

# MANTHAN

OCTOBER 2024 : WEEK-5

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# 1. India will have its own Space Station by 2035, which will be known as “Bharatiya Antriksh Station”

- India is set to establish its own space station, named the “Bharatiya Antriksh Station,” by 2035, as announced by Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh.
- This revelation came during a press conference following the signing of a significant Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Department of Biotechnology (DBT).
- This MoU marks a pioneering collaboration that aims to integrate biotechnology with space technology, ushering in a new era of scientific innovation in India.
- Dr. Jitendra Singh highlighted the evolution of biotechnology, which has expanded from laboratory settings to the vastness of space.
- He emphasized that the MoU signifies a critical transition towards practical applications of biotechnology, moving beyond theoretical research.
- The Minister praised ISRO Chairman S. Somnath and DBT Secretary Dr. Rajesh Gokhale for their roles in facilitating this collaboration and acknowledged the historical significance and visionary leadership that has contributed to the success of both departments.
- Public-private partnerships have played a crucial role in the rapid development of India’s space sector, with Dr. Singh attributing the surge in innovation and entrepreneurship in the space industry to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s efforts to open the sector to private players.
- Currently, nearly 300 startups are contributing to the burgeoning space economy.
- Furthermore, Dr. Singh discussed the growing significance of biotechnology, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- He recognized the Department of Biotechnology’s achievement in developing India’s first DNA vaccine, which garnered international acclaim for the nation’s scientific capabilities.
- The MoU outlines several key initiatives, including the establishment of the Bharatiya Antariksh Station and the introduction of the BioE3 (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment, and Employment) Policy.
- This policy aims to drive high-performance biomanufacturing in India, targeting a \$300 billion bioeconomy by 2030.
- The collaboration will emphasize areas such as microgravity research, space biotechnology, biomanufacturing, bioastronautics, and space biology.
- It is anticipated that this partnership will enhance India’s national human space program while spurring innovations in human health research, pharmaceuticals, regenerative medicine, and bio-based technologies for waste management and recycling.
- Additionally, it will create opportunities for startups in both the space and biotechnology sectors to develop commercially viable technological solutions.
- Concluding his address, Dr. Jitendra Singh expressed optimism about the future, envisioning advancements in bio-astronautics and space biology.

- He highlighted the potential for groundbreaking research and innovation that this collaboration could unlock, benefiting not only India but also the global community.
- This historic partnership between ISRO and the DBT is poised to lead to significant advancements in science and technology, reinforcing India's status as a global leader in innovation.
- The event included participation from various senior officials, underscoring the collaborative spirit driving this landmark initiative.

## India's Latest Development in Space Sector

**India has recently made significant strides in its space sector, with several key achievements and developments:**

### Chandrayaan-3 Mission:

- Marking its first anniversary, the success of the Chandrayaan-3 mission has positioned India as a leader in lunar exploration.
- This mission not only demonstrated India's capabilities in space technology but also contributed to scientific knowledge about the Moon.

### Aditya-L1 Mission:

- Launched to study solar activities, Aditya-L1 has successfully reached its orbit around the Sun-Earth Lagrange Point 1 (L1). It has been instrumental in tracking solar storms, showcasing India's commitment to solar research.

### Gaganyaan Program:

- The Gaganyaan initiative aims to send Indian astronauts into space by 2025. Recent test flights, including the successful crew module separation from the test vehicle, mark crucial steps in this human spaceflight program.

### Regulatory and Commercial Developments:

- The establishment of NewSpace India Ltd. (NSIL) has streamlined commercial activities, including partnerships with private companies like SpaceX and domestic startups, fostering a vibrant space economy.
- Recent regulatory updates also facilitate private sector participation.

### Launch of New Technologies:

- India is progressing with its Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) project and has successfully tested its Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), enhancing capabilities for future satellite launches.

### Private Sector Growth:

- The Indian space sector is witnessing a boom in private enterprises, with over 200 startups now engaged in various aspects of space technology, from satellite manufacturing to launch services.
- This growth is expected to contribute significantly to India's ambition to capture a larger share of the global space economy.
- India's strategic roadmap envisions a robust space economy with an aim to increase its share from 2% to 10% of the global space market by 2035, highlighting the sector's potential for economic growth and technological advancement.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. India is set to establish its own space station, named the “\_\_\_\_\_”, by 2035.

2. The announcement about the Bharatiya Antriksh Station was made by Union Minister \_\_\_\_\_ during a press conference.
3. The significant Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The MoU aims to integrate biotechnology with \_\_\_\_\_ technology, paving the way for scientific innovation in India.
5. Dr. Jitendra Singh emphasized that the MoU marks a transition towards practical applications of \_\_\_\_\_, moving beyond theoretical research.
6. The collaboration will focus on areas such as \_\_\_\_\_ research, space biotechnology, and bioastronautics.
7. The Department of Biotechnology achieved international acclaim for developing India's first \_\_\_\_\_ vaccine.
8. The new BioE3 Policy aims to drive high-performance biomanufacturing in India, targeting a \_\_\_\_\_ billion bioeconomy by 2030.
9. The Gaganyaan initiative aims to send Indian \_\_\_\_\_ into space by 2025.
10. India's strategic roadmap envisions increasing its share of the global space market from 2% to \_\_\_\_\_% by 2035.

## 2. What is 'digital arrest scam' and how can you protect yourself?

- A recent scam has emerged, resulting in significant financial losses for individuals and businesses, amounting to crores of rupees, under the guise of "digital arrest."
- In digital arrest scam, fraudsters impersonate law enforcement officials to deceive their victims.
- Prime Minister Modi has also issued a warning to the public regarding this scam, urging them to report any such incidents to the cyber helpline.
- Additionally, the Computer Emergency Response Team of India (CERT-In) has provided a list of methods by which these fraudsters carry out online scams, including the digital arrest scam.

### What is a digital arrest scam?

- A digital arrest scam is an online scam that defrauds victims of their hard-earned money.
- The scammers intimidate the victims and falsely accuse them of illegal activities.
- They later demand money and put them under pressure for making the payment.

### How digital arrest scam works?

- In digital arrest scam, perpetrators pose as law enforcement officials, such as CBI agents, income tax officers, or customs agents, and initiate contact with victims via phone calls.
- Subsequently, they request that the victims switch to video communication through platforms like WhatsApp and Skype.
- The scammers then threaten the victims with a digital arrest warrant, citing various reasons such as financial misconduct, tax evasion, or other legal violations.

- In certain instances, these fraudsters create a police station-like set-up to further convince victims that the call is legitimate.
- Under the guise of “clearing their name”, “assisting with the investigation”, or “refundable security deposit/escrow account”, individuals are coerced into transferring large sums of money to specified bank accounts or UPI IDs.
- Once the victims comply and make the payment, the scammers vanish, leaving the victims to face financial loss and potential identity theft.

### How to avoid becoming a victim of digital arrest scam?

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- The most important way to protect yourself from getting scammed is to be aware. Always stay vigilant against such crimes. Here are some tips to save you from digital arrest scam:
- Be suspicious of calls from fake officials claiming that you are in trouble. It is always important to remember that real law enforcement agency officials will never ask for payment or banking details.
- Do not give in to the “pressure tactics” deployed by cyber criminals, who seek quick action by creating “a sense of urgency”.
- If you are suspicious about the call, verify their identity by directly contacting the relevant agency they are referring to. Try to be calm and do not panic.
- Avoid sharing personal information and never disclose sensitive personal or financial details over the phone or video calls, especially to unknown numbers.
- Remember, government agencies do not use platforms like WhatsApp or Skype for official communication.
- If you think you are being scammed, never forget to report the incident to the local police or cyber crime authorities.
- CERT-In’s advisory to the public said staying “vigilant and informed” is crucial to protect oneself from this “emerging cyber threat”.

### What to do if you are a victim of digital arrest scam and lost money?

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- If you are a victim of digital arrest scam, the first step is to immediately report your bank and freeze your account.
- File a complaint with the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal ([cybercrime.gov.in](https://cybercrime.gov.in)).
- Always keep whatever evidence you have — call details, transaction details, messages, etc.
- Seek help from a lawyer if needed.

### India and present Digital Arrest Law

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- As of now, India’s legal framework regarding digital arrests and protections is undergoing significant transformation, particularly with the introduction of new criminal laws that came into effect on July 1, 2024.
- The previous laws, including the Indian Penal Code (IPC) of 1860, the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1973, and the Indian Evidence Act of 1872, have been replaced by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA).
- This shift aims to modernize India’s approach to criminal justice, particularly in response to the challenges posed by cybercrime and digital evidence.

### Key Features of the New Legal Framework

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#### Cybercrime Legislation:

- The new laws explicitly address cybercrimes, recognizing the importance of digital evidence such as electronic documents and audio-video recordings.
- This is a significant update, as previous legislation did not adequately cover these aspects.

### Protection of Rights:

- The BNS emphasizes human rights protections, particularly concerning offences against women and children.
- It includes harsher penalties for crimes like human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and domestic violence.
- Provisions have also been made to enhance protections for marginalized communities, including recognition of transgender individuals in the legal framework.

### Procedural Changes:

- The BNSS introduces new procedural norms aimed at expediting justice. For instance, fixed timelines for investigations and mandatory video recording of police actions are now required.
- Forensic experts must be present at crime scenes for serious offences, enhancing the integrity of the investigative process.

### Decriminalization of Certain Offences:

- Some offences that were considered outdated, such as adultery and sedition, have been removed from the new legal framework.
- This reflects a shift towards more contemporary societal norms and values

### Implications for Digital Arrests:

- With these changes, the legal framework around digital arrests has become more robust.
- Law enforcement agencies now have clearer guidelines on handling digital evidence, which is crucial for prosecuting cybercrimes effectively.
- Moreover, the emphasis on human rights and procedural fairness aims to ensure that individuals are protected from arbitrary arrests and have access to due process.
- These developments mark a significant step in adapting India's legal system to the realities of modern technology and society.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. A digital arrest scam involves fraudsters impersonating \_\_\_\_\_ officials to deceive victims and extort money.
2. Scammers in a digital arrest scam often contact victims via \_\_\_\_\_ before switching to video communication platforms like WhatsApp or Skype.
3. During the scam, victims are threatened with a \_\_\_\_\_ arrest warrant for reasons such as financial misconduct or tax evasion.
4. To avoid becoming a victim of the digital arrest scam, individuals should be suspicious of calls from fake officials claiming they are in \_\_\_\_\_.
5. If someone falls victim to a digital arrest scam, they should immediately report the incident to the National Cyber Crime Reporting \_\_\_\_\_.

### 3. Supreme Court ruling on child marriage: why it's important to go beyond just punishment

- The judgment in *Society for Enlightenment and Voluntary Action v. Union of India*, delivered by the Supreme Court, has moved the focus in cases of child marriage from penalising criminal actions to addressing the “harm meted out to the victim”.
- The judgment underlines that comprehensive efforts to address child marriage should go beyond prevention and prosecution, and must include substantial measures to help those already in child marriages reclaim their agency.
- According to National Family Health Survey data, the percentage of women aged 20-24 who were married before 18 declined from 47.4% in 2005 to 26.8% in 2016, and further to 23.3% in 2021.
- Nonetheless, the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of eliminating child marriage entirely by 2030 appears ambitious.
- The institutional response has focused mostly on prevention and, of late, prosecution — such as the mass arrests of men in Assam whose wives were minors when they married.

#### What is the law on child marriage?

- Under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA), a “child marriage” is one in which either the husband is under 21 years of age, or the wife is under 18.
- Such a marriage is “voidable”, that is, the party that was a child at the time of the marriage has the option to annul it — until such annulment occurs, the marriage is valid and subsists.
- In Karnataka and Haryana, as state-specific amendments have made all child marriages void from the beginning.

#### Is annulment the same as divorce?

- Annulment is different from divorce — when a marriage is annulled, it is as though it had never occurred, and the individuals involved are considered unmarried.
- In contrast, divorce acknowledges that a marriage existed for a period before being dissolved, leaving the parties with the legal status of divorcees.
- Divorce requires proving specific grounds — such as cruelty or adultery — depending on the personal law applicable.
- For annulment under the PCMA, the individual needs to only establish that a child marriage took place, and that they were within the legal age limit to apply for nullification.
- PCMA also provides for other civil remedies such as maintenance, residence orders, and return of gifts exchanged at the wedding.

#### Why are there concerns about using criminal action to tackle child marriage?

- Although the child marriage itself subsists unless it is annulled, various activities related to child marriage are criminalised.



- Under the PCMA, performing or promotion of child marriage, and a male adult marrying a minor are criminal offences. Sexual activity with a minor, including within a child marriage, is an offence under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO), and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS).
- Applied together, the criminal provisions of PCMA, BNS, and POCSO create the possibility of criminal action against the girl's entire family — her parents, husband, and in-laws — which could leave her in a vulnerable position without preparation or support to survive independently. It may also create barriers in accessing sexual and reproductive healthcare, as seeking such services could inadvertently trigger criminal action against her family.
- A study of 73 judgments from 2008 to 2017 by the Delhi-based legal resource group Partners for Law in Development found that the criminal provisions of PCMA were used twice as often in cases of self-initiated marriages than arranged marriages.
- A 2024 study by Bengaluru-based Enfold Proactive Health Trust and Civic Data Lab based on 174 PCMA judgments from Assam, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu, showed 49.4% of these marriages were self-initiated.
- These trends suggest that criminal action can overlook complexities involved in the issue, and cause unintended harm to adolescents seeking autonomy.
- In many cases, underage individuals choose to marry to escape difficult situations such as neglect, abuse, or the prospect of a forced marriage. These child marriages involve young people asserting their agency in a patriarchal society, using elopement as a way to legitimise their relationships.

### Why is the SC judgment significant?

- Exiting a child marriage can attract social and economic sanctions.
- The SC judgment directs the introduction of a special scheme for skill development, vocational training, and economic stability for women who leave child marriages, rehabilitation services, monitoring and follow-up support to ensure reintegration, and a call to consider compensation for these women under victim compensation schemes.
- Some women may not want to exit the marriage, but may need help to claim agency within the marriage.
- They require tools to strengthen their ability to advocate for themselves in decisions involving reproductive rights, employment, and education.
- The SC judgment's emphasis on sex education for adolescents can empower those in such marriages with the skills and information to effectively navigate their relationships.
- When implemented with an understanding of the evolving nature of child marriage — especially trends involving young people eloping — these measures offer a more holistic and agency-affirming approach to eliminating child marriage than an over-reliance on criminal prosecution.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. The Supreme Court judgment in *Society for Enlightenment and Voluntary Action v. Union of India* shifts the focus from penalizing criminal actions to addressing the \_\_\_\_\_ faced by the victim.
2. According to National Family Health Survey data, the percentage of women aged 20-24 who were married before 18 decreased from 47.4% in 2005 to \_\_\_\_\_ in 2021.

3. Under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA), a “child marriage” is defined as one where either the husband is under 21 years of age or the wife is under \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Unlike divorce, which acknowledges the existence of a marriage, \_\_\_\_\_ means that a marriage is treated as though it never occurred.
5. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO) criminalizes sexual activity with a minor, including those within a child marriage, while the \_\_\_\_\_ Act, 2023, also addresses related criminal offenses.
6. The Supreme Court judgment emphasizes the need for a special scheme for skill development and \_\_\_\_\_ for women who exit child marriages.
7. The judgment calls for introducing monitoring and follow-up support to ensure the \_\_\_\_\_ of women who leave child marriages.
8. The emphasis on \_\_\_\_\_ for adolescents in the Supreme Court judgment aims to empower individuals to navigate their relationships more effectively.

## 4. Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey appointed Commonwealth secretary general

- Ghana’s foreign minister, Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, has been appointed as the new Secretary-General of the Commonwealth during the conclusion of the group’s summit in Samoa.
- A seasoned politician and lawyer, Botchwey has served as Ghana’s foreign minister since 2017 and was previously a lawmaker.
- Her appointment comes amid ongoing discussions regarding reparations for transatlantic slavery and colonialism, issues that were also highlighted by the other candidates who contested for the position.
- Botchwey stated she was “truly humbled” by the selection and acknowledged the significant work ahead of her.
- Her appointment follows a Commonwealth heads of government meeting (CHOGM), which was heavily focused on calls for the UK to address its historical role in the transatlantic slave trade and the urgent need to tackle climate change.
- During the summit, heads of government emphasized the importance of “reparatory justice” concerning the enslavement of Africans and agreed that it was time for an open and respectful dialogue aimed at fostering a fairer future.
- However, the specifics of this dialogue remain uncertain. While the UK government has not issued an official apology for its actions in the slave trade and has dismissed the idea of reparations, there are indications of a potential shift.
- Botchwey has actively advocated for reparations, asserting that the Commonwealth can help facilitate a unified stance on this critical issue if member states desire it.
- She stresses that reparatory justice should encompass more than just financial compensation, emphasizing the need for support in addressing the climate crisis and enhancing economic resilience in Commonwealth nations.

- Additionally, she has shown support for establishing a free trade agreement among Commonwealth members.
- Botchwey, who has academic credentials from both Ghana and the UK, previously chaired the council of ministers of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and led Ghana's tenure on the UN Security Council, which concluded in December 2023.
- As Secretary-General, she will succeed Patricia Scotland, who has held the role since 2016.
- The position allows for a maximum of two four-year terms, and Botchwey's leadership will be pivotal in navigating the Commonwealth's challenges in the coming years.

## Commonwealth of Nations

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- The Commonwealth of Nations, commonly known as the Commonwealth, is a political association of 56 member states, most of which are former territories of the British Empire.

### Formation:

The Commonwealth was established in its current form in 1949 with the London Declaration.

- **Membership:** Comprises countries from Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe, and the Pacific. Notable members include Canada, Australia, India, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.
- **Goals:** Promotes democracy, human rights, economic development, and cultural exchange among member states.

## Specialties of Selected Commonwealth Nations

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### United Kingdom

- **Specialties:** Rich history, cultural influence, financial services, education (home to renowned universities like Oxford and Cambridge), and tourism.
- **Events:** Hosts the annual Commonwealth Day and the Commonwealth Games.

### India

- **Specialties:** Diverse culture, history, IT and software services, agriculture, and textiles. Known for its film industry (Bollywood) and cuisine.
- **Contributions:** Major player in peacekeeping missions and international diplomacy.

### Canada

- **Specialties:** Natural resources, multicultural society, healthcare, and education. Known for its picturesque landscapes and national parks.
- **Economy:** Strong emphasis on trade, especially with the United States.

### Australia

- **Specialties:** Unique biodiversity, mining, education, and tourism. Famous for its Great Barrier Reef and vibrant cities like Sydney and Melbourne.
- **Culture:** Rich indigenous heritage and a thriving arts scene.

### South Africa

- **Specialties:** Natural resources (gold and diamonds), diverse ecosystems, and cultural heritage (including its famous music and art).

- **History:** Known for its struggle against apartheid and the legacy of Nelson Mandela.

## New Zealand

- **Specialties:** Agriculture, film industry (home to the “Lord of the Rings” films), and adventure tourism. Known for its stunning landscapes and Māori culture.
- **Contributions:** Leader in environmental conservation and sustainability.

## Singapore

- **Specialties:** Global financial hub, trade, and high-quality education. Known for its efficient public services and multicultural society.
- **Economy:** Strong emphasis on innovation and technology.

## Nigeria

- **Specialties:** Oil production, music (home of Afrobeat), and a diverse cultural heritage with over 250 ethnic groups.
- **Economy:** Largest economy in Africa, with significant agricultural and telecommunication sectors.

## Jamaica

- **Specialties:** Music (reggae and dancehall), agriculture (notably coffee and sugar), and tourism. Known for its vibrant culture and sports, particularly track and field.
- **Contributions:** Strong influence on global music and culture.

## Kenya

- **Specialties:** Wildlife conservation, tourism (safari experiences), and agriculture (tea and coffee production).
- **Economy:** Growing tech industry, often referred to as “Silicon Savannah.”

## Key Features of the Commonwealth

- **Commonwealth Games:** A major sporting event held every four years, bringing together athletes from member nations.
- **Cultural Exchange:** Promotes educational and cultural exchange programs among member states.
- **Development Programs:** Provides support for economic development, governance, and human rights initiatives through organizations like the Commonwealth Development Corporation.
  - The Commonwealth nations share a commitment to democracy, peace, and development while celebrating their unique cultural identities and contributions to the global community.
  - Each member state offers distinct specialties that enrich the Commonwealth as a whole.

## Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional political and economic union comprised of 15 West African countries. Established on May 28, 1975, in Lagos, Nigeria, its primary goal is to promote economic integration and cooperation among its member states.

## Member States

- |                |                 |          |
|----------------|-----------------|----------|
| • Benin        | • Cape Verde    | • Gambia |
| • Burkina Faso | • Côte d’Ivoire | • Ghana  |

- Guinea
- Guinea-Bissau
- Liberia
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Senegal
- Sierra Leone
- Togo
- Mali

### The main objectives of ECOWAS include:

- Promoting economic integration and cooperation among member states.
- Establishing a common market and a monetary union.
- Enhancing trade and investment in the region.
- Facilitating the free movement of people, goods, and services across borders.

### ECOWAS has several key functions:

- **Economic Integration:** ECOWAS aims to create a single market by reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers, promoting intra-regional trade, and enhancing cooperation in various economic sectors.
- **Peace and Security:** The organization plays a crucial role in maintaining peace and security in West Africa. It intervenes in conflicts and mediates disputes between member states through its ECOWAS Standby Force and the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security.
- **Political Cooperation:** ECOWAS promotes political stability and good governance among its member states. It supports democratic processes, including elections and constitutional governance.
- **Development Projects:** The organization initiates and implements regional development projects in areas such as infrastructure, agriculture, health, and education, aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of member states.
- **Trade Policies:** ECOWAS has established a common external tariff to facilitate trade among member states and enhance competitiveness in the global market.
- **Regulatory Frameworks:** The community develops and implements policies and regulations that harmonize practices across member states, including trade regulations, customs procedures, and standards for goods and services.

### Institutions

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#### ECOWAS operates through various institutions, including:

- **ECOWAS Commission:** The main administrative body responsible for the day-to-day management and implementation of policies.
- **ECOWAS Community Court of Justice:** Ensures adherence to ECOWAS treaties and resolves disputes between member states and individuals.
- **ECOWAS Parliament:** A regional parliamentary body that serves as a platform for discussion and legislation on regional issues.

### Challenges

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Despite its objectives and functions, ECOWAS faces several challenges, including:

- Political instability and conflicts in member states.
- Economic disparities among member countries.
- Infrastructure deficits and lack of funding for development projects.

- External influences and regional security threats, such as terrorism and organized crime.

Overall, ECOWAS plays a vital role in fostering cooperation and integration in West Africa, addressing both economic and political challenges to enhance regional stability and development.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. Ghana's foreign minister, Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, has been appointed as the new \_\_\_\_\_ during the conclusion of the Commonwealth summit in Samoa.
2. Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey has served as Ghana's foreign minister since \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Her appointment comes amid ongoing discussions regarding \_\_\_\_\_ for transatlantic slavery and colonialism.
4. During the Commonwealth heads of government meeting (CHOGM), there were calls for the UK to address its historical role in the \_\_\_\_\_ slave trade.
5. Botchwey has actively advocated for reparations, asserting that the Commonwealth can help facilitate a unified stance on this critical issue if \_\_\_\_\_ desire it.
6. The Commonwealth of Nations is a political association of \_\_\_\_\_ member states, most of which are former territories of the British Empire.
7. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established on \_\_\_\_\_, 1975, in Lagos, Nigeria.
8. One of ECOWAS's main objectives is to enhance trade and investment in the region by establishing a common \_\_\_\_\_ and a monetary union.
9. ECOWAS plays a crucial role in maintaining peace and security in West Africa through its \_\_\_\_\_ and the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security.
10. The Commonwealth promotes democracy, human rights, economic development, and \_\_\_\_\_ exchange among member states.

## 5. Brazil becomes second BRICS country after India not to join China's BRI

- Brazil recently announced its decision not to join China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), marking a significant setback for Beijing's global infrastructure plan and making Brazil the second BRICS nation after India to refrain from endorsing the project.
- President Lula da Silva's administration instead seeks alternative ways to engage with Chinese investors without formalizing an agreement.
- Celso Amorim, Brazil's Special Presidential Adviser for International Affairs emphasized Brazil's intention to strengthen its relationship with China on its terms rather than through a formal treaty.
- He clarified that Brazil wants to align its prioritized infrastructure projects with BRI investment funds but without formally joining the initiative.
- This decision disrupts China's expectations ahead of President Xi Jinping's planned visit to Brazil, where Chinese officials had hoped to spotlight Brazil's BRI membership.



- However, recent feedback from Brazilian economy and foreign affairs officials indicated that the initiative may offer limited benefits while potentially complicating relations with the United States, especially if a new administration under Donald Trump assumes power.
- Amorim and the president's chief of staff, Rui Costa, returned from a recent Beijing trip "unimpressed" by the proposal's offerings.
- India was the first BRICS member to oppose the BRI, notably condemning the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which traverses Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. India has long criticized BRI projects, emphasizing the need for international norms, transparency, and financial responsibility.
- Additionally, Indian officials point to China's projects in countries like Sri Lanka, where debt-for-infrastructure deals have contributed to severe financial difficulties.

## 16<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit

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- The 16<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit, held in Kazan, Russia, from October 22–24, 2024, underscored the collaborative framework of BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.
- As the current BRICS chair, Russia set an agenda focused on enhancing cooperation across three main areas: political security, economic and financial stability, and cultural partnerships.
- The summit aimed to reinforce a multi-polar global order and address pressing challenges like the Ukraine conflict, climate change, and global financial instability.
- Key themes included the need for reform in global governance structures, specifically advocating for a more equitable and representative United Nations Security Council.
- BRICS members discussed strategies to diversify trade within the bloc and minimize dependency on the US dollar, including expanding their own cross-border payment systems and enhancing the use of national currencies.
- Additionally, the BRICS New Development Bank, which has grown in scope and membership, was highlighted as a key instrument in providing infrastructure and sustainable development financing to emerging economies.
- Another significant discussion revolved around expanding BRICS cooperation in artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and sustainable development.
- With Russia pushing for advancements in tech-driven industries, BRICS members committed to sharing knowledge and resources to address digital security and foster technological innovation.
- The summit concluded with a declaration that emphasized a commitment to peace, economic sovereignty, and cooperation on global issues, reaffirming BRICS' role as a leading voice in advocating for a balanced and inclusive world order.

## Latest Added BRICS countries

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- As of October 2024, BRICS has officially expanded its coalition by adding 13 new partner countries, although these nations are not full members of the bloc.
- The announcement was made during the recent BRICS summit held in Kazan, Russia, from October 22 to 24, 2024.
- The new partner countries include Algeria, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam
- Earlier in 2024, BRICS also welcomed five new full members—Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, Iran, and Ethiopia—effective January 1, 2024.

- This expansion doubled the bloc's membership to ten, significantly increasing its economic clout, as the expanded group now represents nearly one-third of the global economy and 46% of the world's population.
- Notably, Argentina, which was invited to join, declined the offer under its new president.

### China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

- China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), introduced in 2013, is an ambitious infrastructure and economic development project aimed at connecting Asia with Africa, Europe, and beyond via land and maritime networks.
- This initiative, often described as a modern Silk Road, focuses on enhancing global trade, stimulating economic growth, and creating a web of interconnected routes through infrastructure investments.
- The BRI encompasses two main routes: the Silk Road Economic Belt, connecting China to Europe through Central Asia, and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road, which links China to Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa, and Europe via maritime routes.
- The BRI involves massive infrastructure projects, including highways, railways, ports, energy pipelines, and telecommunications networks.
- Through these investments, China seeks to secure its trade routes, access new markets, and strengthen its economic influence globally. The initiative has attracted the participation of over 140 countries, with funding sourced from Chinese banks, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and the Silk Road Fund.
- While the BRI offers growth opportunities for partner countries, it has also sparked controversy. Critics argue that it creates "debt traps," wherein countries incur unsustainable debt to Chinese lenders, jeopardizing their sovereignty and economic stability.
- Additionally, the initiative has raised geopolitical concerns, particularly among Western nations, who view it as a tool for expanding China's strategic influence.
- Despite these criticisms, the BRI has already made a significant impact, reshaping global trade routes and fostering regional development. As China continues to expand the initiative, its effects on global geopolitics and economic landscapes are expected to deepen, positioning the BRI as a defining feature of 21<sup>st</sup>-century globalization.

### QUESTIONS

#### Fill in the Blank:

1. Brazil recently announced its decision not to join China's \_\_\_\_\_ Initiative (BRI), marking a significant setback for Beijing's global infrastructure plan.
2. President Lula da Silva's administration seeks alternative ways to engage with \_\_\_\_\_ investors without formalizing an agreement.
3. Celso Amorim, Brazil's Special Presidential Adviser for International Affairs, emphasized Brazil's intention to strengthen its relationship with China on its \_\_\_\_\_ rather than through a formal treaty.
4. The 16<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit was held in \_\_\_\_\_, Russia, from October 22–24, 2024.
5. The summit aimed to reinforce a \_\_\_\_\_ global order and address pressing challenges like the Ukraine conflict and climate change.
6. As of October 2024, BRICS has officially expanded its coalition by adding \_\_\_\_\_ new partner countries.
7. The BRICS New Development Bank was highlighted as a key instrument in providing infrastructure and \_\_\_\_\_ development financing to emerging economies.



8. China's Belt and Road Initiative, introduced in \_\_\_\_\_, is an ambitious infrastructure and economic development project aimed at connecting Asia with Africa, Europe, and beyond.
9. Critics of the BRI argue that it creates "\_\_\_\_\_" wherein countries incur unsustainable debt to Chinese lenders, jeopardizing their sovereignty.
10. The BRI encompasses two main routes: the Silk Road Economic Belt and the \_\_\_\_\_ Silk Road, which links China to Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa, and Europe via maritime routes.

## 6. UNRWA: What is the UN agency for Palestinian refugees that Israel has banned?

- Israel's parliament passed two Bills to ban the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) from operating in Israel and the Palestinian territories.
- The Knesset also voted to designate UNRWA a terrorist organisation, cutting all ties with the agency.
- The vote could result in the collapse of the already fragile aid distribution mechanism in Gaza, where almost 2 million Palestinians have been displaced, and food, water, and medicine are in short supply.

### What is the UNRWA, and what role does it play?

- The UNRWA was established in 1949 to provide aid to about 700,000 Palestinians who were forced to leave their homes during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.
- UNRWA began operations on May 1, 1950. It operates in Gaza and the Israeli-occupied West Bank, as well as in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan — where Palestinian refugees took shelter after their expulsion.
- According to the UNRWA's website, it runs education, health, relief and social services, microfinance and emergency assistance programmes inside and outside refugee camps in these areas.
- An estimated 5.9 million Palestinian refugees — most of whom are descendants of the original refugees — currently access the UNRWA's services.
- The UN agency is funded mostly by voluntary contributions from donor states such as the United States, Germany, the European Union, etc. It also gets a limited subsidy from the UN, which is used only for administrative costs.
- UNRWA employs some 30,000 Palestinians. More than 200 of its staff members have been killed in Israeli attacks over the past year.

### So why has Israel acted against the UNRWA?

- Israel has argued for decades that the UNRWA's role is obsolete, and its work to aid Palestinian refugees and their descendants has been an impediment to a peace settlement.
- However, critics have blamed Israel's own actions, such as not meaningfully recognising the foundation of a Palestinian state, as having perpetuated the longstanding territorial conflict.
- Israel has also accused some of UNRWA's 13,000 employees in Gaza of participating in the October 7, 2023 attacks on Israel by Hamas that triggered the war.

- Israel has given the US a dossier identifying 12 UNRWA staffers who it says took part in the October 7 attacks. According to Israel, most of these alleged attackers worked as teachers in UNRWA schools. It claims to have evidence that UNRWA employed 190 Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants.
- Although UNRWA fired nine employees after an investigation, it has denied that it aids armed groups on purpose — the agency has been sharing the list of its employees with Israel for a long time.

### **What are the two Bills that Israel has passed?**

- One of the Bills bars UNRWA from operating any representative office, providing any service, or conducting any activity, directly or indirectly, in Israel's sovereign territory.
- The second Bill cuts all ties between government employees and UNRWA, and takes away the legal immunities of the agency's staff.
- Together, the Bills are likely to stop UNRWA from operating in Gaza and the West Bank as Israel controls access to both these Palestinian territories. They could also force the agency to relocate its headquarters from East Jerusalem, according to a report by the Associated Press.
- The Bills were passed by overwhelming majorities in the 120-member parliament. Lawmakers from at least two centrist parties joined Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's ruling coalition in voting for the Bills, demonstrating broad support for the measures.

### **What can be the impact of these measures?**

- Most of the provisions in the Bills will take effect after three months.
- Since the beginning of the war, almost all of Gaza's 2 million people have been reliant on UNRWA for basic necessities, including food, water, and hygiene supplies.
- Along with the Palestinian Red Crescent, UNRWA handles almost all UN aid distribution in the territory.
- The UN agency also recently helped implement an emergency polio vaccination campaign in Gaza to prevent the infectious virus that can cause paralysis from spreading.
- In the West Bank, UNRWA currently provides services for 19 refugee camps, more than 90 schools, and several health services, including prenatal care.

### **Major Problems with Refugees across the world**

- As of October 2024, the global refugee situation remains critical, with an estimated 117.3 million people displaced worldwide due to conflict, persecution, and violence.
- This figure includes over 42.7 million refugees who have fled their home countries and 36 million internally displaced individuals.
- The ongoing crises in regions like Ukraine, Syria, and Afghanistan continue to drive these numbers higher.

### **Major Refugee Hosting Countries:**

- The countries currently hosting the largest numbers of refugees include Turkey, Colombia, and Uganda. Turkey alone accommodates over 3.6 million Syrian refugees, highlighting its role as a key refuge in the region.

### Escalating Needs:

- Humanitarian needs are growing as funding for both humanitarian aid and development decreases. Many displaced individuals face dire situations, including limited access to basic services like food, education, and healthcare.

### Resettlement Challenges:

- The need for resettlement solutions is increasing, yet fewer refugees are being offered a chance to start anew in third countries. Resettlement programs have faced significant challenges, with political and logistical obstacles impeding progress.

### Emerging Crises:

- In addition to ongoing conflicts, new crises are emerging, exacerbated by factors like climate change, which displaces communities and complicates existing vulnerabilities.
- Countries across the globe are grappling with the dual challenges of humanitarian response and integrating large numbers of displaced persons.
- This complex landscape underscores the urgent need for coordinated international action to provide humanitarian assistance and support for the millions affected by displacement.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

- The UNRWA was established in \_\_\_\_\_ to provide aid to Palestinians who were displaced during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.
- UNRWA began its operations on \_\_\_\_\_ and currently operates in Gaza, the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan.
- Approximately \_\_\_\_\_ million Palestinian refugees currently access UNRWA's services.
- Israel's Knesset passed two Bills to ban UNRWA from operating in Israel and designated it as a \_\_\_\_\_ organization.
- Israel accused some UNRWA employees of participating in the attacks on October \_\_\_\_\_, which triggered the recent war.
- One of the Bills passed by Israel bars UNRWA from conducting any activity in Israel's \_\_\_\_\_ territory.
- Since the beginning of the war, almost all of Gaza's \_\_\_\_\_ million people have relied on UNRWA for basic necessities.
- UNRWA employs about \_\_\_\_\_ Palestinians and has lost more than 200 staff members in Israeli attacks over the past year.
- Major refugee hosting countries include Turkey, Colombia, and \_\_\_\_\_, with Turkey hosting over 3.6 million Syrian refugees.
- As of October 2024, the global refugee situation is critical, with an estimated \_\_\_\_\_ million people displaced worldwide due to conflict and violence.

# 7. National Unity Day

- National Unity Day, observed annually on October 31, commemorates the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, a key leader in India's independence movement and the country's first Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister.
- Known as the "Iron Man of India," Patel is celebrated for his commitment to national integration and his efforts to unite the diverse princely states into a single nation.
- Born on October 31, 1875, in Nadiad, Gujarat, Patel was a successful lawyer who became involved in public service after being appointed by Mahatma Gandhi as deputy commander during the Kheda Satyagraha in 1918.
- He later served as President of the Ahmedabad Municipal Board in 1924, implementing significant improvements in sanitation and public services. His leadership during the Bardoli Satyagraha in 1928 earned him the title "Sardar," reflecting his organizational skills and dedication to the freedom struggle.
- At the time of India's independence, the country comprised British India and over 560 princely states. Patel played a crucial role in integrating these states into the newly formed Union of India, ensuring their accession to the nation. He took his oath as Deputy Prime Minister on August 15, 1947, also assuming responsibilities as Home Minister and overseeing the Information and Broadcasting Ministry.

### Celebrating National Unity Day

- National Unity Day serves as a reminder of the values that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel embodied: unity, integrity, and inclusiveness.
- In a country as diverse as India, with myriad cultures, languages, and religions, fostering a sense of unity is essential for national progress.
- The day encourages citizens to reflect on the importance of coming together to overcome challenges, celebrate diversity, and promote harmony.
- The celebration of National Unity Day is marked by various events and activities across the country.
- Government institutions, schools, and colleges organize a number of events to spread awareness about the importance of unity.
- One of the key highlights of the day is the Run for Unity, a nationwide marathon held to honor Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's vision of a united India.
- To mark the 10<sup>th</sup> National Unity Day, the Union Minister of Home Affairs and Cooperation, Amit Shah flagged off the 'Run for Unity' on 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2024 organized in New Delhi. Initiated as a call for solidarity in 2015, the Run for Unity symbolizes a pledge not only for national cohesion but also for a progressive, developed India, embodying the vision of a united and prosperous future.

### 10<sup>th</sup> National Unity Day

- As part of the celebrations, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of various infrastructural and development projects worth over Rs. 280 crore in Ekta Nagar (Kevadia), situated in the Narmada district of Gujarat.
- These projects aim to enhance the tourist experience, improve accessibility and support sustainability initiatives.
- On 31<sup>st</sup> October, Prime Minister will participate in the Rashtriya Ekta Diwas celebrations and offer floral tribute to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He will administer the Ekta Diwas pledge and witness Ekta Diwas Parade which will comprise of 16 marching contingents from 9 States and 1 UT Police, 4 Central Armed Police Forces, NCC and a marching band.
- Special attractions include Hell March contingent of NSG, daredevil show by BSF and CRPF women and men bikers, a show on combination of Indian Martial Arts by BSF, piped band show by school children, 'Surya Kiran' flypast by Indian Air Force, among others.

## Statue of Unity

- October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018, marked the inauguration of the world's tallest statue – the Statue of Unity, against the backdrop of the breathtaking Satpura and Vindhyachal hills at Kevadia, Gujarat.
- The 182-metre (600 feet approx.) statue is dedicated to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the architect of independent India.
- The colossal monument towers over River Narmada & overlooks the vast surrounds and the river basin of the Narmada River and the sprawling Sardar Sarovar dam.
- It stands on the Sadhu Bet hillock, connected by a 300-metre bridge, which offers access from the mainland to the statue.
- The Statue of Unity offers a range of captivating attractions, making it a premier destination for both cultural and eco-tourism.
- Visitors can enjoy the nightly Laser Light and Sound Show, which illuminates the statue and narrates Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's legacy. The scenic Valley of Flowers, featuring over two million plants, and the iconic Sardar Sarovar Dam, the second largest gravity dam worldwide by concrete volume, are must-visit sites. For an immersive natural experience, Panchmuli Lake offers a tranquil boat ride surrounded by lush greenery.
- Other highlights include the Cactus Garden, showcasing desert flora, and Ekta Nursery, where guests can purchase plants as a symbol of unity.
- Children's Nutrition Park and the Dino Trail provide engaging educational experiences, while the Jungle Safari and Vishwa Van global forest celebrate biodiversity with diverse plant and animal species, adding to the uniqueness and diversity of this remarkable site.

## Conclusion

- National Unity Day is not just a day of remembrance; it is a call to action for every citizen to embrace the spirit of oneness.
- In a world that often seems divided, the values championed by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel remain more relevant than ever.
- As we celebrate this day, let us commit ourselves to building a united and harmonious society, honoring the legacy of the Iron Man of India by fostering an environment where diversity is celebrated, and unity is cherished.
- Together, we can strive towards a brighter future for our nation, rooted in the principles of integrity, respect, and solidarity.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. National Unity Day is observed annually on \_\_\_\_\_ to commemorate the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.
2. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is known as the “\_\_\_\_\_” for his commitment to national integration in India.
3. Sardar Patel played a crucial role in the integration of over \_\_\_\_\_ princely states into the newly formed Union of India after independence.
4. The day encourages citizens to reflect on the importance of coming together to overcome challenges, celebrate diversity, and promote \_\_\_\_\_.

5. One of the key highlights of National Unity Day is the \_\_\_\_\_, a nationwide marathon held to honor Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's vision of a united India.
6. The Statue of Unity, dedicated to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, was inaugurated on \_\_\_\_\_, 2018, and is located in Kevadia, Gujarat.
7. Special attractions at the Rashtriya Ekta Diwas celebrations include a show on Indian \_\_\_\_\_ by the BSF and a flypast by the Indian Air Force.
8. National Unity Day serves as a reminder of the values that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel embodied: unity, integrity, and \_\_\_\_\_.

## **8. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of Spain Mr Pedro Sanchez jointly inaugurate TATA Aircraft Complex for manufacturing C-295 aircraft**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez jointly inaugurated the TATA Aircraft Complex at TATA Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) in Vadodara, Gujarat, marking a new era in India-Spain relations.
- The complex will manufacture C-295 aircraft and is a key milestone in the 'Make in India, Make for the World' mission.
- This visit marked Mr. Sanchez's first to India, and the two leaders walked through an exhibition showcasing the new facility's capabilities.
- Prime Minister Modi highlighted that this manufacturing site is a reflection of New India's work culture, moving swiftly from concept to execution, recalling how similar facilities, like Bombardier's train coach factory in Vadodara, were quickly operational and began exporting metro coaches.
- Modi praised the significant growth in India's defense manufacturing, noting that a decade ago, the sector relied heavily on imports.
- Since then, government initiatives have spurred the defense industry, including restructuring ordnance factories, empowering DRDO and HAL, and establishing defense corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
- The iDEX (Innovation for Defence Excellence) scheme has further encouraged innovation, fostering nearly 1,000 defense startups. India's defense exports have increased 30-fold in the last decade, with products reaching over 100 countries.
- The new TATA-Airbus facility will create thousands of jobs, support MSMEs by manufacturing 18,000 aircraft parts locally, and enhance India's expertise in aviation.
- Modi envisions this as a stepping stone towards producing Made-in-India civil aircraft to meet future demands as India's aviation sector expands and connects smaller cities.



- With 1,200 aircraft ordered by Indian airlines, the facility will play a critical role in meeting both domestic and international needs.
- Vadodara's established MSME base, along with Gatishakti University, which prepares sector-specific professionals, positions it as an emerging aviation manufacturing hub.
- The Prime Minister lauded Gujarat's pro-industry policies and acknowledged Vadodara's cultural importance, welcoming Spanish visitors and noting the strong cultural ties between the two nations. He recalled the influence of Spanish Father Carlos Valle in Gujarat, as well as the shared interests in yoga and football, referencing a recent Real Madrid-Barcelona match widely followed in India.
- With 2026 set to be celebrated as the India-Spain Year of Culture, Tourism, and AI, Modi invited Spanish innovators to collaborate in India's development. The event was attended by Gujarat's Governor Acharya Devvrat, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, Union Defense Minister Rajnath Singh, and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, among others.

## Background

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- Under the C-295 program, a total of 56 aircrafts are to be delivered out of which 16 are being delivered directly by Airbus from Spain and remaining 40 are to be made in India.
- Tata Advanced Systems Ltd is responsible for making these 40 aircrafts in India.
- This facility becomes the first private sector Final Assembly Line (FAL) for military aircraft in India.
- It will involve the full development of a complete ecosystem from the manufacture to assembly, test and qualification, to delivery and maintenance of the complete lifecycle of the aircraft.
- Apart from Tatas, leading defence public sector units such as Bharat Electronics Ltd. and Bharat Dynamics Ltd, as well as private Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises will contribute to this program.
- Earlier in October 2022, Prime Minister had laid the foundation stone for the Vadodara Final Assembly Line (FAL).

## Tata Aircraft Complex

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- The Tata Aircraft Complex in Vadodara, Gujarat, is a landmark facility established through a collaboration between Tata Advanced Systems Ltd. (TASL) and Airbus to manufacture C-295 transport aircraft for the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- Inaugurated in October 2024 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Spanish President Pedro Sánchez, this facility is India's first private-sector aircraft assembly line for military use.
- Under the arrangement, Airbus will supply 16 C-295 planes from Spain, while the remaining 40 will be fully manufactured in India by the Tata consortium, involving significant local production and assembly.
- The Vadodara facility is central to India's self-reliance goals in defense, with a high degree of local involvement: 96% of the work hours for each aircraft, including the manufacture of over 13,400 parts, are slated to occur domestically.
- The aircraft will integrate advanced components such as avionics and landing gear from Airbus, while local suppliers will contribute various sub-assemblies.
- Additionally, Bharat Electronics Ltd. and Bharat Dynamics Ltd. will provide electronic warfare suites, adding to India's defense manufacturing capabilities.
- This initiative will bolster the IAF's logistics by adding aircraft capable of short takeoffs and landings on various terrains.
- It's also expected to stimulate job growth, creating thousands of direct and indirect jobs across India's aerospace industry.

- The complex positions India to eventually export these aircraft globally, following delivery to the IAF, further advancing India's defense manufacturing and export potential.

## Spain

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- Spain is a country rich in history, culture, and geography, known for its unique contributions to art, architecture, cuisine, and more.

## Historical Significance

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- **Cultural Mosaic:** Spain has a diverse cultural heritage influenced by various civilizations, including the Romans, Visigoths, Moors, and Christians. This rich tapestry is reflected in its languages, traditions, and architecture.
- **Spanish Empire:** During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Spain was one of the first global empires, establishing colonies in the Americas, parts of Asia, and Africa. This period significantly influenced global trade, culture, and demographics.

## Geographical Features

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- **Diverse Landscapes:** Spain's geography ranges from the snowy peaks of the Pyrenees to the sun-soaked beaches of the Mediterranean, with rich agricultural plains, rugged mountains, and vibrant cities.
- **Climate Variability:** The country experiences various climates, from the arid conditions of the southeast to the temperate climate of the north, influencing its agricultural products and lifestyle.

## Cultural Contributions

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- **Art and Literature:** Spain has produced renowned artists like Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí, and Francisco Goya. In literature, figures such as Miguel de Cervantes, author of "Don Quixote," have had a lasting impact on world literature.
- **Flamenco and Dance:** Flamenco, a passionate art form that originated in Andalusia, combines music, dance, and song, showcasing Spain's rich musical heritage.

## Culinary Excellence

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- **Mediterranean Cuisine:** Spanish cuisine is characterized by its use of fresh ingredients, such as olive oil, seafood, and seasonal vegetables. Dishes like paella, tapas, and churros reflect the country's culinary diversity.
- **Wine Production:** Spain is one of the world's largest wine producers, known for regions like Rioja and Priorat, contributing significantly to the global wine market.

## Architectural Marvels

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- **Gothic and Moorish Architecture:** Spain is home to remarkable architectural styles, including the stunning Gothic cathedrals and the intricate Moorish palaces, such as the Alhambra in Granada and the Mezquita in Córdoba.
- **Modernist Architecture:** The works of Antoni Gaudí, particularly the Sagrada Família in Barcelona, represent a unique blend of art and architecture that attracts millions of visitors.

## Festivals and Traditions

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- **Famous Festivals:** Spain hosts vibrant festivals like La Tomatina in Buñol, running of the bulls in Pamplona (San Fermín), and La Feria de Abril in Seville, showcasing its lively culture and community spirit.
- **Cultural Heritage:** Many traditions, such as Semana Santa (Holy Week) processions, reflect Spain's deep religious roots and its blend of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish influences.



## Unique Aspects

- **Autonomous Communities:** Spain is divided into 17 autonomous communities, each with its own distinct culture, language (like Catalan, Basque, and Galician), and traditions, promoting regional identity and diversity.
- **Historic Cities:** Cities like Barcelona, Madrid, Seville, and Valencia are renowned for their historical significance, modern architecture, and vibrant cultural scenes, making Spain a major tourist destination.

## Current Global Role

- **European Union Membership:** As a key member of the EU, Spain plays a significant role in European politics and economics, influencing policies and trade.
- **Cultural Diplomacy:** Spain promotes its language and culture globally through institutions like the Instituto Cervantes, contributing to the global spread of the Spanish language.

### QUESTIONS

#### Fill in the Blank:

1. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Spanish Prime Minister \_\_\_\_\_ jointly inaugurated the TATA Aircraft Complex in Vadodara, Gujarat.
2. The TATA Aircraft Complex will manufacture the C-\_\_\_\_\_ aircraft, marking a milestone in the 'Make in India, Make for the World' mission.
3. The inauguration of the complex is a reflection of New India's work culture, moving swiftly from concept to \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Under the C-295 program, a total of \_\_\_\_\_ aircraft are to be delivered, with 16 coming directly from Airbus in Spain.
5. Tata Advanced Systems Ltd (TASL) is responsible for manufacturing the remaining \_\_\_\_\_ C-295 aircraft in India.
6. The new facility in Vadodara will create thousands of jobs and support \_\_\_\_\_ by manufacturing 18,000 aircraft parts locally.
7. The TATA-Airbus facility positions India to eventually \_\_\_\_\_ these aircraft globally, advancing its defense manufacturing potential.
8. The Vadodara facility is central to India's self-reliance goals in \_\_\_\_\_, with 96% of the work hours slated to occur domestically.
9. Prime Minister Modi highlighted that a decade ago, India's defense sector relied heavily on \_\_\_\_\_.
10. The complex will enhance India's expertise in aviation, contributing to the expansion of the \_\_\_\_\_ sector and connecting smaller cities.

## 9. Livestock Census: Empowering Farmers and Driving Rural Prosperity

## Introduction

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- India's rich and diverse livestock resources play a crucial role in the economy, supporting millions of livelihoods.
- To foster growth and ensure the welfare of this sector, it is vital to monitor livestock trends closely.
- The Livestock Census, conducted every five years, provides essential data on livestock numbers, distribution, and composition, guiding policymakers in addressing challenges and improving sustainability.
- This comprehensive survey serves as a critical touchstone, not only highlighting the current state of the livestock sector but also setting the stage for future planning and development.
- The insights gained from the Livestock Census are invaluable for driving informed decision-making and fostering sustainable practices across the industry.

## Livestock Census and Integrated Sample Survey (Lc&Iss)

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- The Animal Husbandry Statistics (AHS) Division is responsible for generating crucial statistics related to animal husbandry through the "Livestock Census and Integrated Sample Survey" scheme.
- This initiative, carried out by the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying in collaboration with State Animal Husbandry Departments, plays a vital role in collecting comprehensive data on livestock demographics and trends.

## Key Mandates

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### Quinquennial Livestock Census (LC):

- Conducted every five years since 1919, the Livestock Census aims to provide a comprehensive count of livestock and poultry.
- The 20<sup>th</sup> census notably utilized tablet computers for data collection. Recently, the announcement for the 21<sup>st</sup> Livestock Census was made.

### Annual Integrated Sample Survey (ISS):

- Estimates production of milk, meat, egg, and wool through a survey covering 36 States/UTs. The survey period is from March to February, divided into three seasons.
- Uses Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) via the "eLISS" software.

### Publications:

- **All India Livestock Report:** Provides livestock population details by species, use, sex, and age.
- **Breed-wise Report:** Offers detailed livestock data based on the latest census.
- **Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics:** Annual publication releasing production estimates for key livestock products.

## Importance of Livestock Census

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- India's livestock and poultry resources are vast and play a crucial role in enhancing the socio-economic well-being of rural communities.
- The country is home to approximately 303.76 million bovines, including cattle, buffalo, mithun, and yak, along with 74.26 million sheep, 148.88 million goats, 9.06 million pigs, and about 851.81 million poultry, according to the 20<sup>th</sup> Livestock Census.

- These livestock resources are essential not only for providing nutrition and livelihood opportunities but also for driving rural economic growth and supporting sustainable agricultural practices across the nation.

## Growth in the Livestock Sector

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- Provisional estimates from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) released on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024 reveal that the Gross Value Added (GVA) from the livestock sector reached approximately ₹13,55,460 crores at current prices in the 2022-23 financial year, representing about 30.23% of the GVA for the Agricultural and Allied Sectors.
- When adjusted to constant 2011-12 prices, the GVA stood at around ₹6,90,268 crores, reflecting a growth rate of 5.02% compared to the previous year.
- Additionally, milk production during 2021-22 and 2022-23 was recorded 222.07 million tonnes and 230.58 million tonnes respectively, Depicting, an annual growth of 3.83%.
- This showcases the sector's capacity to meet rising consumer needs while enhancing its contribution to rural livelihoods and the broader economy.

## 21<sup>st</sup> Livestock Census

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- Union Minister Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh announced 21<sup>st</sup> Livestock Census on 25<sup>th</sup> October in New Delhi.
- The event marked a significant step forward with the introduction of digital advancements aimed at enhancing the accuracy and efficiency of data collection.
- Among these innovations is a new mobile application for real-time data gathering, which will be complemented by a web-based dashboard that allows for seamless tracking and timely insights.
- Additionally, offline data capture capabilities have been included to ensure thorough enumeration, even in remote and rural areas.
- Extensive preparations were undertaken to ensure the smooth execution of the census, including the training of over 1 lakh field personnel through regional and state-level programs, as well as the development of a robust digital infrastructure to support the data collection process.
- Covering more than 30 crore households across all States and Union Territories, the census aims to capture the full diversity of India's livestock practices, including those of nomadic communities and pastoralists.
- The census will focus on important areas such as gender roles in livestock rearing, offering a deeper understanding of women's contributions to the sector.
- It will also emphasize breed management, utilizing image-based technology to accurately identify livestock breeds, while prioritizing critical aspects like animal health, productivity, and disease control to address the sector's key challenges.

## Schemes for Betterment of Livestock

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India's livestock sector has seen significant improvements through various schemes aimed at enhancing productivity, health, and infrastructure. Here's a brief overview of some key initiatives:

- **Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM):** Launched in 2014, RGM focuses on the development and conservation of indigenous bovine breeds to improve milk production and make dairy farming profitable for rural farmers, especially women. The program emphasizes genetic improvement through artificial insemination, IVF, and genomic selection.
- **National Livestock Mission (NLM):** Launched in 2014-15, NLM aims at employment generation, entrepreneurship development, and increased production of meat, eggs, milk, and wool. It supports both

forward and backward linkages in the livestock sector, enabling the integration of the unorganized sector with formal markets.

- **Livestock Health & Disease Control (LH&DC):** This scheme aims to improve animal health by implementing vaccination programs and disease surveillance to prevent and eventually eradicate diseases. The funding pattern includes 100% central assistance for some programs and shared funding between the central and state governments for others.
- **National Programme for Dairy Development (NPDD):** NPDD aims to enhance milk quality and increase organized milk procurement, with nationwide implementation of infrastructure for quality testing and chilling. Component B, a JICA-supported pilot project, focuses on dairy infrastructure and market linkages in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
- **National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP):** Launched in 2019, NADCP aims to control Foot & Mouth Disease (FMD) and Brucellosis by vaccinating livestock. It targets 100% vaccination of cattle, buffalo, sheep, goat, and pig populations for FMD and female bovine calves for Brucellosis.
- **Dairy Processing & Infrastructure Development Fund (DIDF):** Initiated in 2017-18, DIDF provides subsidized loans to upgrade processing and chilling infrastructure. The scheme aims to modernize milk procurement systems, with funding from NABARD, government contributions, and end borrowers.
- **Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF):** Part of the Atma Nirbhar Bharat initiative, AHIDF promotes private sector investment in dairy, meat processing, animal feed production, breed improvement, and veterinary vaccine facilities, aiming to boost the sector's growth.
- **Supporting Dairy Cooperatives & Farmer Producer Organizations (SDCFPO):** This scheme provides working capital loans to dairy cooperatives, ensuring sustained operations and market access for milk producers.

These initiatives collectively aim to improve livestock productivity, strengthen infrastructure, and support the socio-economic upliftment of livestock farmers across the country.

## Conclusion

- The 21<sup>st</sup> Livestock Census will play a pivotal role in shaping livestock-centered schemes and initiatives, such as the National Gokul Mission, Livestock Health & Disease Control (LH&DC), and the National Programme for Dairy Development (NPDD).
- By providing comprehensive and updated data, the census will help identify the needs and opportunities in the sector, enabling the government to fine-tune these programs for greater impact.
- The insights gathered will not only strengthen existing initiatives but also pave the way for new strategies aimed at enhancing livestock productivity, improving animal health, and boosting rural incomes.
- Ultimately, this will contribute to the sustainable growth of the livestock sector, benefiting millions of households and driving overall economic development.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. The Livestock Census is conducted every \_\_\_\_\_ years to provide essential data on livestock numbers and trends.
2. The Animal Husbandry Statistics (AHS) Division generates crucial statistics related to animal husbandry through the “Livestock Census and \_\_\_\_\_ Sample Survey” scheme.
3. The 21<sup>st</sup> Livestock Census was announced by \_\_\_\_\_ in New Delhi.

4. The Livestock Census aims to provide a comprehensive count of livestock and poultry, and the most recent census utilized \_\_\_\_\_ for data collection.
5. According to the 20<sup>th</sup> Livestock Census, India is home to approximately \_\_\_\_\_ million bovines, including cattle and buffalo.
6. The Gross Value Added (GVA) from the livestock sector for the financial year 2022-23 reached approximately ₹\_\_\_\_\_ crores.
7. The National Programme for Dairy Development (NPDD) aims to enhance milk quality and increase organized \_\_\_\_\_ procurement.
8. The Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM) focuses on the development and conservation of indigenous \_\_\_\_\_ breeds to improve milk production.
9. The National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP) targets 100% vaccination of livestock populations for \_\_\_\_\_ and Brucellosis.
10. The Livestock Census will help shape livestock-centered schemes and initiatives, such as the National Gokul Mission and the Livestock Health & \_\_\_\_\_ Control (LH&DC).

## 10. 17<sup>th</sup> Urban Mobility India (UMI) Conference & Exhibition 2024

The 17<sup>th</sup> Urban Mobility India (UMI) Conference & Exhibition 2024 was held from October 25 to 27, 2024, at the Mahatma Mandir Convention Centre in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

This annual event, organized under the auspices of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, focuses on fostering sustainable urban mobility solutions through the exchange of innovative ideas among various stakeholders, including government officials, industry leaders, and civil society.

### Key Highlights

#### Inaugural Address:

- Gujarat's Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel inaugurated the conference, emphasizing the importance of urban mobility in enhancing last-mile connectivity and reducing emissions. He highlighted initiatives like the Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) in Ahmedabad, which has been transformative for urban transport.

#### Focus on Sustainability:

- The conference aimed to address urban transport challenges while promoting sustainability. Discussions centered on advancements in electric and CNG bus technologies, aligning with India's commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2070.

#### Collaboration and Networking:

- UMI 2024 served as a platform for professionals to share best practices and collaborate on urban mobility strategies. It included discussions on technological innovations and the need for policies that facilitate sustainable urban transport systems.

### **Global and Local Participation:**

- The event attracted participants from both domestic and international backgrounds, fostering a global dialogue on urban mobility issues. This inclusivity is essential for implementing effective urban transport solutions that are contextually relevant.

### **Policy Development:**

- As part of its goals, the conference aimed to inform and guide local governments in developing their urban transport policies, drawing from successful models and experiences shared by experts.
- Overall, the UMI Conference not only aimed to tackle the pressing issues surrounding urban mobility in India but also showcased the country's efforts to position itself as a leader in sustainable transport solutions. For further details, you can visit the official UMI event page or related news articles covering the conference.
- During the conference, awards were presented in 12 categories to recognize excellence in urban transport initiatives.

### **The categories included:**

- City with the Most Sustainable Transport System
- City with the Best Public Transport System
- City with the Best Non-Motorized Transport System
- City with the Best Safety and Security System & Record
- City with the Best Intelligent Transport System (ITS)
- City with the Most Innovative Financing Mechanism
- City with Best Record of Public Involvement in its Transport Planning
- City with the Best Freight Transport System
- City with the Best Green Transport Initiative
- Metro Rail with the Best Multimodal Integration
- Metro Rail with the Best Passenger Services and Satisfaction
- Running Trophy for the State/UT with the Best Urban Transport Projects

Among the notable awards, Indore was recognized for its excellence in urban transport, receiving the award for the Best Public Transport System.

- Other awardees included Gandhinagar, recognized for its Best Green Transport Initiative, and Bhopal, awarded for the Best Non-Motorized Transport System.
- On this occasion, Shri Manohar Lal, Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, Power, Government of India also announced Gurugram, Haryana as the venue of 18<sup>th</sup> Urban Mobility India (UMI) Conference & Exhibition 2025.
- This year, the Conference was focussed on the theme “Standardisation and Optimisation of Urban Transport Solutions”.
- It has emphasized on harmonising standards for Optimising urban mobility particularly in the Indian context. Further, It has deliberated upon the framework for integration of various modes in urban mobility, multilateral and bilateral funding in view of the Make in India policy, importance of big data for transport planning, E-Bus Eco-system in India, benchmarking of cost in Metro system, digital public infrastructure principles in relation to E-Bus transition, innovative financing and other issues and challenges in Urban transport.



- The conference has also dwelled upon vision for clean air cities, urban freight, urban transport solutions for small and middle towns in India, the need of the hour is to optimise and standardise the urban transport solutions to have efficient and effective system.

## India and Mode of Transportation

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- India has a vast and diverse transportation network that plays a crucial role in its economy and development.

### 1. Modes of Transportation

#### Road Transport:

- The United States has the world's largest road network, stretching nearly 4.1 million miles (6.6 million kilometres).
- This extensive system includes a vast interstate highway network, as well as state, county, and local roads, providing access to nearly every part of the country.
- Following the U.S. is India, with just under 4 million miles (6.4 million kilometres) of roads, which cater to its billion-plus population.

#### Rail Transport:

- The Indian Railways is one of the largest railway networks in the world, operating more than 68,000 kilometers of track and carrying over 23 million passengers daily. It is vital for both passenger and freight transportation.

#### Air Transport:

- India has a growing aviation sector, with more than 450 airports and airstrips. Major international airports include Indira Gandhi International Airport (Delhi), Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (Mumbai), and Kempegowda International Airport (Bengaluru).

#### Water Transport:

- India has a long coastline of about 7,517 kilometers and several major ports, including Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata, which are crucial for maritime trade. Inland waterways are also being developed for cargo transport.

### 2. Government Initiatives

- **Bharatmala Pariyojana:** This is a flagship program aimed at improving road connectivity, especially in border and coastal areas, with an emphasis on economic corridors.
- **National Logistics Policy:** Launched to enhance the logistics sector, this policy aims to reduce logistics costs and improve the overall efficiency of transportation.
- **PM Gati Shakti:** This initiative focuses on integrating various modes of transportation and improving infrastructure to facilitate seamless movement of goods and services.

### 3. International Connectivity

- India is enhancing its international transportation links through projects like the Sagarmala Project, which focuses on port modernization and connectivity with coastal economic zones.
- Initiatives like the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway aim to boost connectivity between India and Southeast Asia.

## 4. Challenges

- **Infrastructure Development:** Despite significant progress, there are challenges in upgrading and maintaining transportation infrastructure to meet the growing demand.
- **Traffic Congestion:** Urban areas face severe traffic congestion, impacting travel times and increasing pollution levels.
- **Safety Concerns:** Road safety remains a significant issue, with high accident rates prompting the need for better regulations and enforcement.

## 5. Global Position

### Rankings:

According to the World Bank's 'Logistics Performance Index Report (2023):

- **India ranks 38 out of 139 countries.** India's rank has improved by six places from 44 in 2018 and sixteen places from 54 in 2014.
- **Emerging Market:** As one of the fastest-growing economies, India's transportation sector is poised for significant investments and developments in the coming years, making it a key player in global supply chains.

## QUESTIONS

### Fill in the Blank:

1. The 17<sup>th</sup> Urban Mobility India (UMI) Conference & Exhibition 2024 was held from October 25 to 27, 2024, at the \_\_\_\_\_ Convention Centre in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
2. The conference was organized under the auspices of the Ministry of \_\_\_\_\_ and Urban Affairs, focusing on sustainable urban mobility solutions.
3. In his inaugural address, Gujarat's Chief Minister \_\_\_\_\_ emphasized the importance of urban mobility in enhancing last-mile connectivity.
4. The conference highlighted advancements in \_\_\_\_\_ and CNG bus technologies as part of India's commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2070.
5. Among the awards presented at the conference, Indore was recognized for having the \_\_\_\_\_ Public Transport System.
6. The theme of this year's conference was "Standardisation and Optimisation of \_\_\_\_\_ Transport Solutions."
7. The conference also discussed the integration of various modes in urban mobility, as well as the importance of \_\_\_\_\_ data for transport planning.
8. The next Urban Mobility India (UMI) Conference & Exhibition 2025 will be held in \_\_\_\_\_, Haryana.
9. The Indian Railways operates more than \_\_\_\_\_ kilometers of track and carries over 23 million passengers daily.
10. India ranks \_\_\_\_\_ out of 139 countries in the World Bank's 'Logistics Performance Index Report 2023.'