCB) for Interpol in India, connects law enforcement agencies in India to those in \_\_\_\_\_ other countries.
4. Bharatpol aims to address delays in criminal investigations caused by reliance on \_\_\_\_\_, emails, and faxes for communication with international law enforcement agencies.
5. One of the key features of Bharatpol is the \_\_\_\_\_ platform, which integrates the CBI with all law enforcement authorities in India, including Superintendents of Police and Commissioners of Police.
6. The \_\_\_\_\_ module of Bharatpol allows front-line police officers to request international assistance from 195 Interpol member countries using standardized templates.
7. The \_\_\_\_\_ module of Bharatpol helps the CBI quickly share criminal intelligence and inputs from 195 countries with law enforcement agencies in India.
8. Home Minister Amit Shah emphasized that Bharatpol is a step toward using \_\_\_\_\_ technology and techniques to catch fugitives and improve the efficiency of investigations.
9. The \_\_\_\_\_ module of Bharatpol ensures the quick, secure, and structured transmission of requests for Interpol Notices, aiding in the swift location of criminals.
10. INTERPOL, the International Criminal Police Organization, assists law enforcement in combating crimes like terrorism, \_\_\_\_\_, and cybercrime across national borders.

## 5. US Presidential Medal of Freedom, awarded to Messi, George Soros and Hillary Clinton

- US President Joe Biden recognised the contributions of 19 public figures in politics, entertainment, sports and more through a ceremony at the White House for awarding the Presidential Medal of Freedom.
- The honorees included some of the Democratic Party's "best-known leaders and boosters: Hillary Clinton, philanthropist and major Democratic donor George Soros, and Robert F. Kennedy, who was given the recognition posthumously."
- Others included Argentinian footballer Lionel Messi, anthropologist Jane Goodall and actor Denzel Washington.

### What is the US Presidential Medal of Freedom?

- The Presidential Medal of Freedom is the United States' highest civilian honour, often given in recognition of a body of work over a person's lifetime.
- A Congressional Research Service report from November 2024 says it was created by President Harry S. Truman (1945 to 1953) in 1945. Later re-named by President John F Kennedy in 1963, it allows the President to recognise "any person who has made an especially meritorious contribution to (1) the security or national interests of the United States, or (2) world peace, or (3) cultural or other significant public or private endeavors."
- The medal itself has a white star over a red pentagon, surrounded by five gold eagles. At its centre is a blue circle with 13 gold stars.

### Who gives out the Presidential Medal of Freedom?

- The award is broad in scope and the qualifications required to receive it. The CRS report says, "There is no formal procedure for nominating and selecting recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom."
- The President has wide latitude under Executive Order 11515 (March 13, 1970) to award the medal to 'any person recommended to the President for award of the Medal or any person selected by the President upon his own initiative.'"
- At times, members of the US Congress have sent letters of recommendation for the award.

### What is the basis for these choices?

- The report adds that the selections of the awardees often reflect the US President's political and personal interests.
- In Biden's case, his list has been interpreted as support for the political and cultural establishment of the country at present, something incoming President Donald Trump has often rallied against.
- Notably, apart from Democratic Party members and supporters, Biden also awarded Republican leader Mitt Romney, who contested and lost the 2012 presidential elections against Barack Obama. Romney has been critical of Trump in recent years.
- During Trump's first presidential term beginning in 2017, awardees included the late Supreme Court judge Antonin Scalia who was seen as a staunch conservative, longtime Republican senator Orrin Hatch and music legend Elvis Presley.

- Other notable recipients over the years are talk show host Oprah Winfrey, billionaire and former Microsoft CEO Bill Gates, civil rights activist Rosa Parks, and boxing legend Muhammad Ali.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. The Presidential Medal of Freedom is the United States' highest civilian honor, often awarded in recognition of a body of work over a person's \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The Presidential Medal of Freedom was created by President \_\_\_\_\_ in 1945 and was later re-named by President John F. Kennedy in 1963.
3. The award has been given to individuals who have made significant contributions in areas such as national security, world peace, culture, or other notable public or private endeavors. One of the recent recipients was Argentinian footballer \_\_\_\_\_, although he was unable to attend the ceremony.
4. According to a Congressional Research Service report, there is no formal procedure for nominating and selecting recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The President has broad discretion under \_\_\_\_\_ (Executive Order 11515) to award the medal to any person recommended or selected by the President.
5. In President Joe Biden's recent awards ceremony, notable recipients included Hillary Clinton, philanthropist George Soros, and Republican leader \_\_\_\_\_, who lost the 2012 presidential election against Barack Obama.

## 6. World Braille Day

- World Braille Day is observed annually on January 4, the birthday of Louis Braille, the man who invented a revolutionary system using which visually impaired persons could read and write.
- Braille is not a language.
- Rather it is a code comprising raised dots using which many languages can be written or read.
- For those with visual impairment, the system allows for reading and writing based purely on tactile cues.

### What does Braille look like?

- According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word "code" refers to "a system of words, letters, figures, or symbols used to represent other" This is essentially what braille is. Braille symbols represent letters, numbers, punctuation marks, or even whole words.
- These symbols are constructed within fixed units of space known as braille cells — a full braille cell comprises the space for six raised dots arranged parallelly in two columns of three.
- This allows for a total of 64 possible combinations of dots and empty spaces in a cell, meaning that one can denote as many as 64 unique symbols using braille.
- Of course, a lot more than 64 symbols are at play, if one considers all the languages in the world.
- This is why different languages and countries have their own braille codes. There are even some eight-dot versions of braille which allow for 255 possible symbols to be denoted.
- India, for instance, developed the Bharati Braille script in the 1950s to unify as many as 11 braille scripts in use for different languages in pre-Independence India.

## How is braille written?

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- Like any other script, braille can be written using paper and pencil/pen, printed, or written on a braille writer.
- The first requires the use of a slate and a stylus.
- A braille slate is a writing guide with a template of evenly spaced depressions for braille dots.
- A stylus is used to create indentations in the template and form braille characters.
- This leads to there being bulges on the paper on its reverse side, which forms the dots which can then be read via touch.
- A braillewriter is the typewriter-equivalent for writing braille. It has only six keys, a space bar, a line spacer, and a backspace.
- The six main keys are numbered to correspond with the six dots of a braille cell.
- The person typing pushes a combination of these six keys at the same time to produce a symbol in braille.
- With developments in technology, new portable devices have come up which allow users to read and write in braille using verbal or tactile cues, and produce hardcopies using braille-embossers (like a printer for braille).
- There are also specific keyboards which the visually impaired can use, which allow them to type using standard alphabets, and then translate this into braille for printed hard copies.

## How was braille invented?

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- The history of braille can be traced back to early 19<sup>th</sup> century France. A certain Charles Barbier, a former artillery captain who was interested in coding and writing systems, was at the heart of braille's early development.
- As the story goes, Barbier came up with a system of “night writing” so that soldiers need not turn on lamps to write letters or read messages at night, which could give away their position and lead to costly losses. Barbier's system was based on 12-dots whose combinations represented different phonetic sounds.
- Now, for human fingers, it is not easy to read all 12 dots at once, making this system rather tedious.
- Enter Louis Braille.
- Born in 1809 near Paris, Braille had gone blind at the age of only three after an unfortunate accident. Nonetheless, he excelled in multiple areas including music and academics.
- At the age of just 15, he figured out an adaptation of Barbier's “night writing”, which he changed to a six-dot system and initially adapted for musical notation.
- This system would go through multiple refinements until 1837, when Braille published a three-volume braille edition of a popular history textbook. Considered to be the first work in the system that would later be termed “braille”, the textbook's success propelled Braille's invention to global fame.
- Initially, braille was a one-to-one transliteration of the French alphabet but over time, various contractions and further refinements took place as braille began to be adapted to languages around the globe.
- The latest World Braille Usage (published in 2013), a compilation of braille codes for languages around the world, contains braille codes for more than 133 languages.



## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. World Braille Day is observed annually on \_\_\_\_\_, the birthday of Louis Braille, the man who invented the braille system.
2. Braille is not a \_\_\_\_\_; rather, it is a code that can be used to represent multiple languages.
3. A full braille cell consists of \_\_\_\_\_ raised dots arranged in two columns of three.
4. In a braille cell, there are a total of \_\_\_\_\_ possible combinations of raised dots and empty spaces.
5. Different languages and countries have their own braille \_\_\_\_\_ to represent symbols in their respective languages.
6. India developed the \_\_\_\_\_ Braille script in the 1950s to unify various braille scripts used across the country.
7. To write braille on paper, a person typically uses a \_\_\_\_\_ and a stylus to create indentations.
8. A braillewriter is similar to a \_\_\_\_\_ and uses six keys to produce braille symbols.
9. The original braille system was adapted from a system called \_\_\_\_\_, which was created by Charles Barbier for military purposes.
10. Louis Braille's first published work in braille was a \_\_\_\_\_ history textbook, which helped the system gain global recognition.

## 7. China to build world's largest hydropower dam in Tibet

- China has approved the construction of the world's largest hydropower dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo River in Tibet, a project that could generate three times more energy than the current largest hydropower plant, the Three Gorges Dam.
- While Chinese state media has promoted the development as a "safe project" that prioritizes ecological protection, local prosperity, and Beijing's climate neutrality goals, concerns about its impact on communities and the environment are rising.
- The dam, first announced in 2020, will be located in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo River, a region rich in biodiversity.
- Activists fear that the dam will displace local Tibetan communities, alter natural landscapes, and disrupt ecosystems on the Tibetan Plateau, which is already home to several Chinese dams.
- Human rights groups also highlight China's controversial actions in Tibet, where it has faced accusations of exploiting land and suppressing local populations.
- Protests against similar hydropower projects, such as the Gangtuo dam, have led to arrests, beatings, and violence against Tibetans.
- Chinese authorities insist that the new dam will not have significant environmental consequences, though they have not clarified how many people it might displace.
- For context, the Three Gorges Dam required the resettlement of 1.4 million people.

- The Yarlung Tsangpo dam is expected to involve the construction of at least four 20 km-long tunnels through the Namcha Barwa mountain, a project that will significantly divert the river's flow.
- Experts and officials in neighboring countries, particularly India and Bangladesh, have raised alarms about the potential geopolitical and environmental consequences of China controlling the river, which flows into India's Arunachal Pradesh and Assam states, as well as Bangladesh.
- A 2020 report from the Lowy Institute suggested that China's control over rivers originating in Tibet gives it a "chokehold" on India's economy.
- Following China's announcement of the dam, India reportedly began exploring plans for its own large hydropower project to mitigate the potential adverse impacts from the Chinese dam.
- The project also faces engineering challenges due to the region's earthquake-prone tectonic plates and steep topography, which could increase the risk of landslides and mud-rock flows.
- Despite these risks, the dam is expected to cost up to \$127 billion, making it China's most ambitious hydropower project to date.

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## Yarlung Tsangpo River

- The Yarlung Tsangpo River is a major river that flows through the Tibet Autonomous Region of China and eventually becomes the Brahmaputra River as it enters India and Bangladesh.
- The Yarlung Tsangpo originates from the Tibetan Plateau near the Mount Kailash region in southwestern Tibet.
- It flows eastward through Tibet, passing through the Yarlung Tsangpo Grand Canyon, which is one of the deepest and longest canyons in the world, even deeper than the Grand Canyon of the United States.
- After entering India, it is known as the Brahmaputra River, flowing through the northeastern states of India, and later through Bangladesh, where it is joined by several other tributaries before emptying into the Bay of Bengal.

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## Significance

- The Yarlung Tsangpo is vital for the people of the Tibetan Plateau and the surrounding regions. It provides water for agriculture, sustains biodiversity, and supports the livelihoods of millions of people living in its basin.
- It is often considered the lifeline of Tibet due to its role in the region's agriculture and ecology.
- The river's basin also holds ecological and spiritual significance for local communities, particularly Tibetan Buddhists.

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## The Yarlung Tsangpo Grand Canyon

- The Yarlung Tsangpo Grand Canyon is located in the Tibet Autonomous Region and stretches for over 500 kilometers.
- The canyon is sometimes called the "Grand Canyon of the East" and is renowned for its breathtaking views, steep cliffs, and significant biodiversity.

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## The River and Hydropower

- The Yarlung Tsangpo has become a subject of interest in terms of hydropower development.
- China has planned a number of large dams along the river, including the controversial Zangmu Dam.
- These projects have sparked concerns in neighboring countries, particularly India and Bangladesh, about water security, ecological impacts, and the potential for downstream flooding.



## The Brahmaputra River (Downstream)

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- Once the Yarlung Tsangpo crosses into India, it enters the northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, and further downstream, it flows into Bangladesh, where it is known as the Jamuna River.
- The Brahmaputra has the world's largest river basin and is a critical water source for the people living in its basin.

## Environmental and Political Issues

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- **Water-sharing disputes:** Since the Yarlung Tsangpo flows through sensitive political regions, its waters are a source of contention. The construction of dams and control over the river's flow by China has led to concerns in India and Bangladesh regarding downstream water availability.
- **Flooding and erosion:** The Brahmaputra and its tributaries, while vital for agriculture and livelihoods, are also prone to seasonal flooding, which causes significant loss of life and property in India and Bangladesh.

## Exploration and Adventure

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- The Yarlung Tsangpo is also known for its extreme and challenging environment.
- The Yarlung Tsangpo River Gorge is a popular location for river-rafting expeditions, although it is considered one of the most dangerous places for such activities.

## Cultural Significance

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- The river has deep cultural significance for Tibetans. The Yarlung Tsangpo Valley is often referred to as the "cradle of Tibetan civilization," as the region's earliest kings are believed to have come from this area.

## Recent Developments

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- With increasing interest in hydropower and water resources, the Yarlung Tsangpo has become a point of geopolitical tension, especially with the planned Upper Brahmaputra Project by China.
- The river's potential to serve as a strategic resource for China has led to concerns in India about water security, particularly with China's growing influence over the region's river systems.

## Three Gorges Dam

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- The Three Gorges Dam is a large hydropower project located on the Yangtze River (Chang Jiang) in China. It is one of the most ambitious and controversial infrastructure projects in the world.
  - **Location:** Yiling District, Hubei Province, China, near the town of Sandouping.
  - **Construction Period:** Began in 1994 and completed in 2012, though it became fully operational in 2015.

### Size:

- The dam is about 2,335 meters (7,660 feet) long.
- It stands 185 meters (607 feet) high, making it one of the tallest dams in the world.
- **Reservoir:** The Three Gorges Reservoir, behind the dam, is one of the largest in the world, stretching over 600 kilometers (370 miles) and covering an area of about 1,084 square kilometers (419 square miles).

### Purpose

- **Hydroelectric Power Generation:** It has a total installed capacity of 22,500 megawatts (MW), making it the largest power station in the world by installed capacity. The dam generates vast amounts of electricity, supplying power to much of China's eastern regions.

- **Flood Control:** It helps manage the seasonal flooding of the Yangtze River, which has historically been a significant issue. The dam is designed to hold back floodwaters and regulate the flow of the river.
- **Navigation:** The dam facilitates improved river navigation, allowing large ships to travel farther upstream into the interior of China, boosting trade and transport along the Yangtze.

### Environmental and Social Impact

- **Displacement:** Over 1.2 million people were relocated to make way for the dam's construction, and thousands of villages, towns, and archaeological sites were submerged in the creation of the reservoir.
- **Ecological Impact:** The dam has caused significant changes to the local ecosystem, including reduced fish populations and altered sediment flow downstream. The Yangtze River dolphin, for example, is believed to have been driven to extinction by the dam's construction.
- **Sedimentation:** The dam has trapped large amounts of sediment that would normally flow downstream, which has affected agriculture and biodiversity along the river.

### Benefits

- **Energy:** It provides a substantial portion of China's electricity needs, reducing reliance on coal and helping to cut down on air pollution.
- **Flood Control:** By regulating water levels, it has minimized the severity of flooding, especially during the monsoon season.
- **Economic Growth:** The improved navigation and electricity supply have spurred industrial development in the surrounding regions.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. The Yarlung Tsangpo River, which originates in the Tibetan Plateau near the \_\_\_\_\_ region, eventually becomes the Brahmaputra River as it flows into India and Bangladesh.
2. The world's largest hydropower dam, approved for construction on the Yarlung Tsangpo River in Tibet, is expected to generate \_\_\_\_\_ times more energy than the current largest hydropower plant, the Three Gorges Dam.
3. The Yarlung Tsangpo River flows through the \_\_\_\_\_ Grand Canyon, which is one of the deepest and longest canyons in the world.
4. The construction of the new hydropower dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo River will involve the construction of at least \_\_\_\_\_ 20 km-long tunnels through the Namcha Barwa mountain.
5. The Three Gorges Dam, located on the Yangtze River in China, has a total installed capacity of \_\_\_\_\_ megawatts (MW), making it the largest power station in the world by installed capacity.
6. The Yarlung Tsangpo River is vital for \_\_\_\_\_, providing water for agriculture, sustaining biodiversity, and supporting the livelihoods of millions of people living in its basin.
7. The controversial construction of dams on the Yarlung Tsangpo River has raised concerns about \_\_\_\_\_ in neighboring countries, particularly India and Bangladesh.
8. The Three Gorges Dam was constructed to help with \_\_\_\_\_ of the Yangtze River, which has historically been prone to seasonal flooding.
9. China's new dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo River could cause \_\_\_\_\_ and ecological disruptions in the Tibetan Plateau, which is already home to several Chinese dams.
10. The Three Gorges Dam required the resettlement of \_\_\_\_\_ people, leading to significant social and economic impact.

## 8. Canada's RCIC scheme

- Over the past year, changes in immigration and study visa rules have made it harder to secure Permanent Residency (PR) in Canada. PR remains the primary goal for the majority of students from India, particularly those from Punjab.
- Recently, Canada announced that the Post-Graduate Work Permits (PGWPs) of nearly 7.66 lakh international students are set to expire by the end of next year.
- Many fear they would have to leave the country if they can't secure PR before their permits expire. However, Canada has introduced a new programme that offers fresh opportunities for such students to settle in the country.
- This initiative, known as the Rural Community Immigration Class (RCIC), provides a pathway for foreign nationals, including students, to apply for PR if they commit to living and working in designated rural communities.

### What is the Rural Community Immigration Class (RCIC)?

- The Rural Community Immigration Class is a new programme launched by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) in December 2024.
- It aims to address labour shortages and promote development in smaller rural communities by attracting individuals willing to settle long-term in these areas.
- For students whose PGWPs are nearing expiration, and who may be struggling to meet the Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS) score for PR or secure high-paying jobs, this programme offers a valuable opportunity.

### Where are these communities located, and why has Canada opened PR opportunities here?

- These communities are primarily located outside Canada's major cities and regions.
- They are smaller towns situated in rural areas near larger regions like Ontario, Vancouver, and others.
- Canada launched this initiative to boost the development of these underrepresented areas by addressing labour shortages, promoting population and economic growth.

### Who is eligible for applying to the Rural Community Immigration Class?

- According to IRCC, eligibility for this programme includes:
- **Education Level:** Applicants can include those with 10+2, graduation, or secondary school qualifications.
- **Studies:** Students who have completed at least 18 months of study in one of the designated communities are eligible to apply for PR directly. Those who studied outside these communities can also apply but must meet additional conditions.
- **Job Offer:** Applicants need a job offer letter from a registered or designated employer in the community. This job offer can be in any category, including non-skilled roles. The offer must be submitted to the community, which will then issue a certificate supporting the PR application.
- **Work Experience:** Relevant work experience is typically required, though this condition may be waived for international graduates who meet certain criteria.
- **Language Proficiency:** Applicants must meet the Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) requirements based on the job's NOC TEER (National Occupational Classification Training, Education, Experience, and Responsibilities) level:

- TEER 0-1: CLB 6
- TEER 2-3: CLB 5
- TEER 4-5: CLB 4
- **Financial Proof:** Applicants must demonstrate they have at least half of the low-income threshold for rural areas (as determined by Statistics Canada) to sustain themselves for one year.
- **Intent to Reside:** Candidates must provide genuine proof of their intention to live in the designated rural community.

### What should applicants keep in mind?

- Research participating communities and their designated employers thoroughly. Act quickly, as Post-Graduate Work Permits (PGWPs) are time-sensitive and ensure all documentation, especially proof of intent to reside, is accurate and complete.

### What are the specific benefits of this programme for international students?

- Rural areas have less competition than larger cities, increasing the chances of securing a PR pathway. Designated employers in these communities often assist with the PR process, easing the application burden, said experts.

### Why is this programme significant for Indian students?

- Indian students constitute the largest share of international students in Canada, accounting for nearly 40%. Many face challenges transitioning to PR due to increased competition and stricter requirements. Several have even staged protests in Canada over these issues.
- Experts suggest that students aspiring to settle in Canada should explore opportunities in rural areas through this programme rather than focusing solely on larger cities.

### Problems in Canada

- **Housing Crisis:** Canada is experiencing a severe housing affordability crisis, especially in major cities like Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal.
- The rising cost of housing, fueled by high demand and low supply, has made homeownership unattainable for many, particularly younger people and low-income families.
- Rent prices have also skyrocketed, further exacerbating the problem.
- **Wildfires and Climate Change:** In 2023 and 2024, wildfires have caused devastating impacts in various parts of Canada, particularly in the western provinces like British Columbia and Alberta.
- These fires have led to evacuations, destruction of homes, and poor air quality, posing significant health risks. Climate change is contributing to the increasing frequency and intensity of these wildfires.
- **Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation:** There remains a longstanding issue related to the rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada.
- The government has been under pressure to address the historical injustices, such as residential schools, land disputes, and systemic discrimination.
- Efforts toward reconciliation and improving living conditions for Indigenous communities are ongoing, but challenges persist in fully addressing these concerns.
- **Healthcare System Strain:** Canada's public healthcare system, though highly regarded, is facing strain due to an aging population, workforce shortages, and long wait times for certain medical services.
- Hospitals in some provinces are overwhelmed, and there is a growing concern over the sustainability and efficiency of the healthcare model.

- **Inflation and Economic Inequality:** Rising inflation, particularly in food and energy prices, is putting a strain on Canadian families.
- The cost of living has increased significantly, while wages have not kept pace, leading to concerns about growing economic inequality and financial hardship for many Canadians.
- **Immigration and Integration Challenges:** While Canada has a relatively open immigration policy, the country is facing challenges related to integrating a growing number of immigrants.
- Issues such as housing, employment, and social integration remain key concerns, as well as the rising tension around immigration policy debates.
- **Political Polarization and Social Unrest:** Like many countries, Canada is experiencing political polarization, with divisions surfacing over issues such as climate policy, Indigenous rights, and immigration.
- This polarization has been reflected in protests and demonstrations, particularly in response to government policies on carbon taxes, lockdowns, and other contentious matters.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. Over the past year, changes in immigration and study visa rules have made it harder to secure \_\_\_\_\_ in Canada.
2. Canada recently announced that nearly \_\_\_\_\_ international students' Post-Graduate Work Permits (PGWPs) are set to expire by the end of next year.
3. The new programme introduced by Canada, which provides opportunities for students to settle in the country, is known as the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The Rural Community Immigration Class (RCIC) was launched by \_\_\_\_\_ in December 2024.
5. The RCIC aims to address labour shortages and promote development in \_\_\_\_\_ communities by attracting individuals willing to settle long-term.
6. Eligible applicants for the RCIC programme need to have completed at least \_\_\_\_\_ months of study in one of the designated rural communities.
7. To apply for PR through the RCIC, applicants must provide a job offer letter from a registered or \_\_\_\_\_ employer in the designated community.
8. Applicants must meet the Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) requirements based on the job's \_\_\_\_\_ level.
9. According to the RCIC, applicants must demonstrate they have at least \_\_\_\_\_ of the low-income threshold for rural areas to sustain themselves for one year.
10. Indian students constitute nearly \_\_\_\_\_% of the international student population in Canada.

## 9. Permanent Settlement in 1793

- The East India Company finally introduced the Permanent Settlement in 1793.
- By the terms of the settlement, the rajas and taluqdars were recognized as zamindars.
- They were asked to collect rent from the peasants and pay revenue to the Company.
- The amount to be paid was fixed permanently, that is, it was not to be increased ever in future.

- It was felt that this would ensure a regular flow of revenue into the Company's coffers and at the same time encourage the zamindars to invest in improving the land.
- Since the revenue demand of the state would not be increased, the zamindar would benefit from increased production from the land.

### The problem

- The Permanent Settlement, however, created problems. Company officials soon discovered that the zamindars were in fact not investing in the improvement of land. The revenue that had been fixed was so high that the zamindars found it difficult to pay. Anyone who failed to pay the revenue lost his zamindari. Numerous zamindaris were sold off at auctions organised by the Company.
- By the first decade of the nineteenth century, the situation changed. The prices in the market rose and cultivation slowly expanded. This meant an increase in the income of the zamindars but no gain for the Company since it could not increase a revenue demand that had been fixed permanently. Even then the zamindars did not have an interest in improving the land. Some had lost their lands in the earlier years of the settlement; others now saw the possibility of earning without the trouble and risk of investment. As long as the zamindars could give out the land to tenants and get rent, they were not interested in improving the land.
- On the other hand, in the villages, the cultivator found the system extremely oppressive. The rent he paid to the zamindar was high and his right on the land was insecure. To pay the rent he had to often take a loan from the moneylender, and when he failed to pay the rent, he was evicted from the land he had cultivated for generations.

### A new system is devised

- By the early nineteenth century, many of the Company officials were convinced that the system of revenue had to be changed again.
- In the North Western Provinces of the Bengal Presidency (most of this area is now in Uttar Pradesh), an Englishman called Holt Mackenzie devised the new system which came into effect in 1822.
- He felt that the village was an important social institution in north Indian society and needed to be preserved.
- Under his directions, collectors went from village to village, inspecting the land, measuring the fields, and recording the customs and rights of different groups.
- The estimated revenue of each plot within a village was added up to calculate the revenue that each village (mahal) had to pay. This demand was to be revised periodically, not permanently fixed.
- The charge of collecting the revenue and paying it to the Company was given to the village headman, rather than the zamindar. This system came to be known as the mahalwari settlement.

### The Munro system

- In the British territories in the South, there was a similar move away from the idea of Permanent Settlement.
- The new system that was devised came to be known as the ryotwar (or ryotwari).
- It was tried on a small scale by Captain Alexander Read in some of the areas that were taken over by the Company after the wars with Tipu Sultan.
- Subsequently developed by Thomas Munro, this system was gradually extended all over south India.
- Read and Munro felt that in the south there were no traditional zamindars.
- The settlement, they argued, had to be made directly with the cultivators (ryots) who had tilled the land for generations.



- Their fields had to be carefully and separately surveyed before the revenue assessment was made.
- Munro thought that the British should act as paternal father figures protecting the ryots under their charge. All was not well
- Within a few years after the new systems were imposed, it was clear that all was not well with them.
- Driven by the desire to increase the income from land, revenue officials fixed too high a revenue demand.
- Peasants were unable to pay, ryots fled the countryside, and villages became deserted in many regions. Optimistic officials had imagined that the new systems would transform the peasants into rich enterprising farmers. But this did not happen.

## Thomas Munro

- Thomas Munro (1761-1827) was a prominent British colonial administrator and the first British Governor of Madras (now Chennai) under the British East India Company.
- His tenure in India was marked by significant contributions to administrative reforms and policies that shaped the British colonial administration in southern India.

### 1. Career and Early Life:

- **Born in Scotland:** Munro was born in 1761 in Scotland, and he joined the British East India Company at the age of 18. He was initially involved in military service but soon moved into administrative roles in India.
- **East India Company:** He entered the service of the British East India Company and began working in various administrative capacities.

### 2. Role in Madras Presidency:

- **Governor of Madras:** He served as the Governor of Madras from 1820 to 1827. During this time, he focused on reforms in land revenue administration, taxation, and local governance.
- **Land Revenue System:** Munro is particularly known for his contributions to the land revenue system. He introduced the “Ryotwari” system in southern India, which directly taxed the landholders (or peasants) rather than the zamindars (landowners). This system replaced the previous zamindari system and was considered more effective in collecting revenue while ensuring direct accountability.

### 3. Administrative Reforms:

- Munro was instrumental in the introduction of policies aimed at improving agricultural productivity and revenue collection in the Madras Presidency.
- He also pushed for reforms that provided a more organized and centralized system of governance, focusing on efficiency and direct control over resources.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. The East India Company introduced the \_\_\_\_\_ in 1793, which was intended to fix the land revenue permanently.
2. Under the Permanent Settlement, \_\_\_\_\_ and taluqdars were recognized as zamindars and tasked with collecting rent from the peasants.
3. The revenue demand under the Permanent Settlement was fixed \_\_\_\_\_, meaning it could not be increased in the future.

4. The Permanent Settlement did not encourage zamindars to invest in improving the land because the revenue demand was \_\_\_\_\_ and could not be increased.
5. In the North Western Provinces, the new system introduced by Holt Mackenzie in 1822 was known as the \_\_\_\_\_ settlement.
6. The \_\_\_\_\_ system, developed by Thomas Munro, involved direct assessment of land revenue with the cultivators or ryots.
7. The \_\_\_\_\_ system, introduced in South India by Thomas Munro, was based on the idea that the British should directly interact with the cultivators instead of relying on zamindars.
8. Holt Mackenzie believed that the \_\_\_\_\_ was an important social institution in North India and needed to be preserved.
9. 9. Thomas Munro thought that the British should act as \_\_\_\_\_ figures, protecting the ryots under their charge.
10. 10. Thomas Munro's tenure as the Governor of \_\_\_\_\_ lasted from 1820 to 1827, where he implemented significant administrative reforms.

## 10. Why the sex ratio in Haryana dropped to an eight-year low in 2024

- After peaking at 923 in 2019, the sex ratio at birth in Haryana dropped to 910 in 2024, an eight-year low.
- The numbers have worried activists and members of the civil society in Haryana, although authorities have termed the latest figures as a “slight fluctuation”.
- The sex ratio is the measure of the number of females per 1,000 males in a given population.
- It serves as a crucial yardstick to measure gender equality, and directly mirrors the status and well-being of women in a society.
- According to the National Health and Family Survey-5 (NFHS-5), which was published in 2021, the overall sex ratio at birth in India was 929.

### A setback for Haryana

- Of the 516,402 children born in Haryana in 2024, 270,354 (52.35%) were boys, while 246,048 (47.64%) were girls, giving a sex ratio of 910 girls per 1,000 boys born.
- For a state which over the past decade has made significant improvements in this metric, this is a setback.
- In 2014, the sex ratio in Haryana was just 871.
- This triggered a massive nationwide outcry, and set off a concerted effort by civil society organisations, the state government, and the Centre to improve the situation.
- In January 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched his signature ‘Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao’ campaign at Panipat.
- The efforts of the government and the civil society bore fruit, with the sex ratio at birth in Haryana climbing steadily after 2014. It touched 900 in 2016, and peaked at 923 in 2019.



- Since then, however, the sex ratio has once again seen a downward trajectory overall, with the biggest dip coming in 2024 when it fell from 916 (in 2023) to 910.
- The setback comes at a time when women from the state are excelling in sports, including at international platforms, as well as in academics.

### Loosening enforcement

- Between 2014 and 2019, strict enforcement of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PNDT) Act and a targeted awareness campaign helped reduce pre-natal sex selection and female foeticide in Haryana, where social attitudes had long favored boys over girls.
- However, activists argue that more needs to be done as enforcement has weakened in recent years. Sunil Jaglan, founder of the ‘Selfie With Daughter’ campaign, highlights that wealthy families still access sex determination and selective abortion services, especially in border areas of neighboring states.
- Despite over 1,200 FIRs registered under the PNDT Act in the past decade, illegal practices persist.
- Additionally, there’s a rising trend of families opting for “only one boy” due to declining land holdings and economic pressures. Shakuntala Jakhar of AIDWA stresses the need for societal and governmental efforts to change attitudes, reduce dowry-related expenses, and discourage viewing girl children as a financial burden.

### Government’s perspective

- State authorities, however, term the latest dip as a “slight fluctuation”, and point to the fact that the state’s sex ratio has improved significantly over the last 10 years.
- “The state’s gender ratio improved from 871 in 2014 to 916 in 2023,” Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini told.
- State officials emphasised that more than 4,000 people have been arrested, including doctors, quacks, and touts, in 1,200-plus cases filed under the PNDT Act.
- They said that the government has worked relentlessly to ensure that the girl child is not seen as a burden, including providing a one-time sum of Rs. 21,000 at the birth of a baby girl, and opening bank accounts for girls through the Sukanya Samriddhi Scheme.
- They also spoke about work that has gone into reducing dropout rates of girls and increasing secondary education enrolment — all factors which are known to in the long term positively impact sex ratio, and the status of women in general
- The officials said that the skewed sex ratio in Haryana is linked to the mindset of people, and that the government is making efforts to change the same.

### 2011 Census

- As of the latest available data from the 2011 Census and estimates from various sources, the gender ratio in India is approximately:  
**940 females for every 1,000 males (as per the 2011 Census).**
- This ratio is an important demographic indicator, reflecting the balance between males and females in the population.
- However, the gender ratio can vary across different states and regions, with some areas having a higher or lower ratio.
- The sex ratio has been slowly improving over the years, but challenges related to female mortality, gender-based violence, and societal biases still persist in certain regions.
- The child sex ratio (for children aged 0-6 years) was 919 girls for every 1,000 boys in 2011, which highlights the ongoing concern about gender imbalances.

- The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) and more recent estimates from government bodies like the Registrar General of India provide updated figures, but the overall trend of a slightly skewed gender ratio remains a concern in various parts of the country.
- India's government and civil society organizations continue to address gender imbalances through initiatives focused on improving the status of women, promoting gender equality, and tackling issues such as child marriage and female infanticide.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. The sex ratio at birth in Haryana dropped to \_\_\_\_\_ in 2024, an eight-year low.
2. According to the National Health and Family Survey-5 (NFHS-5), which was published in 2021, the overall sex ratio at birth in India was \_\_\_\_\_.
3. In 2014, the sex ratio in Haryana was just \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' campaign was launched by Prime Minister \_\_\_\_\_ in January 2015.
5. The sex ratio at birth in Haryana peaked at \_\_\_\_\_ in 2019.
6. Between 2014 and 2019, the strict enforcement of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PNDT) Act helped reduce pre-natal sex selection and \_\_\_\_\_ in Haryana.
7. In 2024, \_\_\_\_\_ percent of the 516,402 children born in Haryana were boys.
8. Haryana's gender ratio improved from \_\_\_\_\_ in 2014 to 916 in 2023.
9. Over the past decade, more than \_\_\_\_\_ FIRs have been registered under the PNDT Act in Haryana.
10. The government provides a one-time sum of Rs. \_\_\_\_\_ at the birth of a baby girl as part of its efforts to improve the status of girls in Haryana.