

MANTHAN

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1. One Nation One Subscription' (ONOS) initiative

- The Union Cabinet approved the 'One Nation One Subscription' (ONOS) initiative for centralised access to research articles and journal publication for government higher education institutions and research and development (R&D) laboratories of the central government.
- The central government has allocated Rs. 6,000 crore for ONOS until 2027. All higher education institutions under central or State governments and R&D institutions of central government can avail the benefits of the initiative through a national subscription.

What is ONOS?

- ONOS is a plan to consolidate researchers' subscriptions to prominent academic journals and other similar publications.
- Once in place, the ONOS initiative will provide access to journal articles to all individuals in India for one "centrally negotiated payment".
- The ONOS will replace individual institutional journal subscriptions.
- Subscriptions to scientific journals are a costly affair. According to research conducted by S. Chakraborty of the National Institute of Plant Genome Research, New Delhi, and other researchers and published in Current Science in April 2020, India spent around Rs. 1,500 crore on subscriptions for electronic and print journals in 2018. Institutions also spent around Rs. 30-50 crore on access to SCOPUS and Web of Science, which are popular citation databases.
- The Indian government spent around Rs. 995 crore on journal subscriptions in 2022.
- This included "the spending by the ten library consortia funded by different ministries/departments and self-subscriptions by individual government academic and R&D institutions".
- Overall, the total expenditure for 2019-2022 was estimated to be around Rs. 2,985 crore, Mr. Sarkar said.
- The ONOS initiative is also expected to include concessions on fees that authors have to pay to have their work published in open access journals.

History of the scheme

- ONOS was recommended as one of the objectives of the Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy 2020 to facilitate knowledge-sharing on an "equal partnership basis".
- A plan for ONOS was presented at a stakeholder consultation in August 2021, which was endorsed by the concerned ministries. Another round of negotiations for ONOS took place on October 11-12, and October 25, 2023.
- The negotiations were held with 41 publishers, which included journals and citation databases, according to the Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor. Popular STEM and social science publishers like Elsevier, Springer Nature, Taylor and Francis, and Wiley were a part of the process.

- A core committee had been constituted to implement ONOS. This committee consists of a secretary each from the Ministry of Education and the Department of Science and Technology, and a scientific secretary, and will be chaired by the Principal Scientific Advisor of the government of India.

Challenges of implementation

- The ONOS core committee notified two more blocs for the transition to ONOS: the planning and execution committee (PEC) and the cost negotiation committee (CNC).
- The PEC includes library consortia coordinators and representatives from government academic and R&D institutions. The main responsibility of this committee is to prepare a strategy to implement ONOS.
- The CNC is responsible to finalise membership terms and conditions and pricing details for the subscription. Its members are from the negotiation committees of the existing library consortia.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. The Union Cabinet approved the ‘_____’ initiative to centralize access to research articles and journal publications for government higher education institutions and R&D laboratories.
2. The ONOS initiative has been allocated Rs. _____ crore by the central government until 2027.
3. ONOS aims to replace individual institutional journal subscriptions with a single, centrally _____ payment for access to journals.
4. According to research conducted by S. Chakraborty, India spent approximately Rs. _____ crore on electronic and print journal subscriptions in 2018.
5. Institutions spent around Rs. 30-50 crore on access to popular citation databases like _____ and Web of Science.
6. The ONOS initiative will provide concessions on the fees authors pay to have their work published in _____ access journals.
7. ONOS was recommended as an objective of the Science, Technology, and _____ Policy 2020.
8. A plan for ONOS was presented at a stakeholder consultation in _____ 2021 and endorsed by concerned ministries.
9. A core committee chaired by the Principal Scientific Advisor was constituted to implement ONOS, including secretaries from the Ministry of Education and the Department of _____.
10. The Cost Negotiation Committee (CNC) under ONOS is responsible for finalizing membership terms and _____ details for the subscription.

2. Climate-Induced Poisoning and Mass Elephant Deaths in Botswana

- Over 350 elephants died under mysterious circumstances in Botswana’s Okavango Delta, which researchers now attribute to climate-induced poisoning from toxic water contaminated with harmful

algal blooms. This event, described as a “conservation disaster,” highlights a growing trend of mass wildlife mortality linked to climate change.

Cause of Death: Cyanobacteria Blooms

- Scientists believe the elephants were poisoned by water containing blooms of cyanobacteria, also known as blue-green algae.
- These harmful blooms have been intensified by the climate crisis, which is increasing their frequency, severity, and geographical distribution.
- The affected elephants exhibited unusual behavior, such as walking in circles, before collapsing and dying.
- The carcasses were first reported in northeastern Botswana in May and June 2020. Despite speculation about other potential causes, such as cyanide poisoning or an unidentified disease, the new research supports the algal bloom hypothesis.
- Researchers analyzed satellite data to map the location of carcasses relative to nearby waterholes.
- They found a strong correlation between waterholes with increased cyanobacteria blooms and the concentration of elephant deaths. On average, the elephants traveled over 100 kilometers (62 miles) from these waterholes and died within 88 hours of drinking.
- Direct testing of water samples was not conducted because no samples were available at the time of the study.

Broader Ecological Impacts

- While elephants were the primary species affected, other animals may also have succumbed to the toxic water.
- However, smaller carcasses were likely scavenged or missed during aerial surveys.
- The deaths underscore the vulnerability of wildlife in regions where access to safe water is limited.
- “They have no choice but to drink from them,” noted a researcher, highlighting the plight of animals facing increasingly hostile environmental conditions.

Climate Change and Wildlife Mortality

- This incident is part of a worrying global trend of sudden, climate-induced diseases and mass mortality events. The study references other climate-linked wildlife die-offs, such as:
- The death of 35 elephants in Zimbabwe in 2020, caused by an obscure bacterium linked to prolonged drought.
- The catastrophic loss of 200,000 saiga antelope in Kazakhstan in 2015 due to haemorrhagic septicaemia, a blood poisoning exacerbated by climatic factors.
- Experts warn that such events are becoming more common as climate change reshapes ecosystems.
- Rising temperatures, prolonged droughts, and erratic rainfall patterns create conditions conducive to the proliferation of harmful bacteria and algae.
- These pathogens not only threaten wildlife but also pose risks to livestock and human populations.

Environmental Conditions in Southern Africa

- In southern Africa, 2019 was one of the driest years in decades, followed by an exceptionally wet year in 2020.

- This abrupt shift in weather conditions contributed to increased sediment and nutrient suspension in water bodies, fueling algal growth. Such climatic variability, projected to intensify with global warming, is expected to make large swathes of the planet hotter, drier, and prone to intermittent heavy rains.
- These changes will likely exacerbate the challenges faced by wildlife in accessing safe and reliable water sources.

Conservation Implications

- The study's findings offer a compelling explanation for the 2020 mass die-off of elephants, a tragedy that shocked the world.
- It also adds to the mounting evidence of climate change's lethal effects on wildlife. From altering water availability to fostering environments that enable harmful microorganisms to thrive, climate change is increasingly driving biodiversity loss.
- Experts emphasize that such mass-mortality events can accelerate species decline and push vulnerable populations toward extinction.
- Elephants, which are already under threat from habitat loss and poaching, face additional challenges from climate-induced environmental changes.
- This underscores the urgent need for conservation strategies that address the multifaceted impacts of climate change on ecosystems and wildlife.

Conclusion

- The 2020 Botswana elephant deaths highlight a critical intersection between climate change and wildlife conservation.
- As the planet warms, the frequency of similar incidents is expected to rise, posing significant challenges for biodiversity preservation.
- This study serves as a stark reminder of the far-reaching and often unexpected consequences of the climate crisis, reinforcing the need for global action to mitigate its impacts on both wildlife and human communities.

Okavango Delta

- The Okavango Delta, located in northern Botswana, is one of the world's largest inland deltas and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is a unique ecosystem formed where the Okavango River fans out into the Kalahari Desert, creating a lush and dynamic wetland system.

Biodiversity Hotspot

- The delta supports a diverse range of wildlife, including elephants, lions, leopards, cheetahs, giraffes, hippos, crocodiles, and over 400 bird species.
- It's a critical refuge for endangered species such as the African wild dog and the wattled crane.

Seasonal Flooding

- The flooding, primarily from rainfall in the Angolan highlands, occurs between May and September. This unusual timing makes it a dry-season haven for wildlife.

Traditional and Cultural Importance

- The delta is home to local communities, including the Bayei and Hambukushu people, who rely on it for fishing, hunting, and gathering.

- It holds spiritual significance for some indigenous groups.

Tourism

- The delta is a prime destination for safari enthusiasts. Activities include mokoro (dugout canoe) excursions, walking safaris, and game drives.
- It offers some of the most luxurious eco-lodges in Africa.

Conservation Challenges

- Threats include climate change, upstream water extraction, and poaching.
- Botswana has implemented strong conservation policies to protect the delta's ecological integrity.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. The mysterious deaths of over 350 elephants in Botswana's Okavango Delta in 2020 were attributed to climate-induced poisoning from toxic water contaminated with _____ blooms.
2. Cyanobacteria blooms, also known as _____ algae, have been intensified by the climate crisis, increasing their frequency and geographical distribution.
3. The affected elephants displayed unusual behavior, such as walking in _____, before collapsing and dying.
4. The mass mortality event in Botswana highlights a global trend of sudden, climate-induced diseases and _____ mortality events.
5. Rising temperatures, prolonged _____, and erratic rainfall patterns create conditions conducive to the proliferation of harmful bacteria and algae.
6. The Okavango Delta, located in northern Botswana, is one of the world's largest inland deltas and a _____ World Heritage Site.
7. The delta supports diverse wildlife, including elephants, lions, and over _____ bird species, making it a biodiversity hotspot.
8. The flooding of the Okavango Delta occurs between May and _____, providing a dry-season haven for wildlife.
9. In southern Africa, 2019 was one of the _____ years in decades, followed by an exceptionally wet year in 2020, contributing to increased algal growth.
10. Mass mortality events, like the 2020 Botswana incident, accelerate species decline and pose significant challenges for _____ preservation.

3. Billionaire Gautam Adani charged in US over alleged \$250m bribery plot

Allegations Against Gautam Adani

- Gautam Adani, chair of the Adani Group and one of the world's wealthiest individuals, has been indicted in New York on charges of securities fraud and conspiring to commit securities and wire fraud.

- The charges stem from an alleged scheme to pay \$250 million in bribes to Indian government officials to secure lucrative solar energy contracts.
- These contracts were expected to yield \$2 billion in profits over 20 years.
- The indictment, filed by the US attorney's office in Brooklyn, also implicates two other executives of Adani Green Energy, a renewable energy company under the Adani Group.

Allegations and Charges

- According to US prosecutors, the alleged bribery took place between 2020 and 2024 and was intended to ensure the company's dominance in the solar energy sector.
- The bribes were purportedly disguised to mislead US investors, raising \$175 million from them in the process.
- The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has also brought charges against Adani and his associates, labeling the scheme as a "massive bribery scheme." Arrest warrants have been issued for Adani and his nephew, Sagar Adani.
- US prosecutors plan to forward these warrants to foreign law enforcement agencies.

Reactions from Adani Group

- The Adani Group has strongly denied the allegations, calling them baseless. In a statement, the conglomerate emphasized that charges in the indictment remain allegations until proven in court. They also assured that all legal avenues would be explored to challenge the accusations.

Market Impact

- The allegations triggered a sharp decline in Adani Group's stock market value. Shares of Adani Green Energy, at the center of the controversy, plunged by 17%, while other Adani companies saw losses exceeding 10%.
- The conglomerate's total market capitalization dropped by \$28 billion in a single trading day.
- Additionally, Adani Green Energy canceled a planned \$600 million bond sale in response to the fallout.
- These declines represent the group's most significant financial setback since February 2023, when a short-seller report from Hindenburg Research accused the conglomerate of stock manipulation, accounting fraud, and money laundering.

Previous Controversy: Hindenburg Research

- The current allegations are reminiscent of the claims made by Hindenburg Research in 2023, which accused the Adani Group of engaging in a "brazen" scheme of stock manipulation and financial irregularities.
- At the time, the Adani Group dismissed those allegations as a mix of misinformation and outdated, baseless accusations.

Statements from US Authorities

- Breon Peace, the US attorney for the Eastern District of New York, described the alleged bribery scheme as elaborate and far-reaching, involving deceitful practices to secure contracts and mislead investors.
- Lisa Miller, deputy assistant attorney general, highlighted that the offenses alleged in the indictment include bribery, lying to investors and banks to raise billions, and obstructing justice. She emphasized that the scheme prioritized corporate gain at the expense of US investors.

Financial Standing and Global Profile

- Gautam Adani is currently the 18th richest person in the world, with an estimated personal fortune of \$85 billion, according to Bloomberg.
- His wealth and influence have made him a prominent figure in global business, particularly in sectors like renewable energy, infrastructure, and logistics.

Implications and Next Steps

- The legal proceedings in the US represent a significant challenge for the Adani Group, which has already faced intense scrutiny over its business practices.
- The allegations could impact the conglomerate's international partnerships and investor confidence, particularly in sectors that require substantial foreign investment.
- As the case unfolds, the Adani Group will likely mount a robust legal defense while attempting to stabilize its market position and reassure stakeholders.
- This case underscores the growing emphasis on corporate accountability and the risks faced by global conglomerates accused of unethical practices.

Gautam Adani

- Gautam Adani is an Indian billionaire industrialist and the founder and chairman of the Adani Group, a multinational conglomerate based in India.
- His group is known for its diversified operations, spanning ports, logistics, power generation, renewable energy, natural resources, and airports.
- Adani has consistently ranked among the wealthiest individuals globally and is recognized for his role in transforming India's infrastructure and energy sectors.

Adani Group

- Established in 1988 as a commodity trading business, it has grown into one of India's largest business conglomerates.
- Operates major infrastructure assets, including Mundra Port, India's largest commercial port.

Renewable Energy

- Adani is a significant player in renewable energy, aiming to become the world's largest renewable energy producer by 2030.
- The group has made significant investments in solar and wind energy projects globally.

Airports and Aviation

- The Adani Group operates some of India's busiest airports, including those in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and Bangalore, making it a major player in Indian aviation infrastructure.

Net Worth

- Adani has consistently been ranked among the richest individuals in the world, often appearing on Forbes' and Bloomberg's billionaires lists.
- His wealth saw significant growth during India's infrastructure and renewable energy boom.

Controversies

- Adani has faced scrutiny and criticism over issues like alleged monopolistic practices, environmental concerns, and financial transparency.
- The group has also been subject to regulatory reviews and investigations domestically and internationally.

Recent Developments

- Adani's business interests continue to expand globally, including investments in Australia (Carmichael coal mine project), Israel (Haifa Port), and Africa (infrastructure projects).

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

- Gautam Adani, chair of the Adani Group, has been indicted in New York on charges of securities fraud and conspiring to commit securities and _____ fraud.
- The allegations against Adani stem from an alleged scheme to pay _____ million in bribes to Indian government officials to secure solar energy contracts.
- The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) labeled the alleged scheme involving Adani and his associates as a "massive _____ scheme."
- Following the allegations, the market capitalization of Adani Group fell by _____ billion in a single trading day.
- The allegations against Adani include misleading US investors and raising _____ million from them under false pretenses.
- In response to the market fallout, Adani Green Energy canceled a planned _____ million bond sale.
- The allegations against Adani are reminiscent of a 2023 short-seller report by _____ Research, accusing the group of stock manipulation and fraud.
- Gautam Adani is currently ranked as the _____ richest person in the world, with an estimated fortune of \$85 billion.
- The Adani Group aims to become the world's largest renewable energy producer by the year _____.
- The Adani Group operates Mundra Port, which is recognized as India's largest _____ port.

4. India re-elected to U.N. Peacebuilding Commission

- India has been re-elected to the U.N. Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) for 2025–2026.
- India's current term on the Commission was expiring on December 31.
- "India has been re-elected to the U.N. Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) for 2025–2026. As a founding member and major contributor to @UNPeacekeeping, India is committed to continuing its engagement with the PBC to work towards global peace and stability," the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations said.
- The Peacebuilding Commission is an intergovernmental advisory body that supports peace efforts in conflict-affected countries and is a key addition to the capacity of the International Community in the broad peace agenda.
- The PBC is composed of 31 Member States, elected from the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Economic and Social Council.

- The top financial contributing countries and the top troop-contributing countries to the United Nations system are also members.
- The Commission is mandated to bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery; to focus attention on the reconstruction and institution-building efforts necessary for recovery from conflict and to support the development of integrated strategies in order to lay the foundation for sustainable development.
- It is also mandated to provide recommendations and information to improve the coordination of all relevant actors within and outside the United Nations, to develop best practices, to help to ensure predictable financing for early recovery activities and to extend the period of attention given by the international community to post-conflict recovery, the Commission said.
- The Commission also focuses on promoting an integrated, strategic and coherent approach to peacebuilding, noting that security, development and human rights are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing; serving a bridging role among the principal organs and relevant entities of the United Nations by sharing advice on peacebuilding needs and priorities, in line with the respective competencies and responsibilities of these bodies.
- India is among the largest contributors of uniformed personnel to U.N. Peacekeeping.
- It currently deploys about 6,000 military and police personnel to UN operations in Abyei, the Central African Republic, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon, the Middle East, Somalia, South Sudan, and Western Sahara.
- Nearly 180 Indian peacekeepers have made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty, the highest number by far from any troop-contributing country.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. India has been re-elected to the U.N. _____ Commission (PBC) for 2025–2026.
2. The U.N. Peacebuilding Commission is composed of _____ Member States, elected from the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Economic and Social Council.
3. India is among the largest contributors of uniformed personnel to U.N. _____.
4. Nearly _____ Indian peacekeepers have made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty, the highest number by far from any troop-contributing country.
5. The U.N. Peacebuilding Commission focuses on promoting an integrated, strategic, and coherent approach to peacebuilding, noting that security, development, and _____ are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing.
6. India currently deploys about _____ military and police personnel to U.N. operations in various conflict-affected regions.

5. U.K. Parliament vote in favour of historic assisted dying bill for terminally ill adults

- Members of Parliament (MPs) in the UK House of Commons voted in favor of the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, a landmark proposal allowing terminally ill adults in England and Wales, with a life expectancy of six months or less, to request medical assistance to end their lives.
- The bill, introduced as a private member's initiative by Labour MP Kim Leadbeater, passed its second reading with 330 votes in favor and 275 against, securing a majority of 55 votes.
- This development marks a significant step towards legalizing assisted dying, although the legislation still requires further scrutiny and amendments in the House of Lords before becoming law.
- The vote was held as a free vote, allowing MPs to make decisions based on their personal beliefs rather than party lines. Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who voted in favor, emphasized that the decision was a matter of conscience and stated that it was for Parliament to determine changes to the law. The bill's progression highlights a dramatic shift from 2015, when a similar proposal was overwhelmingly defeated at the second reading stage.
- The proposed legislation includes what Leadbeater describes as "the most robust safeguards" for assisted dying laws globally.
- Key provisions include the requirement for approval from two independent doctors and a High Court judge before a terminally ill person can proceed.
- Additionally, the individual must self-administer the medication to end their life. Strict penalties, including a maximum 14-year prison sentence, are stipulated for anyone coercing someone into requesting assisted dying or taking lethal medicine.
- During the Commons debate, Leadbeater clarified the bill's intent, stating, "We are not talking about a choice between life or death – we are talking about giving people a choice about how to die."
- The bill seeks to offer terminally ill individuals a dignified option to shorten their suffering while safeguarding against potential misuse.
- The issue has polarized MPs, sparking extensive debates. Supporters argue the bill respects personal autonomy and provides relief to those experiencing unbearable suffering.
- Former Prime Minister David Cameron and recently elected British Indian Conservative MP Neil Shastri-Hurst, who has a background in surgery and medical law, expressed strong support for the legislation.
- Shastri-Hurst emphasized the importance of ensuring individuals have access to "the death they deserve." Other prominent figures who voted in favor include former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy.
- Conversely, opponents of the bill raised concerns about the potential exploitation of vulnerable individuals.
- They fear that legalizing assisted dying might pressure some people into choosing it against their true wishes.
- Notable critics include Priti Patel, the shadow foreign secretary, and former Home Secretary Suella Braverman, who voted against the bill.
- The bill has also drawn significant public and political attention. Leadbeater has been actively campaigning for weeks to build momentum, emphasizing the extensive safeguards embedded in the legislation.
- Public figures and stakeholders from diverse sectors weighed in, with supporters highlighting the humanitarian aspects and critics cautioning against unintended consequences.
- Vote represents a pivotal moment in the UK's ongoing debate on assisted dying.

- While the bill's approval at the second reading stage demonstrates growing acceptance among MPs, its future remains uncertain as it proceeds to the House of Lords.
- The process will involve detailed examination, potential amendments, and further debates before the legislation can achieve final approval and implementation.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. The Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, introduced by Labour MP Kim Leadbeater, passed its second reading in the UK House of Commons with a majority of _____ votes.
2. The proposed legislation requires approval from two independent doctors and a _____ before a terminally ill individual can proceed with assisted dying.
3. During the debate, Labour MP Kim Leadbeater stated, "We are not talking about a choice between life or death – we are talking about giving people a choice about _____."
4. Critics of the bill, including Priti Patel and Suella Braverman, expressed concerns about the potential _____ of vulnerable individuals.
5. The vote on the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill was held as a _____ vote, allowing MPs to decide based on their personal beliefs rather than party lines.

6. Why November 26 is being observed as Constitution Day since 2015

- On November 26, 1949, the Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution of India, and it came into effect on January 26, 1950.
- While January 26 is celebrated as Republic Day, since 2015, November 26 is annually observed as the Constitution Day of India, or Samvidhan Divas.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi conveyed his wishes for the day and shared a video where he previously called the document the "guiding light" of India.

Why is November 26 observed as Constitution Day?

- In May 2015, the Union Cabinet announced that November 26 would be observed as Constitution Day to promote "constitutional values amongst citizens".
- That year also marked the 125th birth anniversary of BR Ambedkar, the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution. K.M. Munshi, Muhammed Saadulah and Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyer were also among the committee's members.
- "This year, the country is celebrating 125th birth Anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.
- The 'Constitution Day' will be a part of these year-long nationwide celebrations.
- This will be a tribute to Dr. Ambedkar, who played a seminal role in the framing of the Indian Constitution as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of Constituent Assembly."

Ambedkar as focus

- The central government's decision was also seen as a move to claim Ambedkar's legacy, in a bid to reach out to the Dalit community. Following the Cabinet meeting in 2015, then Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment Thawar Chand Gehlot said, "Rahul Gandhi and his party never honoured Ambedkar. Neither did he get the Bharat Ratna nor was his oil painting installed in Parliament premises as long Congress was in power."
- At the time, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment decided to undertake several activities to promote Ambedkar's ideas and philosophy, which included the setting up of the Ambedkar International Centre at 15, Janpath in New Delhi at a cost of over Rs. 197 crore.
- On November 19, 2015, the government formally notified November 26 as Constitution Day.
- Before this, the day was observed as National Law Day as Ambedkar was also the first Law Minister of India.

How the Indian Constitution was adopted

- The Constituent Assembly, the body meant to draft the Constitution of India, held its first session on December 9, 1946, attended by 207 members. Initially, the assembly had 389 members, but after Independence and the Partition of India, the strength was reduced to 299.
- The assembly took over three years to draft the constitution, spending over 114 days considering the content of the draft alone.
- A range of sources were consulted for the draft, including the Constitutions of other countries, and suitable amendments were made to adapt the provisions to what India needed at the time.
- Another major source was the Government of India Act of 1935.
- It introduced bicameralism — upper and lower Houses — at the Centre and in six provinces along with direct elections to these chambers.
- At the time, it was one of the longest pieces of legislation passed in the British Parliament.
- On December 13, 1946, Nehru moved the "Objectives Resolution" that was later adopted as the Preamble on January 22, 1947, to encapsulate the basic philosophy of the Constitution.
- The Drafting Committee chaired by Ambedkar was one among the over 17 committees of the Constituent Assembly.
- Their task was to prepare a Draft Constitution for India. Out of some 7,600 amendments tabled, this committee removed about 2,400 amendments while debating and deliberating the Constitution.
- The last session of the Constituent Assembly ended on November 26, 1949, when the Constitution was adopted, and two months later on January 26, 1950 it came into effect after 284 members signed it.
- January 26 was chosen since the Congress' Poorna Swaraj resolution was declared on this day in the year 1930.

Indian Constitution

- The Indian Constitution, adopted on 26th November 1949 and enforced on 26th January 1950, is the supreme law of India.
- It establishes the framework for the political principles, structures, powers, and duties of government institutions, as well as the rights and duties of citizens. Here's an overview.

Longest Written Constitution

- The Indian Constitution is the longest written constitution in the world, with 448 articles in 25 parts, 12 schedules, and numerous amendments.

Preamble

- Declares India a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic and secures justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity for its citizens.

Fundamental Rights

Ensures six basic rights

- Right to Equality
- Right to Freedom
- Right against Exploitation
- Right to Freedom of Religion
- Cultural and Educational Rights
- Right to Constitutional Remedies

Fundamental Duties

- Added by the 42nd Amendment Act (1976), listing 11 duties for citizens under Article 51A.

Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSPs)

- Guidelines for the government to ensure socio-economic justice, detailed in Part IV.

Parliamentary System

- Modeled after the British Parliamentary System, it consists of the President, Lok Sabha, and Rajya Sabha.

Federal Structure with Unitary Bias

- A quasi-federal system, dividing powers between the Centre and the States through three lists:
 - Union List
 - State List
 - Concurrent List

Independent Judiciary

- The Supreme Court, High Courts, and subordinate courts ensure the rule of law, with powers of judicial review.

Amendability

- The Constitution can be amended under Article 368, allowing it to adapt over time. So far, 105 amendments have been made.

Secularism

- Ensures the state treats all religions equally and does not establish or promote any religion as a state religion.

Universal Adult Franchise

- Grants voting rights to all citizens aged 18 years or above (reduced from 21 years by the 61st Amendment Act, 1988).

Significance

- **Social Justice:** Ensures equality and prohibits discrimination based on caste, religion, sex, or birthplace.

- **Democratic Governance:** Empowers citizens to participate in the democratic process.
- **Unity in Diversity:** Provides a framework to govern a nation of diverse cultures, languages, and religions.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. On _____, the Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution of India, and it came into effect on January 26, _____.
2. November 26 is annually observed as _____ Day in India, since _____.
3. The decision to observe November 26 as Constitution Day was made by the Union Cabinet in _____.
4. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution, was born on _____.
5. The Constituent Assembly's first session was held on _____ and initially had _____ members.
6. The Constitution of India was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on _____ and came into effect on _____.
7. The Indian Constitution is the _____ written constitution in the world, with _____ articles.
8. The Preamble to the Indian Constitution declares India to be a _____, _____, _____, and _____ Republic.
9. The Fundamental Rights of the Indian Constitution ensure six basic rights, including the _____ to Equality and the _____ to Freedom.
10. The Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSPs) are detailed in _____ of the Indian Constitution and provide guidelines for the government to ensure _____ justice.

7. Income Tax Department has introduced new PAN 2.0 project

- The 10-digit alphanumeric Permanent Account Number (PAN) issued by the Income Tax Department is set to have a slew of upgrades – enhancement of the QR code feature for new and old cards, a completely online application process and a merger of all existing identification numbers to make PAN as the common identifier for businesses.
- Additionally, a “PAN data vault system” will be created for all entities using PAN data, for data protection and cybersecurity purposes.
- The Union Cabinet approved the PAN 2.0 Project to make PAN the “single source of truth and data consistency”.
- With PAN already linked to Aadhaar, it is expected to become a strong source of identification and information for authorities.
- Existing PAN cards will continue to be valid under PAN 2.0, as per the FAQs issued by the Finance Ministry.
- Existing PAN holders need not mandatorily apply for the new card but could upgrade their PAN free of cost.

- The number or PAN would remain the same. The allotment or update or correction of PAN will be done free of cost and e-PAN will be sent to the registered email ID.
- For a physical PAN card, the applicant has to make a request along with a fee of Rs. 50 (domestic).
- For delivery of cards outside India, Rs. 15 plus postal charges will be charged, the FAQs said.

What is the PAN 2.0 Project?

- PAN enables the I-T Department to link transactions such as tax payments, Tax Deducted at Source (TDS)/Tax Collected at Source (TCS) credits and income returns with the department.
- Essentially, PAN acts as an identifier for the person with the tax department and remains the same once allotted.
- Further, TAN stands for Tax Deduction and Collection Account Number, a 10-digit alphanumeric number issued by the I-T Department.
- TAN has to be obtained by people responsible for deducting or collecting tax at source.
- It is compulsory to quote TAN in TDS/TCS return, any TDS/TCS payment challan and TDS/TCS certificates.
- The PAN 2.0 Project, with a financial implication of Rs. 1,435 crore, was approved by the Union Cabinet.
- Under it, the existing PAN system will be upgraded and its IT backbone will be revamped, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said during the Cabinet briefing.
- “There were repeated demands from the industry to have a common business identifier.
- They used to say they don’t want different (identification) numbers, a single number would be beneficial.
- The project will make efforts to make PAN as the common business identifier.
- All PAN/ TAN/ TIN will be clubbed under this system,” he said.
- Currently, PAN-related services are spread across three platforms: the e-filing portal, the UTITSL portal, and the Protean e-Gov portal. These services will now be integrated into a single, unified portal.
- “This one-stop platform will handle comprehensively issues/matters related to PAN and TAN... By doing so, the I-T Department endeavours to simplify processes, eliminate delays, and improve grievance redressal mechanisms,” the FAQs said.

What are the features of PAN 2.0?

- The QR code feature, which began in 2017-18, helps validate the PAN. This feature will continue with some enhancements.
- The project also aims to set up a “mandatory PAN data vault system” for all entities using PAN data, including financial institutions, government agencies, and central and state government departments through an online validation service.
- “The PAN related information is used by many entities such as banks, insurance companies... So, those (entities) who take details of PAN, they will have to keep PAN data safely, mandatorily through the data vault system,” Vaishnaw said.
- The project will enable a technology-driven transformation of taxpayer registration services to improve ease of access and service delivery.

What does it mean for individuals and businesses?

- Of the 78 crore PAN cards issued, 98 per cent belong to individuals.
- A senior Finance Ministry official told that “PAN holders having an old PAN Card without QR code have an option to apply for a new card with QR code.
- In PAN 2.0, the submission of applications is going to be online (paperless).” Also, PAN 2.0 will help weed out duplicate PANs and minimise instances of one person holding more than one PAN.

QR Code (Quick Response Code)

- A QR Code (Quick Response Code) is a type of matrix barcode that can store a significant amount of data, such as text, URLs, or other information, in a two-dimensional pattern.
- It was first invented in 1994 by a Japanese company, Denso Wave, to track automotive parts. QR codes are widely used due to their ability to quickly convey information that can be scanned using a smartphone, tablet, or dedicated QR code reader.

Two-Dimensional: Unlike traditional barcodes that are one-dimensional, QR codes store data both horizontally and vertically, allowing for more information in a smaller space.

Versatile: Can store various types of data, such as:

- URLs
- Text
- Contact information (vCards)
- Wi-Fi credentials
- Payment information

Error Correction: QR codes can still be scanned even if they are partially damaged, thanks to error correction mechanisms (Levels L, M, Q, H).

Fast Scanning: Designed for high-speed scanning and interpretation.

Customizable: Can include logos, colors, and designs for branding without compromising functionality.

Common Uses:

- Marketing and advertising (e.g., linking to websites or promotional content)
- Contactless payments (e.g., UPI or PayPal)
- Product tracking and inventory management
- Sharing Wi-Fi passwords
- Event tickets and boarding passes
- Healthcare (e.g., vaccine certificates, medical records)

How to Generate a QR Code:

- Use an online QR code generator (e.g., QR Code Monkey, QRStuff, QRickit).
- Enter the data (text, URL, etc.) you want to encode.
- Customize the design (optional).
- Download the QR code as an image file (e.g., PNG, SVG, or JPEG).

How to Scan a QR Code:

- Open the camera app or a QR code scanning app on your smartphone.

- Point the camera at the QR code.
- Tap the link or action that appears.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. The PAN 2.0 Project, with a financial implication of Rs. _____, was approved by the Union Cabinet.
2. Under the PAN 2.0 system, all PAN, _____, and TIN numbers will be integrated to create a common business identifier.
3. PAN 2.0 will feature an upgraded _____ to ensure the secure storage and validation of PAN data for entities using it.
4. Existing PAN cards will remain valid under PAN 2.0, but holders can upgrade their cards free of cost to include a _____.
5. Currently, PAN-related services are offered on three platforms: the e-filing portal, _____, and the Protean e-Gov portal.
6. The PAN 2.0 Project aims to transform taxpayer registration services to enhance _____ and service delivery.
7. In the PAN 2.0 system, individuals can receive an e-PAN at their registered email ID without any charge, but a physical PAN card will incur a fee of Rs. _____ for domestic delivery.
8. The QR code feature, introduced in 2017-18, will continue under PAN 2.0 with _____ to validate PAN details effectively.
9. A key objective of the PAN 2.0 Project is to eliminate delays and improve _____ mechanisms for PAN and TAN-related issues.
10. Of the 78 crore PAN cards issued, _____ per cent belong to individuals.

8. Proba-3, the advanced European solar mission that ISRO will launch

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will launch the European Space Agency's Proba-3 mission on its PSLV rocket to study the solar corona, the outermost and hottest part of the Sun's atmosphere, from Sriharikota.
- The mission will also attempt the first-ever "precision formation flying", where two satellites will fly together and maintain a fixed configuration in space.
- This is the latest solar mission in ESA's Proba suite of missions. Its predecessors Proba-1 (also launched by ISRO) and Proba-2 were launched in 2001 and 2009, respectively. Teams of scientists from Spain, Belgium, Poland, Italy and Switzerland have worked on Proba-3.

What is Proba-3?

- Developed at an estimated cost of 200 million euros, Proba-3 has an expected mission life of two years. It will be launched into a highly elliptical orbit measuring around 600 x 60,530 km and have an orbital period of 19.7 hours.

- The mission is designed with two satellites that will be launched together, separate from each other and then fly in tandem. They will then form a solar coronagraph, an instrument that helps block out the bright light emitted by the Sun to reveal the objects and atmosphere around it.

What will Proba-3 study?

- Due to the corona's temperature, going up to 2 million degrees Fahrenheit, it is difficult for any instrument to observe it closely.
- However, it is important for scientific study, as all space weather and its associated turbulences — solar storms, solar winds, etc. — originate from the corona.
- These phenomena influence space weather and can potentially interfere with the smooth operations of all satellite-based communications, navigation, and power grids on Earth. To study these, Proba-3 will have three instruments onboard:
- The Association of Spacecraft for Polarimetric and Imaging Investigation of the Corona of the Sun (ASPIICS) or the coronagraph.
- Its field of view is between the Sun's outer and inner corona, a circular belt normally observable during solar eclipse events.
- The instrument has a 1.4-metre diameter occulting disk mounted on it, to block the Sun's light and facilitate a close-up view of this belt.
- The Digital Absolute Radiometer (DARA) will maintain a continuous measurement of the Sun's total energy output, known as the total solar irradiance.
- The 3D Energetic Electron Spectrometer (3DEES) will measure electron fluxes as it passes through Earth's radiation belts, providing data for space weather studies.

Why is Proba-3 unique?

- The two satellites — Occulter Spacecraft (weighing 200 kg) and the Coronagraph Spacecraft (weighing 340 kg) — will mimic a natural solar eclipse. They will manoeuvre precisely in Earth's orbit so that one satellite casts a shadow onto the other.
- A naturally occurring solar eclipse allows solar physicists to observe and study the Sun's corona for 10 minutes, across an average of about 1.5 eclipse events per year.
- Proba-3 will give six hours, equivalent to 50 such events annually, which will help deepen understanding of the Sun's corona like never before.
- Both the Occulter and the Coronagraph will face the Sun at all times. They will maintain a formation of a few millimetres and then move to a position where they will be 150 metres apart for six hours at a time.
- One satellite will act as a viewing telescope, kept at the centre of a shadow cast by the other satellite positioned 150 metres away.
- This positioning will facilitate observing the Sun's corona and will be autonomously achieved through precise flight formation.
- If done successfully, the Occulter will create an artificial yet stable eclipse, by masking large parts of the Sun. As a result, the Sun's blinding light will get blocked and only the solar corona will be visible to the coronagraph, which will photograph and facilitate studies of the lesser-known features.

How might India benefit from Proba-3?

- Proba-3 is being called ESA's technology demonstration mission.

- The fact that ISRO has been designated to launch the mission demonstrates India's reliable space launch facilities and growing space capabilities. A cost-effective launch is also one of the highlights of the mission.
- There is a strong possibility that the Indian solar physicist community will get exclusive access to the Proba-3 data.
- A few Indian solar physicists have also been involved in conceptualising the scientific goals of this mission along with their Belgian counterparts.

European Space Agency

- The European Space Agency (ESA) is an intergovernmental organization founded in 1975 with 22 member countries dedicated to space exploration.
- Headquartered in Paris, the ESA employs approximately 2,547 staff worldwide as of 2023, and it had an annual budget of €7.8 billion for 2024.
- Its mission encompasses a broad range of activities, including human spaceflight, planetary exploration (e.g., Mars and the Moon), Earth observation, scientific research, telecommunications, and the development of launch vehicles.
- ESA's spaceflight programs include the operation of crewless exploration missions and the maintenance of the Guiana Space Centre in French Guiana, a major European spaceport.
- One of the key ESA initiatives is the Ariane rocket series, developed to carry scientific and commercial payloads into space.
- The Ariane 6, the latest in the series, is set to launch in 2024 after a successful engine test in November 2023. The ESA shares the costs of developing and launching this vehicle with Arianespace.
- In addition to its own projects, the ESA collaborates extensively with NASA. Notable joint missions include the International Ultraviolet Explorer (IUE), the first high-orbit telescope, launched in 1978; the Cassini-Huygens space probe to Saturn, where ESA contributed the Huygens lander for Titan; and the Orion spacecraft's service module, part of NASA's Space Launch System.
- Other important ESA missions include Giotto, the first deep-space mission launched in 1986 to study Halley's Comet, and the Hipparcos star-mapping mission of 1989.
- During the 1990s, ESA partnered with NASA on several high-profile space projects, including the Hubble Space Telescope, SOHO, and Ulysses.
- The ESA has played a key role in developing launch vehicles, particularly the Ariane rocket series. Ariane 1, launched in 1979, was the first ESA rocket and was followed by Ariane 4, which operated from 1988 to 2003 and helped solidify the ESA's position as a leader in the commercial space launch market.
- Although the Ariane 5 had a rocky start with a failure on its first flight, it went on to achieve 112 successful launches by 2021, cementing its reputation in the competitive commercial launch market.
- Looking forward, the ESA continues to innovate with the Ariane 6, which is scheduled for its maiden flight in mid-2024, signaling the agency's ongoing commitment to advancing space exploration and technology.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. Proba-3 is a mission by the European Space Agency (ESA) to study the _____, the outermost and hottest part of the Sun's atmosphere.

2. Proba-3 will attempt the first-ever _____, where two satellites will fly together and maintain a fixed configuration in space.
3. The Proba-3 mission will form a solar _____, an instrument that blocks the Sun's bright light to reveal objects and the atmosphere around it.
4. One of the instruments onboard Proba-3 is ASPIICS, designed to observe the Sun's corona, which is typically visible during _____.
5. The Digital Absolute Radiometer (DARA) onboard Proba-3 will measure the Sun's total energy output, known as _____.
6. The two satellites of Proba-3 will autonomously maintain a distance of _____ meters apart to create a stable artificial eclipse.
7. Proba-3 will orbit Earth in a highly elliptical orbit measuring around _____ x 60,530 km.
8. By creating a stable artificial eclipse, Proba-3 will enable scientists to observe the solar corona for up to _____ hours at a time.
9. The European Space Agency (ESA) was founded in _____ and has 22 member countries.
10. The ESA's latest addition to its rocket series, the _____, is scheduled for its maiden flight in mid-2024.

9. Paris' Notre-Dame cathedral set to reopen

- French President Emmanuel Macron will visit renovation works at Paris' Notre-Dame cathedral ahead of its reopening on December 7, five and a half years after a devastating fire destroyed its roof and spire and caused major damage throughout.

What is Notre-Dame?

- A medieval Gothic masterpiece, Notre-Dame de Paris (Our Lady of Paris) is one of the French capital's most beloved and visited monuments. Its rib vaulting, flying buttresses, stunning stained-glass windows and carved stone gargoyles have long been celebrated in books and movies.
- The first stone was laid in 1163, and construction continued for much of the next century, with major restoration and additions made in the 17th and 18th century.
- Victor Hugo used the cathedral as a setting for his 1831 novel, "The Hunchback of Notre-Dame". Quasimodo, the main character, has been portrayed by Hollywood actors including Charles Laughton and also in an animated Disney adaptation.

Why and how did it burn?

- On the evening of April 15, 2019, the cathedral's roof burst into flames. Soon, the fire had engulfed the spire and almost toppled the main bell towers.
- Around the world, TV viewers watched with horror as the medieval building burned.
- The roof collapsed but the bell towers and facade held. It remains unclear what exactly caused the fire.

- French authorities have said an electrical fault or a burning cigarette may have been responsible.

What will happen at the opening ceremony?

- President Emmanuel Macron will give a speech in front of the cathedral on December 7 after which Paris' Archbishop Laurent Ulrich will use his crozier to knock on the cathedral's heavy doors.
- From within the cathedral, a psalm will be sung three times in response to the knocking, after which the doors will open.
- The archbishop will bless the cathedral's ancient organ before it starts playing. This will be followed by a service.
- The service is invitation-only and the guest list is not yet known. It will be followed by a show broadcast from the cathedral square, for which details are also not yet available.

How was the cathedral rebuilt?

- Money poured in from all over the world, including from French luxury sector billionaires Francois Henri Pinault and the Arnault family.
- So much money has been donated – more than 840 million euros (\$882 million), according to Macron's office – that there will even be funds left over for further investment in the building. The damage has needed five years' worth of restoration work.

What has changed?

- Officials say the cathedral will be more beautiful than ever, not only because the spire, roof and anything else destroyed by the fire was rebuilt by thousands of expert craftspeople, but also because the stone and paintings, which had blackened over the years, have been thoroughly cleaned.
- The furniture was also renovated and cleaned, or replaced.
- Not everything was damaged in the fire. For instance, emergency workers formed a human chain to whisk gem-studded chalices and other priceless artefacts out of harm's way.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. Notre-Dame de Paris, also known as _____, is a medieval Gothic masterpiece and one of the most visited monuments in the French capital.
2. The construction of Notre-Dame began in the year _____, with significant restorations made in later centuries.
3. The devastating fire that damaged Notre-Dame occurred on _____, 2019.
4. The author _____ used Notre-Dame as the setting for his 1831 novel "The Hunchback of Notre-Dame."
5. French President _____ will visit the renovation works of Notre-Dame ahead of its reopening on December 7, 2024.
6. The funds raised for the restoration of Notre-Dame exceeded _____ million euros.
7. During the fire, emergency workers formed a _____ to save priceless artifacts like gem-studded chalices.
8. The ceremonial reopening of Notre-Dame will include the Archbishop of Paris knocking on the cathedral's heavy doors with a _____.
9. The renovation of Notre-Dame involved cleaning the _____, which had blackened over the years.

10. The fire caused the roof of Notre-Dame to collapse, but the _____ and façade remained intact.

10. What is the UNSC Resolution 1701 upon which the Israel-Lebanon ceasefire is based?

- Israel and Lebanon entered into a ceasefire a day after Israel's security cabinet approved a US-backed proposal to end the 13-month-long conflict that escalated in September.
- "This is designed to be a permanent cessation of hostilities," he said in his announcement from the White House. "What is left of Hezbollah and other terrorist organisations will not be allowed to threaten the security of Israel again."
- The onset of Israel's relentless assault on Palestine in October 2023 has seen an increase in hostilities along the UN-demarcated Blue Line, the de facto border separating Israel and Lebanon.
- The ceasefire proposal draws on the provisions of Resolution 1701 passed by the UN Security Council (UNSC) in 2006. Skirmishes across the border continued, and the resolution was never fully implemented at the time.

What is Resolution 1701?

- Quite simply, the UNSC Resolution 1701 aims at ending hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel, and calls for the creation of a buffer zone as well as a permanent ceasefire.
- The resolution meant to complete the withdrawal of Israeli forces in 2000 from southern Lebanon along the 'Blue Line' and the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights.
- In July 2006, Israel invaded Lebanon after Hezbollah killed three Israeli soldiers and kidnapped two others.
- The war lasted over a month and resulted in the deaths of over 1,000 Lebanese people and 170 Israelis.
- The UNSC unanimously passed Resolution 1701 on August 11, 2006, calling for a full cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah.

The 19-paragraph resolution calls for a long-term solution based on the following provisions:

- The full implementation of the relevant provisions of the Taif Accords and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), requiring the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon, so there will be no weapons or authority in the country other than that of the Lebanese State
- No foreign forces in Lebanon without the Government's consent
- No sales or supply of arms and related materials to Lebanon except as authorised by its Government
- Provision to the UN of all remaining maps of landmines in Lebanon in Israel's possession
- Full respect by both parties for the Blue Line and security arrangements to prevent the resumption of hostilities, including an area free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Lebanese authorities and UNIFIL between the Blue Line and the Litani River.

- The Security Council thus authorised the UNIFIL force strength to a maximum of 15,000 U.N. peacekeepers to monitor the end of hostilities, help secure the area with Lebanese troops and ensure the safe return of displaced Lebanese.

And what does the current ceasefire proposal say?

- The US-backed proposal falls firmly within the limits of the resolution and calls for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah within 60 days. This period will allow Hezbollah fighters to retreat 40 kilometres away from the Israel-Lebanon border. Israeli ground forces are expected to withdraw from the Lebanese territory they have occupied since October 2023.
- Lebanon is expected to implement a rigorous supervision of Hezbollah's movements south of the country's Litani river, to prevent militants from regrouping there.
- These would be monitored by UN peacekeeping troops, the Lebanese military and a multinational committee.
- Israel, on the other hand, has vowed to resume military operations in case of a breach of the agreement.

Lebanon

- Lebanon is a small country in the Middle East, located on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. It is known for its rich history, cultural diversity, and natural beauty. Here's an overview:

Geography

- **Capital:** Beirut.
- **Borders:** Bordered by Syria to the north and east, Israel to the south, and the Mediterranean Sea to the west.
- **Landscape:** A mix of coastal plains, mountain ranges (Mount Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon), and fertile valleys (Bekaa Valley).
- **Climate:** Mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers and cool, wet winters.

Demographics

- **Population:** Approximately 6 million (including a large number of refugees, particularly from Syria).
- **Ethnic and Religious Diversity:** A mosaic of religions, including Christianity (various denominations), Islam (Sunni and Shia), and Druze. It is one of the few Middle Eastern countries with a Christian head of state.

Economy

- **Historically:** Known as the "Switzerland of the Middle East" due to its banking sector and vibrant trade.
- **Current Challenges:** The economy has faced significant turmoil in recent years, marked by hyperinflation, a banking crisis, and high unemployment rates.
- **Key Sectors:** Agriculture, tourism, and remittances from the Lebanese diaspora.

History

- **Ancient Times:** Home to the Phoenicians, an ancient maritime civilization.
- **Ottoman Period:** Part of the Ottoman Empire until the end of World War I.
- **French Mandate:** Became a French mandate before gaining independence in 1943.
- **Modern History:** Experienced a devastating civil war (1975-1990) and multiple conflicts with Israel.

Current Events

- Lebanon is currently grappling with political instability, an economic crisis, and social challenges:

- **Economic Collapse:** The Lebanese pound has significantly depreciated, and the country faces shortages of basic goods and electricity.
- **Port Explosion:** The 2020 Beirut port explosion caused extensive damage and loss of life, highlighting corruption and mismanagement.
- **Refugee Crisis:** Hosts one of the highest numbers of refugees per capita, primarily from neighboring Syria.

Culture

- Renowned for its cuisine (e.g., tabbouleh, hummus, kibbeh), music, and art.
- Home to historic sites like Baalbek, Byblos, and Tyre.
- Famous for its lively festivals and vibrant nightlife, particularly in Beirut.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. The UN Security Council Resolution _____ was passed in 2006 to call for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah.
2. The _____ Line serves as the de facto border separating Israel and Lebanon.
3. In July 2006, Israel invaded Lebanon after _____ killed three Israeli soldiers and kidnapped two others.
4. The current US-backed ceasefire proposal requires Hezbollah fighters to retreat _____ kilometers away from the Israel-Lebanon border.
5. The ceasefire agreement mandates that Lebanon rigorously supervise Hezbollah's movements south of the _____ River.
6. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was authorized to deploy up to _____ peacekeepers to monitor hostilities and ensure the return of displaced Lebanese.
7. The resolution calls for the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon, ensuring that no weapons or authority exist other than that of the _____ State.
8. Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon along the Blue Line and the _____ Heights was initially part of Resolution 1701.
9. Lebanon's population is approximately _____ million, including a large number of refugees from Syria.
10. Lebanon's economy has been significantly affected by hyperinflation, a banking crisis, and the aftermath of the _____ explosion in 2020.

11. National Milk Day: Recalling Verghese Kurien's role in pioneering the white revolution

- National Milk Day on November 26 commemorates the birth anniversary of 'The Milkman of India', Dr Verghese Kurien, who was credited with making India self-reliant in the sphere of milk production.

- India is the biggest milk-producing country in the world, responsible for 25 per cent of the global milk output.

Who was Dr Verghese Kurien?

- Born in Kozhikode, Kerala on November 26, 1921, Kurien obtained degrees in physics in 1940 and mechanical engineering in 1943, intending to join the Indian Army as an engineer.
- However, he then secured a scholarship from the Government of India to pursue dairy engineering and trained at the Imperial Institute of Animal Husbandry (now the National Dairy Research Institute) in Bengaluru.
- He completed his master's in Mechanical Engineering with a minor in dairy engineering from Michigan State University in 1948.
- In May 1949, Kurien began his government-mandated assignment at an experimental government creamery in Anand, Gujarat, hoping to leave after his bond period ended.
- While there, he developed a friendship with Tribhuvandas Patel, then the Chairman of the Kaira District Cooperative Milk Producers Union.
- From 1945-46, Patel led the effort for dairy farmers in the region to unionise and combat the exploitation by Polson, a dairy company that monopolised milk collection.
- At Patel's insistence, Kurien took charge as an engineer to look after the cooperative's machines.
- With time, he took an active interest in the daily operations of the union and the farmers, eventually becoming its general manager.
- Under Kurien's leadership, the cooperative expanded its capacity and acquired equipment to process and store dairy products.
- Thus, it was able to expand its milk supply to previously underserved areas of the country, which relied on imported milk powder. More importantly, the collective established a direct link between the producers and consumers.
- The cooperative would be renamed the Anand Milk Union Limited or Amul, and began marketing its products under the Amul brand.
- This model of dairy milk cooperatives proved to be wildly successful and others soon followed suit.
- Kurien and Patel, along with Dara Khurody – who had established the Aarey Milk Colony in Bombay, which provided pasteurising and distribution facilities for the milk from Anand – were awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 1963.

From Amul to Operation Flood

- Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's 1964 visit to Anand to inaugurate Amul's cattle feed plant set the ball rolling with his endorsement of the Amul model.
- A year later, Kurien became the inaugural chair of the National Dairy Development Board based in Anand.
- As NDDB head, Kurien oversaw the launch of Operation Flood in January 1970.
- The programme aimed at increasing milk production, while minimising price fluctuations and empowering dairy farmers by expanding the cooperative movement.
- The programme achieved this in three phases and saw India's milk production nearly triple, from about 21.2 million tonnes in 1968–69 to more than 55.6 million tonnes in 1991–92.

- Kurien also oversaw the establishment of the Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Limited in 1973, which owns the Amul brand, and founded the Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA) in 1979.

Blue Revolution

- Integrated Development and Management of Fisheries' Foreseeing high potential, the Hon'ble Prime Minister has called for "a revolution" in the fisheries sector and has named it as "Blue Revolution".
- The Blue Revolution, with its multi-dimensional activities, focuses mainly on increasing fisheries production and productivity from aquaculture and fisheries resources, both inland and marine.

OBJECTIVES

- To increase the overall fish production in a responsible and sustainable manner for economic prosperity
- To modernize the fisheries with special focus on new technologies
- To ensure food and nutritional security
- To generate employment and export earnings
- To ensure inclusive development and empower fishers and aquaculture farmers

CENTRALLY SPONSORED SCHEME on Blue Revolution: Integrated Development and Management of Fisheries.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries has accordingly restructured the scheme by merging all the ongoing schemes under an umbrella of Blue Revolution.

The restructured scheme provides focused development and management of fisheries, covering inland fisheries, aquaculture, marine fisheries including deep sea fishing, mariculture and all activities undertaken by the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB).

The restructured Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Blue Revolution: Integrated Development and Management of Fisheries formulated at a total Central outlay of 3000 crore for five years has the following components:

- (a) National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) and its activities,
- (b) Development of Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture,
- (c) Development of Marine Fisheries, Infrastructure and Post-Harvest Operations,
- (d) Strengthening of Database & Geographical Information System of the Fisheries Sector,
- (e) Institutional Arrangement for Fisheries Sector and
- (f) Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) and other need-based Interventions.
- (g) National Scheme of Welfare of Fishers

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. National Milk Day is celebrated on _____ to commemorate the birth anniversary of Dr. Verghese Kurien.
2. Dr. Verghese Kurien, often referred to as the _____ of India, is credited with making the country self-reliant in milk production.
3. The cooperative that Kurien managed, which was renamed Anand Milk Union Limited, is popularly known by its brand name _____.
4. The programme launched in 1970 to increase milk production and empower dairy farmers in India was called _____.

5. Dr. Verghese Kurien was one of the recipients of the _____ Award for Community Leadership in 1963, along with Tribhuvandas Patel and Dara Khurody.
6. The Blue Revolution focuses on increasing fisheries production and productivity in a _____ and sustainable manner.
7. One of the objectives of the Blue Revolution is to modernize fisheries with a special focus on new _____.
8. The restructured Centrally Sponsored Scheme for the Blue Revolution has a total Central outlay of _____ crore for five years.
9. The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare oversees the Blue Revolution through its Department of _____, Dairying & Fisheries.
10. The component of the Blue Revolution that focuses on _____ Fisheries and Aquaculture aims to improve production in inland areas.