

# MANTHAN

**NOVEMBER 2024 : WEEK-1**

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# 1. Maha Kumbh Mela 2025

- In a world marked by the hustle of modernity, few events hold the power to bring millions together in pursuit of something greater than themselves.
- The Maha Kumbh Mela, a sacred pilgrimage that is celebrated four times over a course of 12 years, stands as a unique embodiment of such power.
- Kumbh Mela, the world's largest peaceful gathering, draws millions of pilgrims who bathe in sacred rivers seeking to purify themselves from sins and attain spiritual liberation.
- As pilgrims prepare for their journey to Prayagraj from January 13 to February 26, they will not only engage in a series of spiritual rituals but also embark on an odyssey that transcends physical, cultural, and even spiritual boundaries.
- The Maha Kumbh Mela is deeply embedded in Hindu mythology and represents one of the most significant gatherings of faith in the world.
- This sacred event rotates between four locations in India-Haridwar, Ujjain, Nashik, and Prayagraj- each situated by a holy river, from the Ganges to the Shipra, the Godavari, and the confluence of the Ganges, Yamuna, and the mythical Sarasvati in Prayagraj.
- The timing of each Kumbh Mela is determined by the astrological positions of the Sun, Moon, and Jupiter, believed to signal an auspicious period for spiritual cleansing and self-enlightenment.
- Rooted in the rich soils of Indian mythology and culture, the Maha Kumbh Mela is a profound representation of humanity's timeless quest for inner peace, self-realization, and spiritual unity.
- The Kumbh Mela is an event that intrinsically encapsulates the science of astronomy, astrology, spirituality, ritualistic traditions, and socio-cultural customs and practices, making it extremely rich in knowledge.
- This event is celebrated by a broad spectrum of pilgrims from the Hindu faith. Participants include ascetics, such as Sadhus and Naga Sadhus, who practice intense spiritual discipline, hermits who emerge from seclusion to join the Mela, seekers of spiritual wisdom, and everyday practitioners of Hinduism.
- This vast gathering embodies a unique convergence of faith, wisdom, and cultural heritage.

## The Significance of Sacred Rituals

- The Maha Kumbh Mela is a vibrant amalgamation of rituals, with the sacred bathing ceremony at its heart.
- At the confluence of the Ganges, Yamuna, and the mythical Sarasvati rivers, known as Triveni Sangam, millions of devotees gather to perform this deeply significant ritual.
- The act of immersing in these holy waters is believed to purify one of sins, liberate both individuals and their ancestors from the cycle of rebirth, and ultimately guide them towards Moksha, or spiritual liberation.
- Alongside this primary ritual, pilgrims engage in worship along the riverbanks and attend spiritual discourses led by revered sadhus and saints.
- While devotees are encouraged to bathe at any time during the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh, certain dates, beginning with Paush Purnima, are especially auspicious.
- On these days, a spectacular procession of saints, their followers, and members of various Akharas (spiritual orders) takes place.
- They partake in the grand ritual known as Shahi Snan, also referred to as 'Rajyogi Snan,' marking the commencement of the Maha Kumbh Mela.

- This tradition holds that the faithful receive additional blessings from the accumulated virtues and spiritual energy of saints who have bathed before them, reinforcing the communal essence of this age-old celebration.
- During the Kumbh Mela, a vibrant array of ceremonies unfolds. Key among them is the traditional procession of Akharas called 'Peshwai' on elephant backs, horses and chariots in a grand spectacle.
- Alongside this, numerous cultural events captivate millions of pilgrims who gather to witness and partake in this majestic festival.

### Tracing the History: A Journey Through Time

- The roots of the Kumbh Mela stretch back thousands of years, finding early references during the Maurya and Gupta periods (4<sup>th</sup> century BCE to 6<sup>th</sup> century CE).
- The initial gatherings, although not as large as the modern Kumbh Mela, drew pilgrims from across the Indian subcontinent.
- Over time, the Mela's significance grew alongside Hinduism's rise, with rulers like the Guptas further elevating its status as a revered religious congregation.
- During the medieval period, the Kumbh Mela received patronage from various royal dynasties, including the Chola and Vijayanagar empires in the south, and the Delhi Sultanate and Mughals in the north.
- Even Mughal emperors such as Akbar are noted to have participated in the celebrations, illustrating a spirit of religious tolerance.
- Historical accounts reveal that in 1565, Akbar granted the Naga Sadhus the honor of leading the royal entry into the Mela, an act symbolizing unity across religious and cultural lines.
- In the colonial period, British administrators observed and documented the festival, intrigued by its massive scale and the diverse congregations it drew.
- Figures such as British colonial administrator James Prinsep chronicled the Kumbh Mela in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, detailing its ritualistic practices, the vast congregations, and the socio-religious dynamics at play.
- These accounts contributed valuable insights into the Kumbh's evolution and its resilience through time.
- Post-independence, the Maha Kumbh Mela gained even greater significance, symbolizing national unity and India's rich cultural heritage.
- Recognized by UNESCO in 2017 as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity, the Kumbh Mela stands as a testament to the survival and evolution of ancient traditions in an era of modernization.

### Celebration of Culture and Unity

- The Maha Kumbh Mela is more than a gathering for spiritual cleansing; it is a vibrant cultural celebration.
- Traditional music, dance, art, and craftsmanship converge here, making the Mela a feast for the senses.
- Pilgrims experience not only a spiritual journey but also a deep dive into India's diverse cultural landscape, united by a shared pursuit of inner peace and understanding.
- International pilgrims and seekers of spirituality also gather, drawn by the Mela's universal message of unity, tolerance, and transcendence.
- Amid the vibrant crowds and colorful displays, the Mela is a reminder that the longing for spiritual fulfillment is a common thread that binds humanity, rising above nationality, language, and beliefs.

### Conclusion

- The Maha Kumbh Mela in 2025 is not just a gathering; it is a journey towards the self.
- Beyond rituals and symbolic acts, it offers pilgrims an opportunity for inner reflection and a deeper connection with the divine.

- In a world often dominated by the demands of modern life, the Maha Kumbh Mela stands as a beacon of unity, purity, and enlightenment.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. The Maha Kumbh Mela is celebrated every \_\_\_\_\_ years at four different locations in India.
2. The sacred bathing ceremony at the Maha Kumbh Mela takes place at the confluence of the Ganges, Yamuna, and the \_\_\_\_\_ rivers.
3. The Kumbh Mela is considered the world's largest \_\_\_\_\_ gathering.
4. The timing of the Kumbh Mela is determined by the astrological positions of the Sun, Moon, and \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The Shahi Snan, also known as \_\_\_\_\_ Snan, marks the commencement of the Maha Kumbh Mela.
6. Pilgrims believe that bathing in the holy rivers at Kumbh Mela purifies them of their sins and guides them towards \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The historical roots of the Kumbh Mela trace back to the \_\_\_\_\_ and Gupta periods.
8. The Kumbh Mela was recognized by UNESCO in \_\_\_\_\_ as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity.
9. The \_\_\_\_\_ Mela embodies the convergence of faith, wisdom, and cultural heritage, with rituals and cultural events captivating millions.
10. The Kumbh Mela symbolizes unity, tolerance, and transcendence, attracting pilgrims from not only India but also \_\_\_\_\_.

## 2. India launches updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) at COP 16 to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in Colombia

- Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh, released India's updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), at the 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP 16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
- The document was released during a special event called 'Roadmap for achieving the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) targets and release of India's updated NBSAP', on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2024, in Cali, Colombia.

### Context and Development of NBSAP

- India has a rich tradition of biodiversity conservation, which predates the global biodiversity movement and the establishment of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
- The journey toward formal biodiversity management began with the creation of the first National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) in 1999, followed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Project from 2000-2003 that fostered wider stakeholder engagement in biodiversity planning.

- This culminated in the National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) in 2008, which was further refined in 2014 to align with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets established during the CBD's 2010 meeting.
- India's commitment to biodiversity was also demonstrated through various national reports and updates, including an overview in 2019 that highlighted the status, threats, strategies, and governance frameworks related to biodiversity conservation.

## Updating NBSAP

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- In response to the CBD's decisions, India prioritized the update of its NBSAP to align with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF).
- This involved extensive consultations and collaboration among stakeholders to establish National Biodiversity Targets (NBTs) that reflect the nation's ecological, social, and economic context.
- The updated NBSAP comprises seven chapters focusing on contextual analysis, capacity-building strategies, financing mechanisms, and biodiversity monitoring frameworks.

## Biodiversity Characteristics and Ecosystem Diversity

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- India's diverse geography, climate, and socio-economic conditions contribute to its status as a megadiverse country, housing numerous species across various ecosystems.
- With over 55,000 plant taxa and 1,00,000 animal species, India plays a crucial role in global biodiversity.
- This diversity supports essential ecosystem services vital for human livelihoods and ecological health.

## Conservation Strategies and Approaches

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- India employs both in-situ and ex-situ conservation strategies. Protected areas (PAs) are central to conservation efforts, complemented by community-driven initiatives and managed forest practices.
- Agro biodiversity is recognized as critical for food security, with extensive efforts made in conservation and sustainable management of agricultural biodiversity.

## Goals and Targets

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- The NBSAP outlines 23 National Biodiversity Targets that align with the KM-GBF's global objectives.
- These targets focus on reducing threats to biodiversity, ensuring sustainable use of resources, and enhancing tools for implementation.
- Each target is linked to specific strategies aimed at promoting ecosystem resilience, species recovery, and sustainable management practices.

## Implementation of NBSAP

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- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) serves as the central agency responsible for coordinating biodiversity conservation efforts across India.
- Since the enactment of the Biological Diversity Act in 2002, the country has developed a multi-tier governance structure involving the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs), Union Territory Biodiversity Councils (UTBCs) and numerous Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs).
- These bodies work collaboratively with local communities, particularly in forest-dependent areas, to manage and protect biodiversity.
- Furthermore, the Indian government actively incorporates biodiversity considerations into various sectors, engaging multiple ministries and stakeholders, including NGOs and international organizations/Non-State Actors.

## Implementation Architecture and Capacity Building

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- The NBSAP's implementation architecture advocates for a collaborative governance model, promoting a bottom-up approach that engages local communities and various sectors.

- Capacity building is a critical component, requiring enhanced training and development initiatives to equip stakeholders at multiple levels.

## Biodiversity Financing and Monitoring

- A significant challenge identified is the financing of biodiversity initiatives. The estimated financial requirements for implementing the updated NBSAP are substantial, necessitating innovative resource mobilization strategies.
- The establishment of a comprehensive biodiversity monitoring framework is also essential for tracking progress against national targets, leveraging indicators that reflect the ecological health and biodiversity status across India.

## Conclusion

- India's NBSAP reflects a comprehensive approach to biodiversity conservation, integrating traditional practices with modern governance and collaborative strategies.
- The ongoing updates and stakeholder engagement underscore the country's commitment to maintaining its rich biodiversity while addressing contemporary environmental challenges.
- Continued efforts in capacity building, resource mobilization, and effective monitoring will be critical in achieving the set biodiversity targets and ensuring sustainable development for future generations.

## COP 16

- COP16, the 16<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), will be held in 2024 in Cali, Colombia.
- This event is particularly crucial for advancing global biodiversity efforts, following the agreements made at COP15 in 2022. At COP15, countries endorsed the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), which set ambitious targets to halt biodiversity loss.
- COP16 will focus on transforming these commitments into actionable plans.
- Key goals include ensuring robust mechanisms for monitoring biodiversity progress, integrating biodiversity into sectors like food, energy, and finance, and mobilizing substantial financial investments for biodiversity conservation.
- The event will be pivotal in aligning countries' financial flows with biodiversity goals, with a strong emphasis on equity, ensuring that developing nations, Indigenous peoples, and local communities have access to the resources they need.
- Additionally, Colombia's diverse ecosystems will provide a fitting backdrop for discussions on how to protect the world's natural heritage, particularly as many of its species face threats from climate change.
- COP16's outcomes are expected to have lasting impacts on global conservation strategies and biodiversity protection.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. India's updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) was released by the Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, \_\_\_\_\_, at the 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP 16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
2. The updated NBSAP was released during a special event called "Roadmap for achieving the \_\_\_\_\_ Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) targets" on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2024 in Cali, Colombia.
3. India's journey toward formal biodiversity management began with the creation of the first National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) in \_\_\_\_\_.



4. India's commitment to biodiversity was further demonstrated through various national reports, including an overview in \_\_\_\_\_ that highlighted the status, threats, strategies, and governance frameworks related to biodiversity conservation.
5. The updated NBSAP was developed in response to decisions from the \_\_\_\_\_ and prioritizes the alignment with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF).
6. India's biodiversity includes over \_\_\_\_\_ plant taxa and \_\_\_\_\_ animal species, making it one of the world's most biodiverse countries.
7. The NBSAP outlines \_\_\_\_\_ National Biodiversity Targets that align with the global objectives of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF).
8. The Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC) serves as the central agency responsible for coordinating biodiversity conservation efforts across \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The governance structure in India for biodiversity conservation includes the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs), and Union Territory Biodiversity Councils (UTBCs), working collaboratively with \_\_\_\_\_ to manage and protect biodiversity.
10. The estimated financial requirements for implementing the updated NBSAP are substantial, necessitating \_\_\_\_\_ resource mobilization strategies to support biodiversity initiatives.

## 3. Asian Buddhist Summit 2024

### Introduction

- India, a vibrant tapestry of diverse cultures and religious beliefs, has long been a heartland of Buddhism.
- This ancient tradition not only flourished within its borders but also spread to various countries.
- To celebrate this rich heritage, the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, in collaboration with the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC), is hosting the First Asian Buddhist Summit (ABS) on November 5-6, 2024, in New Delhi.
- The summit, themed "Role of Buddha Dhamma in Strengthening Asia," will feature esteemed Sangha leaders, scholars, and practitioners from across the continent, fostering dialogue and understanding while addressing contemporary challenges faced by the Buddhist community.
- The Hon'ble President of India will attend as the Chief Guest.

### Background

- The journey of Buddha Dhamma began in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE when Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment and began sharing his profound insights.
- Following the Buddha's Mahaparinirvana, his teachings were preserved and disseminated by his followers, leading to the emergence of the three major Buddhist traditions: Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana.
- The Mauryan Emperor Ashoka (268-232 BCE) played a crucial role in propagating Buddha Dhamma, demonstrating how its teachings could transform society by fostering peace, happiness, and harmony.
- His governance was rooted in Dhamma principles, and his rock and pillar edicts stand as enduring symbols of the widespread dissemination of Buddhism across Asia.
- As Buddhism grew, various monastic schools emerged, resulting in a significant split by the first century CE, which led to the development of Mahayana and Nikaya Buddhism, with Theravada as the only surviving Nikaya school.



- Buddhism's influence extended beyond India, adapting to local cultures as it spread north through Central Asia into East Asia, forming the Northern branch, and east to Southeast Asia, creating the Southern branch.
- The adaptability of Buddhist teachings and the emergence of diverse interpretations have allowed the religion to meet the spiritual needs of various cultures throughout history.

### **First Asian Buddhist Summit 2024**

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- The Asian Buddhist Summit 2024 emphasizes the profound interconnection among Buddha Dhamma, India, and Asia, showcasing their complementary relationship. The Honorable President of India is anticipated to attend as the Chief Guest, underscoring the event's significance.
- This summit aligns with India's Act East Policy and Neighborhood First Policy, focusing on collective, inclusive, and spiritual development in Asia.

### **With this vision in mind, the summit will delve into key themes that celebrate Buddhism's rich heritage and its contemporary relevance across the region**

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#### **Buddhist Art, Architecture and Heritage**

- Buddhist art, architecture, and heritage hold immense significance, reflecting the deep cultural and spiritual connections within the tradition.
- Practiced by millions, the teachings of Buddha are beautifully embodied in India's rich tapestry of heritage, with landmarks like the stupas of Sanchi and the caves of Ajanta exemplifying exquisite craftsmanship while conveying profound teachings.
- By preserving and celebrating Buddhist art and architecture, we can enhance cross-cultural understanding and appreciation among diverse communities.

#### **Buddha Cārikā and Dissemination of Buddha Dhamma**

- Buddha Cārikā or the sublime wandering of the Buddha played an important role in the dissemination of the Buddha Dhamma.
- After attaining enlightenment, the Buddha travelled across India spreading his teachings among commoners.

#### **Role of Holy Buddhist Relics and its Relevance in Society**

- Buddhist relics are vital in society as they serve as sacred symbols of the Buddha's teachings, inspiring devotion and mindfulness among practitioners.
- They preserve cultural heritage and traditions, acting as focal points for rituals and community gatherings.
- By attracting pilgrims and tourists, they also contribute to local economies while encouraging principles of peace and compassion within communities.

#### **Significance of Buddha Dhamma in Scientific Research and Well-Being**

- The significance of Buddha Dhamma in scientific research and well-being lies in its emphasis on mindfulness, compassion, and the interconnectedness of all beings.
- By integrating these ancient teachings with contemporary science, researchers are exploring holistic approaches to well-being that enhances psychological and physical health.

#### **Role of Buddhist Literature and Philosophy in 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

- Buddhist literature and philosophy weave a rich and intricate tapestry that delves into the human condition, the nature of reality, and the path to enlightenment.

- The wisdom of the Buddha, as expressed in these texts, has captivated minds for centuries.
- Through these writings, the philosophy of Buddhism remains a timeless source of insight and understanding.
- In addition to discussions on these important themes, the summit will feature a special exhibition titled “India as the Dhamma Setu (Bridge) Connecting Asia,” along with other creative displays at the venue.
- This event presents a unique opportunity to unite diverse perspectives on Buddha’s Dhamma from across Asia.
- Through dialogue that addresses contemporary challenges and promotes Buddhist heritage, the summit aims to foster a more compassionate, sustainable, and peaceful world, contributing to the overall welfare of humanity.

### **India Celebrating Its Buddhist Culture & Heritage**

- The teachings of the Buddha, along with those of his disciples and followers, have fostered unity across Asia by cultivating a shared perspective on life, divinity, and social values.
- Buddha Dhamma has become an integral part of India’s cultural identity, contributing to the country’s robust foreign policy and effective diplomatic relationships.
- This shared heritage enhances mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation among nations in the modern era.
- In recognition of this, India has undertaken various initiatives to promote and preserve this rich cultural legacy:

### **Buddhist Tourism Circuit in India**

- Buddhist Circuit is one of the fifteen thematic circuits identified for development under the Swadesh Darshan—Integrated Development of Theme-Based Tourism Circuits Scheme of the Ministry of Tourism.
- The Buddhist Circuit covers all sites related to Buddhism in the country, including Kapilvastu.

### **First Global Buddhist Summit**

- The two-day Global Buddhist Summit 2023, inaugurated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on April 20, 2023 focused on exploring methods for disseminating and internalizing universal values.
- The summit addressed pressing global challenges and presented sustainable models for the future. Participants collectively recognized the urgent need for peace and harmony, both personally and globally, highlighting the relevance of Buddha Dhamma’s teachings as essential guides for fostering interfaith dialogue, promoting harmony, and achieving universal peace.

### **First International Conference on Shared Buddhist Heritage**

- From September 17, 2022, to September 2023, India held a unique event under its year-long leadership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), bringing together Central Asian, East Asian, South Asian, and Arab countries to discuss “Shared Buddhist Heritage.”
- The conference aimed to re-establish trans-cultural links and explore commonalities in Buddhist art, archaeological sites, and museum collections among the SCO member states, fostering collaboration and understanding of their shared heritage.

### **One Day International Symposium on the Significance of Vipassana Meditation for Wellbeing & Global Peace**

- On February 27, 2024, the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC), along with the Ministry of Culture, the Embassy of India in Bangkok, and Silpakorn University, hosted a symposium on the Significance of Vipassana Meditation for Wellbeing and Global Peace at Silpakorn University.

- The event featured monks, academicians, and Vipassana practitioners, who actively participated in discussions and a question-and-answer session.
- Topics included the differences between yoga and Vipassana, connections to spirituality, and the understanding of faith, highlighting meditation's importance for personal wellbeing and global harmony.

### Classical Status to Pali Language

- On October 4, 2024, Pali was officially granted classical status, a recognition that underscores its historical significance in the region's spiritual and cultural heritage.
- Lord Buddha used Pali to deliver his sermons, establishing it as a vital medium for conveying his teachings.
- This designation further affirms the importance of Pali in preserving the rich traditions of Buddhism and the teachings of Buddha Dhamma.

### International Abhidhamma Divas

- On October 17, 2024, Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi hosted the International Abhidhamma Divas, organized by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the International Buddhist Confederation.
- The event brought together around 1,000 participants, including ambassadors, monks, and scholars.
- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addressed the audience, emphasizing the enduring relevance of Abhidhamma teachings and highlighting Pali's crucial role in preserving Buddha Dhamma.
- Thus, ABS in continuation to the above activities represents a unique opportunity to bring together the diverse voices of Buddha Dhamma across Asia.

### Conclusion

- The spread of Buddhism has profoundly shaped cultures and societies across Asia and beyond, fostering values of compassion, mindfulness, and interconnectedness.
- India, as the birthplace of Buddhism, is actively moving forward with policies that celebrate and promote this rich heritage.
- By hosting the Asian Buddhist Summit, India not only reaffirms its commitment to the principles of Buddha Dhamma but also positions itself as a leader in nurturing the growth and relevance of Buddhism in contemporary society, ensuring that its teachings continue to inspire future generations.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. The First Asian Buddhist Summit 2024, themed "Role of Buddha Dhamma in Strengthening Asia," is being hosted by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment in the \_\_\_\_\_ century BCE and began sharing his profound teachings, which became known as the Buddha Dhamma.
3. Emperor \_\_\_\_\_ played a crucial role in propagating Buddha Dhamma across Asia during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, spreading the teachings through his rock and pillar edicts.
4. The Buddhist teachings were initially preserved and disseminated by the Buddha's followers, leading to the emergence of three major Buddhist traditions: Theravada, Mahayana, and \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The Buddhist Circuit in India, one of the thematic circuits developed under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, includes significant sites like \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The significance of \_\_\_\_\_ in scientific research and well-being is explored through its emphasis on mindfulness, compassion, and interconnectedness.

7. The First Global Buddhist Summit in 2023 focused on addressing pressing global challenges and presented sustainable models for the future, emphasizing the role of Buddha Dhamma in fostering \_\_\_\_\_ and harmony.
8. The First International Conference on Shared Buddhist Heritage was held under India's leadership of the \_\_\_\_\_ and aimed to explore commonalities in Buddhist art and archaeological sites.
9. On October 4, 2024, the Pali language was granted \_\_\_\_\_ status, recognizing its importance in preserving the teachings of Buddha Dhamma.
10. The International Abhidhamma Divas event held in New Delhi on October 17, 2024, was organized by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the \_\_\_\_\_.

## **4. The International Solar Alliance Hosts the Seventh Session of its Annual Assembly with representatives from 103 Member & 17 Signatory Countries**

- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is hosting its seventh Assembly session in New Delhi, with ministers from 29 countries in attendance.
- At the inaugural ceremony, India's Minister for New and Renewable Energy, Shri Pralhad Joshi, highlighted the significance of solar energy as a transformative force for global sustainability.
- He emphasized ISA's leadership in mobilizing resources and deploying solar projects, particularly in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). ISA has completed 21 out of 27 demonstration projects, showcasing successful collaboration and commitment to sustainable development.
- Shri Joshi also highlighted key ISA initiatives, such as the Solar Data Portal, which provides real-time data on solar resources and project performance, aiding governments, investors, and developers.
- The Global Solar Facility, aiming to unlock commercial capital for solar projects in underserved regions like Africa, is operationalizing a pilot project in the Democratic Republic of Congo, supported by a \$39 million commitment from India, ISA, Bloomberg, and other foundations.
- Additionally, the SolarX Startup Challenge, which identifies innovative solutions for the solar sector, has supported 30 winners from the Asia-Pacific region, with plans for a third edition for Latin America and the Caribbean.
- The monthly ISA Knowledge Series and the Green Hydrogen Innovation Centre further contribute to advancing solar research and advocacy.
- The ISA Assembly also saw remarks from the Co-President, France's Minister of State for Development, Thani Mohamed Soilihi, who expressed France's continued commitment, pledging €1.5 billion to finance solar projects within ISA's Member Countries.
- France's priorities include supporting the STAR-C programme for local capacity building, facilitating financing for developing economies, and enhancing ISA's international outreach. Dr. Ajay Mathur, Director General of ISA, emphasized the collective efforts of the Assembly in driving global solar transformation and tackling energy transition challenges.

- The Assembly agenda includes discussions on ISA's work plans and budgets for the coming year, with a focus on the Viability Gap Funding (VGF) Scheme.
- This scheme offers grants of 10% to 35% for solar projects in LDCs and SIDS, contingent on securing 90% of the project cost from other sources. Countries will be able to submit proposals on a first-come, first-served basis until the annual budget of USD 1.5 million is exhausted.
- The Assembly will also elect a new president and co-president for the 2024-2026 term and announce the new Director General, who will assume office in 2025.
- Following the Assembly, a High-Level Technology Conference on Clean Technologies will be held, marking the launch of ISA's third edition of the World Solar Reports, which provides insights on solar technology, investment, and markets.
- The Assembly will conclude with a visit to a farm in Delhi to observe the implementation of agrivoltaic systems, which combine solar energy production with agricultural use, showcasing practical applications of solar technology.

### About the ISA Assembly

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- The Assembly is ISA's yearly apex decision-making body, representing each Member Country. This body makes decisions concerning the implementation of the ISA's Framework Agreement and coordinated actions to be taken to achieve its objective. The Assembly meets annually at the ministerial level at the ISA's seat. It assesses the aggregate effect of the programmes and other activities in terms of deployment of solar energy, performance, reliability, cost, and scale of finance. The Sixth Assembly of the ISA is deliberating on the key initiatives of ISA on three critical issues: energy access, energy security, and energy transition.

### About the Demonstration Projects

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- In May 2020, ISA initiated Demonstration Projects to meet the needs of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Development States (SIDS). The aim was to exhibit solar technology applications that can be scaled up and build the capacity of Member Countries to replicate these solar-powered solutions.
  - **Bhutan:** Solar cold storage at the National Post Harvest Centre in Paro
  - **Burkina Faso:** Solarisation of two primary healthcare centres in the rural communes of Louda and Korsimoro in the north centre region
  - **Cambodia:** Solarisation of primary and secondary schools in Koh Rong city
  - **Cuba:** Solar water pumping system at the Hatuey Indian Experimental Station (EEIH) in Perico, Matanzas
  - **Djibouti:** Installation of two off-grid solar-powered cold storage units in Omar Jaga'a in the Arta region and Dougoum village in the Tadjourah region
  - **Ethiopia:** Solar-powered water pumps in Gedeo Zone, Irgachefe Woreda community
  - **Mauritius:** Solarisation of the Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital in Rose Belle
  - **Samoa:** Solar streetlights implemented across 46 locations
  - **Senegal:** Solar cold storage in the Borough of Ndande, within the Municipality of Theippe in the Kebemer Department
  - **The Gambia:** Solar water pumping systems in Wassadou and Julangel
  - **Tonga:** Solar water pumping project in four villages on Tongatapu

## About the STAR-Centre Initiative

- Solar Technology Application Resource-Centre (STAR-C) are equipped with specialised training facilities, tools, and structured learning modules designed to cultivate a highly skilled solar workforce.
- To date, ISA has successfully established and operationalised STAR Centers in seven countries: Ethiopia, Somalia, Cuba, Côte d'Ivoire, Kiribati, Ghana, and Bangladesh.
- Since their launch, these centres have trained professionals in various aspects of solar energy, preparing them to contribute effectively to the sector's rapid expansion.

## About the International Solar Alliance

- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is a global organization with 120 Member and Signatory countries, focused on promoting solar energy as a key solution for a sustainable, carbon-neutral future.
- Its mission is to unlock US\$1 trillion in solar investments by 2030, aiming to reduce costs and improve financing for solar technology.
- ISA works with governments to improve energy access and security, supporting solar adoption across sectors like agriculture, health, transport, and power generation.
- ISA promotes policy changes, shares best practices, and helps countries implement solar-friendly regulations.
- It has designed new business models for solar projects, facilitated demand pooling for solar technology, and lowered costs.
- By improving access to finance, ISA reduces risks and attracts private investments, while also enhancing access to solar training, data, and insights for engineers and policymakers.
- The organization became the first international intergovernmental body headquartered in India after 15 countries ratified the ISA Framework Agreement on December 6, 2017.
- ISA partners with multilateral development banks, financial institutions, private and public sectors, and civil society to deploy affordable solar solutions, particularly in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
- Through its efforts, ISA aims to bring clean, reliable, and affordable energy to communities globally, fostering sustainable growth and improving quality of life.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. The seventh Assembly of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) is being held in \_\_\_\_\_, with ministers from 29 countries in attendance.
2. India's Minister for New and Renewable Energy, Shri \_\_\_\_\_ Joshi, highlighted the importance of solar energy for global sustainability.
3. ISA has successfully completed \_\_\_\_\_ out of 27 demonstration projects to showcase collaboration and commitment to sustainable development.
4. The Solar Data Portal provides \_\_\_\_\_ data on solar resources and project performance to aid governments, investors, and developers.
5. The Global Solar Facility is working on a pilot project in the \_\_\_\_\_, supported by a \$39 million commitment from India, ISA, Bloomberg, and other foundations.
6. The SolarX Startup Challenge has supported \_\_\_\_\_ winners from the Asia-Pacific region, with plans for a third edition for Latin America and the Caribbean.
7. France has pledged \_\_\_\_\_ billion to finance solar projects within ISA's Member Countries, including supporting the STAR-C programme.



8. The Viability Gap Funding (VGF) Scheme offers grants ranging from \_\_\_\_\_% to \_\_\_\_\_% for solar projects in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
9. The STAR-C Initiative is designed to cultivate a highly skilled solar workforce, with training centers established in \_\_\_\_\_ countries, including Ethiopia, Somalia, and Cuba.
10. The International Solar Alliance aims to unlock \_\_\_\_\_ trillion in solar investments by 2030 to reduce costs and improve financing for solar technology.

## 5. Pradhan Mantri Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana

- The Pradhan Mantri Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana (PMVKY) is a landmark initiative that was launched on October 28, 2014.
- This ambitious scheme has been conceived as a comprehensive strategy to address the unique challenges faced by tribal communities in India, which constitute about 8.9% of the country's population.
- With over 700 scheduled tribes spread across diverse regions— from the Himalayas to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands—India's tribal populations often remain marginalized in terms of socio-economic development.
- With the vision of inclusive development articulated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Pradhan Mantri Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana (PMVKY) aims to empower tribal communities in India, recognizing their historical neglect.
- The initiative not only provides financial assistance but also establishes a framework for sustainable development.
- As the Prime Minister stated, "Our tribal communities have shown the way when it comes to living in harmony with nature and conserving our forests," highlighting the importance of their priorities.
- With a financial outlay of ₹26,135.46 crores from 2021-22 to 2025-26, PMVKY focuses on the holistic development of tribal communities through integrated village development and capacity-building initiatives in education and livelihoods.
- By fostering an environment where these communities can thrive, the government seeks to create a more equitable society that aligns with Modi's vision of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" (Together with all, Development for all). This initiative not only aims to improve the socio-economic conditions of tribal populations but also emphasizes the preservation of their cultural heritage and identity.

### Six Key Steps Under PMVKY

**The PMVKY encompasses six steps aimed at different facets of tribal welfare. These include:**

#### 1. Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana

- The Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAAGY) revamps the existing Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Plan, which focuses on integrated village development in 36,428 villages with significant tribal populations.
- This initiative targets critical sectors such as road and telecom connectivity, education, health services, and sanitation, all of which aim to raise the living standards of tribal communities.



- Under the scheme, these villages have been specifically identified to address challenges in road connectivity, mobile and internet access, schools, Anganwadi centres, health sub-centres, drinking water facilities, drainage, and solid waste management.
- Each village will receive ₹20.38 lakh, with a total expenditure of ₹7,276 crore planned by 2025-26.
- As of July 2024, schemes for approximately 16,000 villages have been approved, and ₹2,283 crore has already been released for implementation.

## **2. Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**

- The PVTG development scheme is designed to ensure the socio-economic upliftment of the most marginalized tribal communities (PVTG families) while preserving their cultural heritage.
- The initiative provides financial support to state governments for tailored developmental activities in housing, health, and education sectors.
- The Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission has been launched to enhance further living conditions and provide PVTG families with access to basic facilities.
- In the 2023-24 Budget Speech, the government announced the launch of a Pradhan Mantri PVTGs Development Mission to improve their socio-economic conditions, allocating Rs. 15,000 crore over three years for essential amenities like secure housing, clean drinking water, sanitation, education, health, nutrition, and enhanced connectivity.
- An initial comprehensive IEC campaign is underway in 100 districts, targeting around 500 blocks and 15,000 PVTGs habitations to raise awareness about their entitlements.
- The initiative will ensure that every unreached PVTGs household benefits from various government schemes, utilizing local centers like Haat Bazar, CSCs, and Gram Panchayats to facilitate access and services at their doorstep.

## **3. Support to Tribal Research Institutes (TRI)**

- This component facilitates research and documentation efforts related to tribal communities.
- Financial assistance is allocated to state governments and UTs based on their proposals to strengthen the knowledge base concerning tribal cultures and challenges.

## **4. Pre-Matric Scholarships**

- These centrally sponsored schemes aim to support tribal students in their educational pursuits.
- The Pre-Matric Scholarship caters to students in grades IX and X, the scholarship is available for students with a parental income of up to ₹2.50 lakhs, ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder educational advancement.
- For most states, the Government of India contributes 75%, while the state government provides 25%. In the case of North Eastern and hilly states, the Government of India's contribution increases to 90%, with the state contributing only 10%. For Union Territories (UTs) like Andaman & Nicobar, which do not have a Legislative Assembly or their own grants, the Government of India provides 100% of the funding.

## **5. Post-Matric Scholarships**

- The Post-Matric Scholarship follows similar terms and conditions as the Pre-Matric scheme but caters to Scheduled Tribe students studying beyond class 10. This scholarship aims to further support their educational journey by alleviating financial burdens and encouraging continued academic advancement.

## 6. Administrative Assistance for Project Management Units

- The PMVKY also allocates funds to establish project management units within state governments, ensuring that schemes related to the welfare of Scheduled Tribes are effectively monitored and implemented.

## Other Steps by Government of India for Tribal Welfare

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### ❖ Eklavya Model Residential Schools

- In addition to the above components, the Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) scheme has been established to provide quality education to Scheduled Tribe students from classes VI to XII.
- Under the new scheme, the Government decided to establish one EMRS in every block having more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons (as per census 2011).
- Accordingly, the target is to set up 728 EMRSs across the country by the year 2026.

### Funding and Implementation Strategies

- In the current financial year (2024-25), the central government has allocated ₹4,300 crore to support the six schemes under the PMVKY. This includes provisions to provide scholarships to 27.5 lakh students and improve basic amenities in 5,000 villages.
- The emphasis on tribal research institutes, multi-purpose centers, and project management units underscores the government's commitment to sustainable tribal development.

### ❖ Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM)

- Approved for implementation from 2021-22 to 2025-26, the PMJVM has been restructured by merging and extending two existing schemes: the “Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce through Minimum Support Price” and the “Institutional Support for Development and Marketing of Tribal Products.”
- The Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM) is designed to enhance tribal entrepreneurship and create livelihood opportunities by promoting the efficient and equitable use of natural resources, including agricultural products, NonTimber Forest Products (NTFPs), and non-farm enterprises.
- The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) serves as the central implementing agency for this initiative.
- The mission supports the theme of “Vocal for Local by Tribal,” aiming to empower tribal communities through local resource utilization.
- Under the PMJVM, the Ministry provides financial assistance for the procurement of Minor Forest Produces (MFPs) at Minimum Support Price (MSP), the development of infrastructure for MFP and non-MFP value chains, and value addition training programs through Van Dhan Vikas Kendras.

### ❖ Development Action Plan for Scheduled Tribes (DAPST)

- The Development Action Plan for Scheduled Tribes (DAPST) serves as a dedicated funding source for tribal development.
- This multi-faceted strategy encompasses support for critical areas such as education, health, sanitation, water supply, and livelihood opportunities.
- In addition to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA), 41 ministries and departments contribute a percentage of their total scheme budgets each year towards tribal development initiatives under the DAPST.

- This collaborative approach aims to address the diverse needs of tribal communities across sectors including education, health, agriculture, irrigation, roads, housing, electrification, employment generation, and skill development.
- For the current financial year, these ministries and departments are implementing 214 schemes and programs under the DAPST, with an allocation exceeding ₹1.23 lakh crore.
- Of this, approximately ₹36,000 crore has already been released for various schemes and programs, underscoring the government's commitment to the development of Scheduled Castes and Tribal Areas.
- The Pradhan Mantri Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana represents a significant step towards the empowerment and inclusion of tribal communities in India's development narrative.
- By providing targeted interventions across various sectors, the PMVKY aims to create a more equitable society where tribal populations can thrive and contribute to the nation's progress.
- With the government's sustained commitment to tribal welfare, the future looks promising for the diverse and resilient tribal communities of India.

### QUESTIONS

#### Fill in the Blank:

1. The Pradhan Mantri Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana (PMVKY) was launched on \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The total financial outlay for PMVKY from 2021-22 to 2025-26 is \_\_\_\_\_ crores.
3. The initiative aims to empower tribal communities, which constitute approximately \_\_\_\_\_% of India's population.
4. Under the Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAAGY), each village will receive \_\_\_\_\_ lakh for development purposes.
5. The Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission was allocated \_\_\_\_\_ crores in the 2023-24 Budget to improve living conditions of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).
6. The Pre-Matric Scholarship scheme is available for students in grades \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The Government of India contributes \_\_\_\_\_% of the funding for Pre-Matric Scholarships in North Eastern and hilly states.
8. The Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) scheme aims to establish \_\_\_\_\_ schools by 2026.
9. The Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM) has been approved for implementation from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.
10. The Development Action Plan for Scheduled Tribes (DAPST) involves \_\_\_\_\_ ministries and departments contributing to tribal development initiatives.

## 6. US presidential Election 2024

The 2024 United States presidential election is set to take place on November 5, 2024.

This election will determine the next President and Vice President of the United States, with both major parties, the Republicans and Democrats, fielding candidates.

## 1. Primaries and Caucuses

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### Timeframe: January - June 2024

- **Purpose:** Primaries and caucuses are held in each state to determine the presidential nominees for the Democratic and Republican parties.
- **Process:** Voters in each state select their preferred candidate, which allocates delegates to the national party conventions based on results.
- **Types of Primaries:** Primaries may be open (allowing all voters to participate) or closed (only allowing registered party members to vote). Some states hold caucuses instead, where party members gather to discuss and vote for candidates.

## 2. National Conventions

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- **Democratic National Convention:** August 19-22, 2024, in Chicago, Illinois.
- **Republican National Convention:** July 15-18, 2024, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- **Purpose:** These conventions are where each party formally nominates its candidate for president and vice president. Delegates from each state pledge their support to candidates based on primary and caucus results.

## 3. General Election Campaign

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- After the conventions, nominees campaign nationwide, focusing especially on “swing states” (states where the election outcome is uncertain).
- Candidates participate in debates, rallies, and advertise their platforms on various media.
- Debates provide voters with a side-by-side comparison of the candidates’ policies and positions on critical issues.

## 4. Election Day and Voting Process

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### Date: November 5, 2024.

- **Voter Participation:** American citizens aged 18 and older can vote, but each state has specific requirements for voter registration.
- **Methods:**
  - **In-Person Voting:** Available in polling places across the country on Election Day.
  - **Early Voting:** Many states offer early voting days before the general election.
  - **Mail-in and Absentee Voting:** Voters can request ballots and mail them in, a practice increasingly popular since 2020.

## 5. The Electoral College

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- **System:** Each state is allocated a certain number of electors based on its representation in Congress (House + Senate seats). There are 538 electors in total, with 270 needed to win.
- **Electoral Votes Allocation:** Most states use a “winner-takes-all” system where the candidate with the most votes in a state wins all its electoral votes. However, Maine and Nebraska use a proportional system.
- **Electoral College Vote:** Electors cast their votes in December 2024, and these votes are formally counted in Congress in January 2025.

## 6. Certification and Inauguration

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- **Certification:** Congress meets to certify the electoral votes in early January 2025.

- **Inauguration:** The elected president and vice president are inaugurated on January 20, 2025.
- For the latest election updates and real-time results, news organizations and state election boards provide comprehensive and up-to-date reporting on Election Day and throughout the election process.

## Donald Trump set to become 47<sup>th</sup> President of the U.S.

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- Donald Trump has been elected as the 47<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, defeating Democratic nominee Kamala Harris in a historic comeback.
- Trump, who previously refused to accept his election defeat four years ago, endured felony convictions, two assassination attempts, and was linked to the Capitol insurrection.
- His victory was secured after winning Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Georgia, surpassing the required 270 electoral votes.
- Kamala Harris won in New Hampshire and Minnesota, extending long-standing Democratic wins in those states.
- Trump is now the second president, after Grover Cleveland, to serve non-consecutive terms.
- His campaign was marked by personal attacks against Harris and a portrayal of America as a nation under threat.

## Donald Trump's key election promises

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### Economy

- Trump's campaign promises to "end inflation and make America affordable again" include plans to boost U.S. energy production by opening areas like the Arctic for oil drilling, aiming to reduce energy costs.
- He also intends to lower housing costs by restricting mortgage access for some undocumented immigrants, deporting others, and launching a home-building program on federal land.

### Immigration

- Trump's 2024 campaign prioritizes immigration control, echoing his 2016 "Build the wall" stance. He vows to "seal the border" and plans the largest mass deportations of undocumented migrants in U.S. history, starting with one million removals, as noted by VP pick JD Vance.
- Trump also proposes ending citizenship for children of undocumented residents.

### Abortion

- In the first presidential election since the Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to abortion in 2022, Trump has struggled to find a consistent position on the issue.
- While he has generally argued that states should set their own abortion laws, he stated during a debate that he would not support a national abortion ban.
- Recently, Trump has tried to adopt a more neutral stance, which has led to mixed reactions.
- He faced backlash from conservatives after criticizing Florida's six-week abortion ban but later indicated he would oppose a Florida ballot measure to establish abortion rights.

### Healthcare

- Trump has pledged to protect Social Security and Medicare without cuts or raising the retirement age, placing this as one of his top 20 priorities.
- Although he previously attempted to dismantle the Affordable Care Act, which expanded healthcare coverage, his efforts were unsuccessful. Recently, he proposed taxpayer-funded fertility treatments, but it's uncertain if this costly plan has Republican support in Congress.

## Trade

- When Donald Trump became president in 2016, he ended the era of U.S. free trade by imposing tariffs on Chinese imports, many of which Joe Biden has maintained and even expanded.
- Trump now proposes new tariffs of 10–20% on most foreign goods, with a significant 60% tariff on Chinese imports.
- In his 20 core promises, he emphasized making the U.S. a manufacturing superpower and stopping outsourcing. During a debate with Kamala Harris, Trump highlighted his tariffs on Chinese goods and noted that the Biden administration has not removed them.

## Ukraine and NATO

- Donald Trump has pledged to end the war in Ukraine within 24 hours through a negotiated settlement with Russia.
- During a presidential debate, he mentioned his familiarity with both Ukrainian President Zelensky and Russian President Putin, suggesting that the U.S. should work to quickly negotiate a deal to end the conflict.
- However, he did not specify the concessions each side should make, and the Kremlin stated that a resolution could not be achieved in such a short time.
- On NATO, Trump believes that countries not meeting the recommended 2% of GDP for defense spending should lose their protection under the alliance.

## Israel-Gaza war

- Trump has positioned himself as a strong supporter of Israel, and has condemned pro-Palestinian supporters on US college campuses. However, he has occasionally criticised Israel's handling of the war.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. The 2024 United States presidential election is set to take place on \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The Republican National Convention will be held in \_\_\_\_\_ from July 15-18, 2024.
3. The Democratic National Convention is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_ 19-22, 2024, in Chicago, Illinois.
4. The United States uses the \_\_\_\_\_ system, where the candidate with the most votes in a state wins all its electoral votes, except in Maine and Nebraska.
5. The candidate who wins \_\_\_\_\_ electoral votes becomes the next President of the United States.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ is the second president in U.S. history to serve non-consecutive terms, following Grover Cleveland.
7. Donald Trump's campaign promises to reduce energy costs include opening areas like the \_\_\_\_\_ for oil drilling.
8. Trump has promised to carry out the largest mass \_\_\_\_\_ of undocumented migrants in U.S. history, starting with one million removals.
9. In his healthcare plan, Trump proposed taxpayer-funded \_\_\_\_\_ treatments, although it is uncertain if it will gain support in Congress.
10. Donald Trump has vowed to end the war in \_\_\_\_\_ within 24 hours through a negotiated settlement with Russia.



## 7. Bob Khathing Museum of Valour inaugurated

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh last week inaugurated the Major Ralengnao 'Bob' Khathing Museum of Valour at Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The virtual event was held on the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, observed as National Unity Day, where Singh also inaugurated a statue of Patel.
- The legendary Bob Khathing led the expedition to peacefully integrate Tawang into India.
- He was also instrumental in establishing essential military and security frameworks, such as the Sashastra Seema Bal, Nagaland Armed Police, and the Naga Regiment.
- By the time of the Tawang expedition, Bob Khathing had already made a name for himself in the Second World War through his soldierly exploits. We take a look at the eventful career of the soldier and civil servant.

### What was Bob Khathing's Tawang expedition?

- In 1951, Maj Bob Khathing of the Indian Frontier Administrative Service was assigned by Assam's Governor, Jairamdas Daulatram, to secure Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh amid concerns that China might alter the boundary with India.
- Khathing led an expedition starting on January 17, 1951, from Assam's Lokhra Camp with Assam Rifles troops, facing hostile terrain and extreme weather.
- Upon reaching Tawang, he gained the locals' trust and officially brought the area under Indian administration by hoisting the Indian flag on February 14, 1951.
- Khathing also set up an administrative system by appointing Gaon Buras (village elders) in the area.
- Historian Claud Arpi noted that the Chinese Liberation Army reached Lhasa in September 1951, highlighting the importance of Khathing's timely intervention in securing Tawang.

### Who was Bob Khathing?

- Ranenglao 'Bob' Khathing was born on February 28, 1912, in Manipur's Ukhrul district. He was a Tangkhul Naga.
- He studied at Sir Johnstone High School in Imphal and did his matriculation from Shillong before joining Cotton College in Guwahati. He joined Ukhrul High School as its Head Master. He also founded a school at Harasingha in Assam's Darrang district.
- In 1939, after the Second World War broke out, Khathing joined the Indian Army and got an Emergency Commission as an officer.

### What is the record of his Army service?

- Bob Khathing was a distinguished military officer recognized for his exceptional service during World War II.
- He was awarded the Member of the British Empire (MBE) and the Military Cross (MC) for his role in rallying Naga support against the Japanese in Burma and India and for acts of bravery. Initially commissioned into the 9/11 Hyderabad Regiment, he was later transferred to the Assam Regiment in 1942.



- During the war, he served in a guerrilla force called Victor Force, formed to fight the Japanese along the Burma-India road.
- Later, he became an advisor to the SANCOL force, which was tasked with tracking Japanese troops.
- Khathing was instrumental in organizing supply collections, gathering intelligence from villagers, and inspiring the local Naga population to support the Allied forces.
- His efforts were crucial to the success of military operations, and he participated in several successful ambushes.

### What did Bob Khathing do after the war ended?

- At the end of the Second World War, the Emergency Commissioned officers in the Army were demobilised.
- Known to be very close to the then Maharaja Kumar Priyabrata Singh of Manipur, Khathing joined the then interim government as minister in charge of the hill areas.
- In 1949, when Manipur merged with India, the interim government was dissolved and he joined the Assam Rifles.
- Khathing served with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Assam Rifles Battalion for two years.

### Second World War (1939–1945)

- The Second World War (1939–1945) was one of the most devastating and widespread conflicts in human history, involving most of the world's nations.
- It was fought between two major alliances: the Allied Powers (primarily the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and China) and the Axis Powers (mainly Germany, Italy, and Japan). Here's a detailed overview:

### Causes of the War

- **Treaty of Versailles (1919):** The harsh terms imposed on Germany after World War I led to widespread resentment, economic hardship, and a desire for revenge. This fostered the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party.
- **Expansionist Policies:** Nazi Germany under Hitler aimed to expand its territory, and Italy and Japan also pursued imperialist ambitions.
- **Failure of the League of Nations:** The League of Nations, created after World War I to prevent future wars, was ineffective in dealing with rising aggression from Germany, Italy, and Japan.
- **Appeasement:** Western powers, particularly Britain and France, initially followed a policy of appeasement, hoping to avoid another conflict by conceding to some of Hitler's demands.

### Key Events

- **Invasion of Poland (1939):** The war officially began on September 1, 1939, when Nazi Germany, led by Adolf Hitler, invaded Poland. This led Britain and France to declare war on Germany. The Soviet Union also invaded Poland from the east.
- **The Fall of France (1940):** Germany quickly conquered much of Western Europe, including France, in a rapid campaign. The Dunkirk evacuation (May-June 1940) saw over 330,000 British and French soldiers rescued from the beaches of northern France.
- **Battle of Britain (1940):** Germany launched a prolonged air campaign against Britain, but the Royal Air Force (RAF) successfully repelled the German Luftwaffe, marking the first major defeat of the Axis Powers.

- **Operation Barbarossa (1941):** On June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany broke its non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union and launched a massive invasion of Soviet territory, marking the beginning of the Eastern Front. This campaign eventually failed, leading to heavy losses for Germany.
- **Pearl Harbor (1941):** On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, prompting the United States to enter the war. This led to a global conflict involving Japan, the United States, and other powers.
- **The Battle of Stalingrad (1942–1943):** One of the turning points of the war, the Soviet victory at Stalingrad marked the beginning of a powerful Soviet offensive against Nazi forces on the Eastern Front.
- **D-Day (1944):** On June 6, 1944, Allied forces launched Operation Overlord, the invasion of Normandy, France, opening up a second front against Germany in Western Europe. This led to the liberation of much of France.
- **The Pacific Theater:** In the Pacific, the U.S. and Japan engaged in numerous battles. Key moments included the Battle of Midway (1942), where the U.S. Navy decisively defeated the Japanese fleet, and the island-hopping campaign, which gradually pushed Japanese forces back toward Japan.
- **The Holocaust (1941–1945):** The Nazis carried out the systematic genocide of six million Jews and millions of others, including Roma, disabled people, and political dissidents, in what is now known as the Holocaust. Concentration camps, such as Auschwitz, were used for mass extermination.

## Turning Points

- **The Battle of El Alamein (1942):** In North Africa, Allied forces, under British General Bernard Montgomery, defeated the German Afrika Korps, commanded by Field Marshal Erwin Rommel. This victory ended Axis hopes of controlling North Africa.
- **The Battle of Kursk (1943):** The largest tank battle in history, it marked a decisive Soviet victory and began the Soviet push westward toward Germany.
- **The Allied Bombing Campaign:** Allied bombers relentlessly targeted German cities, weakening morale and industrial capacity. Cities like Dresden were heavily bombed, causing massive civilian casualties.
- **The Siege of Leningrad (1941–1944):** The German siege of the Soviet city of Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) lasted for nearly 900 days, resulting in extreme starvation and suffering, but the city never fell.

## End of the War

- **Germany's Surrender (May 1945):** As Allied forces closed in from both the west and east, Hitler committed suicide on April 30, 1945. Germany surrendered unconditionally on May 7, 1945, marking V-E Day (Victory in Europe) on May 8, 1945.
- **The Pacific War's End:** Despite victories on the ground, Japan continued fighting in the Pacific. The U.S. dropped two atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima (August 6, 1945) and Nagasaki (August 9, 1945), leading to Japan's surrender on August 15, 1945, marking V-J Day (Victory over Japan) and bringing the war to a close.

## Consequences

- **Loss of Life:** The war caused an estimated 70–85 million deaths, including both military personnel and civilians. It was one of the deadliest conflicts in history.
- **The United Nations:** In 1945, the United Nations (UN) was established to prevent future conflicts and promote international cooperation.

- **The Cold War:** The war left the Soviet Union and the United States as the world's two superpowers, leading to a geopolitical rivalry known as the Cold War, which lasted for much of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- **Decolonization:** The war weakened European powers and contributed to the rapid decolonization of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, as former colonies sought independence.
- **Nuremberg Trials:** Leading Nazis were tried for war crimes at the Nuremberg Trials, setting precedents for international law regarding human rights and the prosecution of war crimes.

## Major Players

### Allied Powers

- **United States:** Initially neutral, the U.S. joined after the attack on Pearl Harbor. It played a crucial role in both the European and Pacific theaters.
- **Soviet Union:** The USSR suffered tremendous losses but played a decisive role in defeating Nazi Germany, especially on the Eastern Front.
- **United Kingdom:** Led by Winston Churchill, the UK stood firm against Nazi Germany and contributed significantly to the war effort.
- **China:** China fought against Japanese invasion, particularly after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor.

### Axis Powers

- **Germany:** Led by Adolf Hitler, Germany's aggressive expansionism triggered the war.
- **Italy:** Initially led by Benito Mussolini, Italy was involved in several campaigns but switched sides to the Allies in 1943 after Mussolini's fall.
- **Japan:** Seeking territorial expansion, Japan's invasion of China and later the Pacific islands drew the U.S. into the war.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. In 1951, Major Bob Khathing was assigned to secure \_\_\_\_\_ in Arunachal Pradesh amid concerns that China might alter the boundary with India.
2. Bob Khathing led an expedition from Assam's \_\_\_\_\_ Camp to Tawang, facing hostile terrain and extreme weather conditions.
3. Bob Khathing hoisted the Indian flag in Tawang on \_\_\_\_\_ (date), officially bringing the area under Indian administration.
4. After World War II, Bob Khathing served with the \_\_\_\_\_ Battalion of the Assam Rifles for two years.
5. Bob Khathing was awarded the \_\_\_\_\_ for his role in rallying Naga support against the Japanese in Burma and India.
6. Bob Khathing joined the Indian Army in \_\_\_\_\_ (year) after the outbreak of the Second World War.
7. The virtual inauguration of the Major Ralengnao 'Bob' Khathing Museum of Valour was held on the birth anniversary of \_\_\_\_\_ (person), observed as National Unity Day.
8. Bob Khathing was born in \_\_\_\_\_ (place) in 1912, and he belonged to the Tangkhul Naga community.
9. During the Second World War, Bob Khathing was commissioned into the \_\_\_\_\_ Regiment, later transferring to the Assam Regiment in 1942.

10. The \_\_\_\_\_ (year) marked the formal conclusion of World War II after Germany's surrender on May 7, 1945, followed by Japan's surrender in August.

## 8. Ballon d'Or

- Spain's Rodri pipping Vinícius Jr of Brazil for the Ballon d'Or has been described as a "robbery" and the "biggest injustice in history", which not only points to the emotions that the Beautiful Game invokes, but also the high regard in which this honour is held in the footballing world.
- The Ballon d'Or is the most important individual award a footballer can win. This is not just because of the immense prestige that its almost-70-year history carries, but also because of the power and (indirect) cash rewards that it brings.
- The significance of the award in a player's career and in modern football is enormous.

### What is the controversy with the Ballon d'Or award this year?

- The 2024 Ballon d'Or battle was between Vinícius Jr., Real Madrid's standout forward, and Rodri, Manchester City's defensive midfielder. Vinícius helped Real Madrid win the Champions League, La Liga, and the UEFA Super Cup, while Rodri played a crucial role in City's treble-winning season and Spain's European Championship victory.
- Despite Vinícius' impressive contributions, Rodri won the Ballon d'Or, becoming the first defensive midfielder to do so.
- Real Madrid, feeling disrespected by the award's criteria, claimed that if Vinícius wasn't deserving, Dani Carvajal should have been. As a result, Real Madrid boycotted the award ceremony.

### How does the voting for Ballon d'Or take place?

- The Ballon d'Or voting process has evolved over time. Initially, journalists from each country voted for the top 10 players, with the final list decided by France Football editors.
- Now, the number of voting journalists has been reduced to 100, based on FIFA rankings.
- For the women's award, the voting pool has been cut to 50 journalists.
- The award is mainly determined by journalists' opinions, with criteria focusing on individual performance, team success, and player behavior/fair play in the previous season, rather than the calendar year.

### What is the problem with this system?

- Journalists determine both the MVP in basketball and the Ballon d'Or in football, which are often linked to significant financial bonuses in players' contracts.
- While these awards don't offer direct monetary rewards, they influence a player's earnings due to their perception, and factors like club power or external influences can affect the outcome.
- For example, Vinícius Jr could have earned a million dollars if he won the Ballon d'Or. Journalists' differing views on Vinícius's fight against racism and his behavior should not impact his financial rewards or the award itself.

### Is this the first time that the Ballon d'Or has run into controversy?

- The Ballon d'Or has been surrounded by controversies over the years. In the 1990s, when no player stood out above the rest, several one-time winners emerged, including George Weah, Zinedine Zidane,

and Matthias Sammer. The award was open to non-Europeans only from 1995, with Weah being the only African winner.

- Thierry Henry, despite being a French football star, never won the award, questioning its validity.
- From 2008 to 2023, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo dominated, winning 13 Ballon d'Ors between them, with occasional challenges from players like Franck Ribéry.
- Robert Lewandowski and Erling Haaland also felt unlucky to have lost out to Messi in recent years. With Messi and Ronaldo's dominance fading, the Ballon d'Or now highlights emerging players.
- The Ballon d'Or is one of the most prestigious individual awards in football, presented annually by France Football magazine. It honors the best male football player in the world for that year. Here's a complete overview of its history, process, and significance:

## 1. History

**First Awarded: 1956**

**Founded by:**

- France Football magazine, which initially aimed to recognize the best European football player.
- Over time, the award expanded its eligibility to include global players.
- Original Name: "European Footballer of the Year"
- Current Name: Ballon d'Or (Golden Ball), a term first used in 1995.

## 2. Eligibility and Voting

- **Eligibility (for men):** To be eligible for the Ballon d'Or, a player must have played for a top club in a European competition. This was later expanded globally, allowing non-European players to be considered after 1995. There are no specific age restrictions.
- **Voting Process:** The voting is conducted by a panel of international journalists from across the world, one from each country. They submit their top five player choices for the award, and the points system is as follows:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> place: 6 points
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> place: 4 points
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> place: 3 points
  - 4<sup>th</sup> place: 2 points
  - 5<sup>th</sup> place: 1 point
- The player with the most points wins the Ballon d'Or.
- **Key Consideration:** The award is generally based on a player's performances during the calendar year, including their club and international football contributions. Trophies won, individual achievements, and consistency across competitions are crucial factors.

## 3. Ballon d'Or Feminin

- **Introduced in 2018:** The female version of the Ballon d'Or was launched to honor the best female footballer in the world. The voting system and general eligibility mirror that of the men's award.

## 4. Notable Past Winners

- Lionel Messi holds the record for the most Ballon d'Or wins, with 7 awards (as of 2024).
- Cristiano Ronaldo has won the Ballon d'Or 5 times.
- Other notable winners include Michel Platini, Johan Cruyff, Marco van Basten, Zinedine Zidane, and more recently Robert Lewandowski (who was controversially not awarded in 2020 due to the cancellation of the award during the COVID-19 pandemic).

## 5. Award Ceremony and Trophies

- The Ballon d'Or Gala is an annual event, usually held in Paris, where the award winner is announced. It features speeches from former players, managers, and sometimes footballing legends.
- The trophy itself is a golden ball atop a pedestal, symbolizing the greatness of the player who wins it. The trophy has gone through slight design changes over the years but has always remained a symbol of excellence in football.

## 6. Changes Over the Years

- 2010-2015: The Ballon d'Or was merged with the FIFA World Player of the Year award and was presented as the FIFA Ballon d'Or during this period.
- In 2016, FIFA and France Football ended their partnership, and the Ballon d'Or returned to being solely awarded by France Football.

## 7. Award Criticisms and Controversies

- **Inclusion of Non-European Players:** The inclusion of players outside Europe has been controversial, as many critics argue that European players should be the primary focus.
- **Bias Toward Attackers:** Historically, attacking players like strikers and playmakers have dominated the award, leading to debates about the underrepresentation of defenders and goalkeepers, with Lev Yashin (1963) being the only goalkeeper to win.
- **Inconsistent Voting:** Sometimes, players with excellent performances are overlooked due to team achievements overshadowing individual ones, or voting errors.

## 8. Notable Controversies

- **Robert Lewandowski (2020):** Lewandowski had a record-breaking year, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the award was canceled that year. Many fans and analysts believed Lewandowski was the deserving winner.
- **Lionel Messi's 2021 win:** Messi won his 7<sup>th</sup> Ballon d'Or in 2021, in part due to his Copa América victory with Argentina, which sparked debates about whether he deserved it over players like Robert Lewandowski, who was arguably the standout player that season for club football.

## 9. Recent Developments

- **2023 Winner:** Lionel Messi won the Ballon d'Or for the 8<sup>th</sup> time in 2023 after leading Argentina to victory in the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.
- The award continues to evolve, with increased scrutiny on how it balances individual and team achievements.

## 10. Significance

- The Ballon d'Or is not just a personal accolade but a representation of a player's legacy in football history. It has the power to cement a player's status as one of the all-time greats, often influencing future endorsement deals, sponsorships, and media recognition.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. The Ballon d'Or was first awarded in \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The award was founded by \_\_\_\_\_ magazine to recognize the best European football player.
3. The Ballon d'Or trophy is a \_\_\_\_\_ ball atop a pedestal.
4. In 1995, the Ballon d'Or expanded its eligibility to include \_\_\_\_\_ players.



5. The Ballon d'Or voting system awards 6 points for a player who finishes in \_\_\_\_\_ place.
6. The 2024 Ballon d'Or winner, \_\_\_\_\_ of Manchester City, became the first defensive midfielder to win the award.
7. Real Madrid boycotted the 2024 Ballon d'Or ceremony in protest of \_\_\_\_\_ winning over Vinícius Jr.
8. The Ballon d'Or is generally based on a player's performance during the \_\_\_\_\_ year.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ holds the record for the most Ballon d'Or wins, with 7 awards as of 2024.
10. The female version of the Ballon d'Or, called the \_\_\_\_\_ d'Or, was introduced in 2018.

## 9. Balfour Declaration, 107 years on

- Arthur James Balfour (1848-1930), who held various powerful positions in the British government, was nicknamed 'Bloody Balfour' because of his brutal suppression of revolt in Ireland.
- However, it was a different action of his that has led to continued bloodshed, in a totally different part of the world.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> earl of Balfour lends his name to the Balfour Declaration, which promised British support in establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine.
- The Balfour Declaration was made on November 2, 1917. A century later, its violent ripples are still being felt in West Asia.

### Balfour Declaration: Details, Significance, and Effects

#### 1. Overview of the Balfour Declaration

- The Balfour Declaration was a statement issued by the British government on November 2, 1917, during the First World War.
- It was made in the form of a letter from Arthur James Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, to Lord Rothschild, a prominent leader of the British Jewish community.
- The declaration expressed the British government's support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine, then part of the Ottoman Empire, which was under British control following the defeat of the Ottomans in World War I.
- The exact wording of the declaration was:  
**"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object."**

#### 2. Context and Causes of the Balfour Declaration

- The declaration came at a time when the British were looking for support from different global communities in the fight against the Central Powers in World War I. Several factors contributed to the Balfour Declaration:
- **Strategic Interests:** Britain wanted to secure Jewish support in both Europe and the United States.
- The Jewish population, especially in the U.S., was influential, and Britain hoped that the declaration would rally them to the Allied cause.
- **Zionist Movement:** The declaration was heavily influenced by the growing Zionist movement that aimed at creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine.



- The movement had significant lobbying power in both Europe and the U.S., and many Zionist leaders viewed the declaration as a critical step toward their goal.
- **Colonial Interests:** The British government had its eye on the strategic importance of the region, particularly the Suez Canal and the route to India, and hoped that an eventual Jewish presence in Palestine could help strengthen British influence in the Middle East.

### 3. Significance of the Balfour Declaration

- **Foundation for Modern Israel:** The Balfour Declaration is considered a key historical document leading to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.
- It provided international legitimacy to the Zionist aspiration for a Jewish homeland in Palestine.
- **Endorsement of Zionism:** The declaration marked a major victory for the Zionist movement and set the stage for Jewish immigration to Palestine, which increased significantly after World War I, especially during the 1930s and 1940s.
- **International Recognition:** The declaration also represented the British government's official recognition of Jewish ties to Palestine, which would later be incorporated into international law and supported by the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine in 1922.

### 4. Effects of the Balfour Declaration

- The Balfour Declaration had significant political, social, and military implications for the Middle East and global geopolitics, leading to long-lasting consequences:
- **Increased Tensions in Palestine:** The declaration gave rise to increased Jewish immigration to Palestine, which led to tensions between the Jewish and Arab populations.
- Arabs in the region, who had hoped for independence after the Ottoman Empire's collapse, felt betrayed by the British, who they saw as favoring the Jewish national home.
- **Arab Opposition:** The Balfour Declaration was met with strong opposition from the Arab population in Palestine and the broader Arab world, who feared that it would result in the displacement of Arabs and undermine their aspirations for independence.
- Arab leaders felt that the declaration contradicted earlier British promises of Arab self-determination, such as the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence.
- **International Controversy:** The declaration was also controversial internationally, as it was seen as Britain making promises about a land (Palestine) that it did not fully control and without consulting its indigenous Arab population.
- This controversy continued through the British Mandate of Palestine and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- **The Creation of Israel (1948):** The Balfour Declaration laid the groundwork for the United Nations Partition Plan of 1947, which recommended the establishment of separate Jewish and Arab states in Palestine.
- The creation of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent Arab-Israeli conflict can be traced back to the tensions set in motion by the Balfour Declaration.
- **Legacy and Continuing Impact:** The legacy of the Balfour Declaration continues to influence Middle Eastern geopolitics, with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remaining a central issue.

### Establishment of Israel

- The declaration's implications are still a point of contention, particularly in debates about the rights of Palestinians and the legitimacy of Israel.

## Background and Pre-1948 Context

- The roots of Israel's establishment go back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the Zionist Movement, initiated by Theodor Herzl, advocating for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in response to anti-Semitism and persecution of Jews in Europe.
- The Balfour Declaration of 1917, issued by Britain, supported the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine, which was under British mandate after World War I.

## UN Partition Plan (1947)

- Following World War II, and the Holocaust, there was increased international support for the creation of a Jewish state. The United Nations proposed a Partition Plan in November 1947, recommending the division of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states.
- The Jewish community accepted the plan, but the Arab states and Palestinian Arab leaders rejected it, leading to tensions and conflict.

## Declaration of Independence

- On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion, the head of the Jewish Agency, proclaimed the independence of the State of Israel, hours before the British Mandate over Palestine expired.
- Ben-Gurion's declaration marked the establishment of a Jewish state in the land of Israel, in accordance with the Zionist movement's goals.

## Arab-Israeli War (1948-1949)

- The declaration of independence was followed by an immediate military intervention from neighboring Arab countries, including Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, which sought to prevent the establishment of Israel.
- The resulting Arab-Israeli War (also known as the War of Independence for Israelis, or Nakba, meaning "catastrophe" for Palestinians) lasted from 1948 to 1949, resulting in a ceasefire and the establishment of armistice lines.
- Israel emerged victorious, expanding its territory beyond the borders proposed in the UN Partition Plan.

## Aftermath and Impact

- The war caused the displacement of a significant number of Palestinians, leading to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- Israel's establishment was recognized by many countries, and it became a member of the United Nations in 1949.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. The Balfour Declaration was issued on \_\_\_\_\_ by the British government in 1917.
2. The Balfour Declaration expressed the British government's support for the establishment of a \_\_\_\_\_ for the Jewish people in Palestine.
3. The Balfour Declaration was written by British Foreign Secretary \_\_\_\_\_ to Lord Rothschild, a leader of the British Jewish community.
4. The Balfour Declaration was issued during \_\_\_\_\_, as Britain sought support from different global communities.
5. The Balfour Declaration was heavily influenced by the growing \_\_\_\_\_ that aimed at creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

6. The Balfour Declaration contributed to increased \_\_\_\_\_ to Palestine, resulting in tensions between Jewish and Arab populations.
7. The United Nations Partition Plan of 1947 recommended the division of Palestine into separate Jewish and \_\_\_\_\_ states.
8. The State of Israel was proclaimed on \_\_\_\_\_ by David Ben-Gurion, marking the establishment of a Jewish state.
9. The Arab-Israeli War of 1948-1949 is also known as the War of \_\_\_\_\_ for Israelis or Nakba for Palestinians.
10. The establishment of Israel in 1948 led to the displacement of a significant number of \_\_\_\_\_ contributing to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

## 10. First 'black hole triple' system discovered: What does it mean?

- A new study says scientists have discovered a “black hole triple” in space for the first time.
- The system comprises a black hole at its centre, currently in the process of consuming a small star spiraling very close to it.
- There is also a second star, which appears to be circling the black hole but is actually far away.
- The discovery of the system, located about 8,000 light years away from Earth (one light year is the distance light travels in a year, 9.5 trillion kilometre), has raised questions about how black holes are formed.
- A black hole is a region in space where the pull of gravity is so strong that no matter or light can escape it.
- Astronomers believe most black holes are formed after massive stars explode at the end of their lives — known as a supernova.
- However, the triple system suggests a gentler process.
- The study, ‘The black hole low-mass X-ray binary V404 Cygni is part of a wide triple’, was carried out by researchers at the California Institute of Technology and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

### The triple system

- Many black holes discovered until now have been part of binary systems, consisting of a black hole and a secondary object (such as a star or another black hole).
- But the black hole triple not only has one star which orbits the black hole about every 6.5 days, but also a more far-off star which orbits it every 70,000 years.
- Situated in the constellation of Cygnus, the system features one of the oldest known black holes, the V404 Cygni, which is nine times as big as the Sun in our solar system.
- Researchers accidentally discovered the distant star while looking through a repository of astronomical observations taken by telescopes.

## ‘Failed supernova’

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- Burdge and his colleagues have proposed that V404 Cygni has two stars around it as the black hole did not arise from a supernova, which typically kicks away outer stars in the explosion.
- Instead, it was formed through another process called “direct collapse”, where the star caves in after expending all its fuel, but does not explode.

## Black Hole

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- A black hole is a region of spacetime where the gravitational pull is so strong that nothing, not even light, can escape from it.
- This intense gravity results from a massive amount of matter being concentrated in a very small space.
- Black holes can form in several ways, but the most common way is when a massive star collapses under its own gravity at the end of its life cycle, creating a singularity surrounded by an event horizon.

## Here are key features of black holes

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- **Singularity:** At the center of a black hole is a point of infinite density, known as the singularity. The laws of physics as we know them cannot describe the conditions at this point.
- **Event Horizon:** The boundary surrounding a black hole is called the event horizon. Once something crosses this boundary, it cannot escape the black hole’s gravity, making the interior of the black hole invisible to outside observers.
- **Accretion Disk:** Matter that is drawn toward a black hole often forms a spinning disk of hot gas and debris known as an accretion disk. This disk emits radiation, which can sometimes be detected by astronomers.

## Types of Black Holes

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- There are several types of black holes, based on their size and mass:
  - **Stellar Black Holes:** These form from the remnants of massive stars that have undergone supernova explosions.
  - **Supermassive Black Holes:** These are found at the centers of most galaxies, including our own Milky Way. They can have millions or even billions of times the mass of our Sun.
  - **Intermediate Black Holes:** These are smaller than supermassive black holes but larger than stellar-mass black holes. Their existence is still a topic of research.
  - **Hawking Radiation:** A theoretical prediction by physicist Stephen Hawking suggests that black holes can emit a faint radiation due to quantum effects near the event horizon.
  - This radiation might eventually cause black holes to lose mass and “evaporate” over time.
  - **Gravitational Waves:** When black holes merge, they release a significant amount of energy in the form of gravitational waves, ripples in spacetime that can be detected by observatories like LIGO.

## Supernova

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- A supernova is a powerful and luminous stellar explosion that occurs when a star reaches the end of its life cycle.
- The explosion releases an immense amount of energy, briefly outshining an entire galaxy and radiating more light than the Sun will in its entire lifespan.
- Supernovae play a crucial role in the universe by dispersing elements such as carbon, oxygen, and iron into space, which are essential for the formation of new stars and planets.

## There are two primary types of supernovae:

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### Type I Supernovae

- These occur in binary star systems, where one star is a white dwarf (the remnant of a star that has exhausted its nuclear fuel).
- When the white dwarf accumulates too much matter from its companion star, it becomes unstable and explodes.
- Type I supernovae are further classified into subtypes (Ia, Ib, Ic) based on their spectral characteristics.

### Type II Supernovae

- These are the result of the collapse of a massive star (at least eight times the mass of the Sun).
- When the core of the star runs out of nuclear fuel, gravity causes the core to collapse, while the outer layers are ejected in a violent explosion.
- This type of supernova is often associated with the death of stars in the late stages of their life cycles.
- Supernovae are critical in the study of astrophysics, as they provide insights into the processes of star evolution, the creation of heavy elements, and the expansion of the universe.
- They are also used as “standard candles” to measure cosmic distances due to their predictable brightness.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. A “black hole triple” system was discovered for the first time, consisting of a black hole at the \_\_\_\_\_, a star spiraling close to it, and a second distant star orbiting it.
2. The newly discovered black hole system is located about \_\_\_\_\_ light years away from Earth.
3. A black hole is a region in space where the gravitational pull is so strong that \_\_\_\_\_ can escape from it.
4. Most black holes are believed to be formed after a massive star undergoes a \_\_\_\_\_ at the end of its life.
5. The newly discovered black hole triple system is located in the \_\_\_\_\_ constellation.
6. The black hole at the center of the system is known as \_\_\_\_\_, and it is nine times as big as the Sun.
7. The process of black hole formation suggested by the triple system is called “\_\_\_\_\_ collapse,” where a star caves in after using up its fuel without exploding.
8. The region surrounding a black hole, beyond which nothing can escape, is called the \_\_\_\_\_.
9. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a powerful and luminous stellar explosion that occurs when a star reaches the end of its life cycle.
10. The explosion of a massive star in a type II supernova results in the collapse of its \_\_\_\_\_, while the outer layers are ejected.