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Lebanon

Syllabus: GS-1; Geography-Mapping

Context

➢ The Israeli military launched deadly attacks in the densely populated Dahiyeh suburb of Beirut, aiming to target Hezbollah's headquarters and weapons depots.

➢ One of the key targets of the attack was Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, who Israel has claimed as dead, though no confirmation has been received from the Hezbollah.

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Geography

- ➢ **Location:** *Lebanon is a small country in the Middle East, situated on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. It shares borders with Syria to the north and east and Israel to the south.*
- ➢ **Area:** *Approximately 10,452 square kilometers.*
- ➢ **Capital:** *Beirut.*
- ➢ **Climate:** *Mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers and mild, rainy winters. Mountainous areas experience cooler climates.*
- ➢ **Topography:** *Characterized by two parallel mountain ranges (Mount Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon mountains) and a fertile coastal plain. The Bekaa Valley lies between the two ranges, forming a major agricultural area.*

History

- ➢ **Ancient History:**
  - o *Lebanon has been a crucial part of various ancient civilizations like the Phoenicians (known for their maritime trade and the alphabet), the Roman Empire, and the Ottoman Empire.*
- ➢ **Modern History:**
  - o *Gained independence from France in 1943.*
  - o *Lebanon was a key player in regional geopolitics due to its strategic location and diverse religious composition.*
  - o *The Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) had a major impact on the country, leading to sectarian violence and foreign interventions.*
  - o *Post-war Lebanon has been plagued by political instability, including issues with Syrian and Israeli influence, as well as the presence of Hezbollah.*

Economy

- ➢ *Currency: Lebanese Pound (LBP).*

Languages:

- ➢ *Arabic (official language).*
- ➢ *French and English are widely spoken.*

Foreign Relations

- ➢ **Regional Relations:**
  - o *Lebanon's foreign policy is often influenced by its complex relations with Syria, Israel, and other neighboring countries.*
  - o *Hezbollah, a Shia militant and political group, is heavily supported by Iran and has significant influence on Lebanon's domestic and foreign policies.*

- o *Syrian Civil War has had major spillover effects on Lebanon, including a large influx of refugees and increased sectarian tensions.*
- o *Western Relations: Lebanon has strong ties with France, its former colonial ruler, and receives aid from the European Union and the United States.*

➢ **Socio-Economic Issues**

- o **Refugee Crisis:** *Lebanon hosts one of the largest refugee populations per capita, primarily from Syria and Palestine.*
- o **Poverty and Inequality:** *The economic collapse has exacerbated poverty levels, leading to widespread social unrest.*
- o **Corruption:** *Lebanon's political system is notorious for corruption, clientelism, and nepotism.*
- o **Electricity Crisis:** *Frequent power outages due to poor infrastructure and corruption in the energy sector.*

Current Challenges

➢ **Political Instability***: Frequent government collapses and difficulty in forming new governments.*

➢ **Hezbollah's Influence:** *Hezbollah's dual role as both a political party and a militant group creates tensions, especially with neighboring Israel and the West.*

➢ **Economic Collapse:** *A significant issue with international efforts focused on providing financial aid and reforms to stabilize the country.*

➢ **Environmental Issues:** *Pollution, deforestation, and inadequate waste management are ongoing concerns.*

Culture

➢ **Lebanese Cuisine:** *Known for dishes like hummus, tabbouleh, and shawarma.*

➢ **Music and Dance:** *The Dabke is a traditional dance, and Lebanese pop music is popular across the Arab world.*

➢ **Festivals:** *Lebanon has a rich cultural heritage with several music, film, and art festivals despite the ongoing crises.*

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO)

Syllabus: GS-1; Social Issues, GS-2; Governance

Context

➤ *The Supreme Court held that viewing in private, downloading, storing, possessing, distributing or displaying pornographic acts involving children attract criminal liability under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) and the Information Technology Act.*

About

➤ *The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 is a landmark law enacted to safeguard children (defined as persons below 18 years of age) from sexual abuse and exploitation in India.*

➤ *It provides a comprehensive framework for the protection of children against a variety of sexual offenses, ensuring justice through special procedures and provisions.*

Key Features of the POCSO Act, 2012

➤ **Broad Definition of Sexual Offences:**
   o *Penetrative Sexual Assault: Includes both vaginal and anal penetrative sexual assault.*
   o *Aggravated Penetrative Sexual Assault: Involves situations where the perpetrator is in a position of trust or authority (e.g., police officers, family members, teachers).*
   o *Sexual Harassment: Covers acts of sexual advances and actions with sexual intent (such as gestures or exhibiting pornography).*
   o *Child Pornography: Involves using children for pornographic purposes and possessing such materials.*

➤ **Gender-Neutral Law:**
   o *The Act is gender-neutral, recognizing that both male and female children can be victims of sexual offenses.*
   o *Mandatory Reporting:*
   o *It is mandatory for any individual aware of an offense under the POCSO Act to report it to the authorities. Failure to do so can result in punishment.*

➤ **Special Courts:**
   o *The Act mandates the establishment of Special Courts to expedite trials of offenses under POCSO. These courts are intended to be child-friendly, ensuring that the victim is comfortable during the legal process.*

➤ **Child-Friendly Procedures:**

- o *Statements of the child must be recorded in a friendly and non-threatening environment.*
- o *No child should be detained in a police station in the night for any reason.*
- o *The child cannot be asked to face the accused during cross-examination.*
- o *The identity of the child must be kept confidential.*

➤ **Burden of Proof on the Accused:**
- o *The POCSO Act shifts the burden of proof onto the accused once the offense is established, aligning with the principle of "guilty until proven innocent" to protect children.*

➤ **Punishments:**
- o *Penetrative Sexual Assault: Minimum 10 years of imprisonment, which may extend to life imprisonment.*
- o *Aggravated Penetrative Sexual Assault: Minimum 20 years of imprisonment, extendable to life imprisonment or death penalty (introduced via the 2019 amendment).*
- o *Sexual Harassment: Imprisonment for up to 3 years and a fine.*
- o *Using a Child for Pornographic Purposes: Imprisonment for up to 5 years, which may increase for repeat offenders.*

➤ **Amendments to POCSO (2019):**
- o *Introduced the death penalty for aggravated penetrative sexual assault in certain cases.*
- o *Added more stringent punishments for child pornography.*
- o *Expanded the scope to better deal with online child exploitation.*

➤ **Protection of Victims' Rights:**
- o *The Act emphasizes that the child's safety and well-being are of utmost importance during the trial.*
- o *Compensation is provided to the victim for immediate and long-term rehabilitation, including medical costs and psychological counseling.*

➤ **Monitoring Mechanism:**
- o *The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and State Commissions are tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Act to ensure compliance and provide recommendations.*

SASTRA Ramanujan Prize

Syllabus: GS-2; International Institutions, Awards and Recognitions

Context

➢ *The 2024 SASTRA Ramanujan Prize will be awarded to* **Alexander Dunn of the Georgia Institute of Technology, U.S.**

About

➢ *The SASTRA Ramanujan Prize is a prestigious award established in 2005 by* **SASTRA University in India to honor the memory of the renowned mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan.**

Objective

➢ *The prize aims to recognize and promote the work of young mathematicians who have made significant contributions in areas influenced by Ramanujan's legacy.*

Eligibility

➢ *The award is primarily for* **mathematicians below the age of 32** *at the time of nomination.*
➢ *It encourages contributions to various fields, including number theory, algebra, analysis, and other branches of mathematics that reflect Ramanujan's interests and work.*
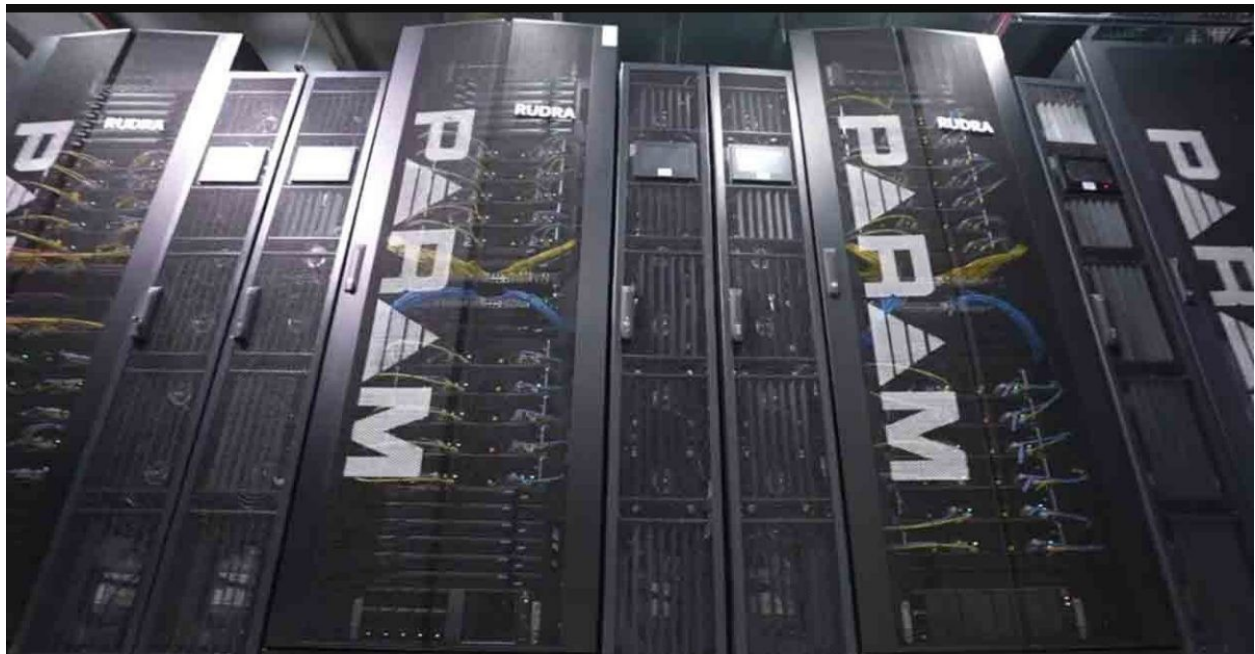
Prize Details

➢ *The* **winner receives a monetary award along with a citation.**
➢ *The prize is typically awarded annually, and recipients are selected based on the impact and originality of their work.*

PARAM Rudra supercomputers

Syllabus: GS-3; Science and Technology

Context

Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually launched three PARAM Rudra supercomputers, *a significant step in India's push for scientific and technological advancement under the* **National Supercomputing Mission (NSM).**

About

➢ **Developed by***: Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC).*
➢ **Technology:** *Based on India's indigenous PARAM series of supercomputers, PARAM Rudra is a high-performance computing (HPC) system.*
➢ **Architecture:** *It uses hybrid architecture combining CPUs and GPUs to deliver superior computational power for varied scientific applications.*

Specifications and Performance

- ➢ **Processing Speed:** *PARAM Rudra is capable of performing several petaflops (quadrillions of calculations per second), though exact figures may vary across installations.*
- ➢ **Energy Efficiency***: Designed to be energy-efficient, PARAM Rudra employs advanced cooling systems and energy-saving techniques.*
- ➢ **Applications:** *Fields like weather forecasting, seismic data analysis, and space research utilize its processing power.*

Government Initiative

- ➢ **Part of the National Supercomputing Mission (NSM***): PARAM Rudra is a product of India's National Supercomputing Mission (NSM), which aims to develop a nationwide infrastructure for high-performance computing.*
- ➢ **Objective of NSM:** *By installing supercomputers like PARAM Rudra, India seeks to enhance its capability in scientific research, engineering simulations, big data analytics, and AI research.*

Significance

- ➢ **Boosting Scientific Research and Innovation**
  - o **Accelerated Research:** *PARAM Rudra dramatically speeds up research in areas such as climate change, genomics, material science, and drug discovery, enabling faster breakthroughs in critical fields.*
  - o **Complex Simulations***: The supercomputers are essential for running large-scale simulations and models, such as seismic activity, weather patterns, and nuclear physics research, which are beyond the capability of conventional systems.*
- ➢ **Key to India's Technological Self-Reliance**
  - o **Indigenous Development:** *PARAM Rudra is part of India's push towards Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) in the field of advanced technology. It showcases India's ability to build world-class HPC systems without relying on foreign technology.*
  - o **Strategic Autonomy:** *By developing supercomputing infrastructure indigenously, India reduces its dependence on foreign nations for critical technology, ensuring strategic autonomy in sectors such as defense and space.*
- ➢ **Enhancing Weather Forecasting and Disaster Management**
  - o **Improved Accuracy in Forecasting:** *PARAM Rudra is critical for climate modeling, helping to improve the accuracy and timeliness of weather forecasts, including predicting monsoons, cyclones, and extreme weather events.*

- o **Disaster Preparedness:** *The supercomputers enhance India's ability to predict and respond to natural disasters like earthquakes and floods, contributing to more effective disaster management.*

- ➢ **Support to National Security**
    - o **Defense Applications:** *The computational power of PARAM Rudra aids in simulations and analysis required in defense research, ballistics, and nuclear technology, bolstering India's national security infrastructure.*
    - o **Strategic Data Analysis:** *It helps in processing large volumes of data essential for national security, including geospatial analysis, cryptography, and cyber defense.*
- ➢ **Advancing AI, Big Data, and Machine Learning**
    - o **AI and Machine Learning:** *PARAM Rudra provides the computational backbone needed to train AI models and support machine learning and big data analytics in sectors like healthcare, finance, and agriculture.*
    - o **Innovation Ecosystem:** *It fosters an ecosystem where research institutions, startups, and industries can harness advanced computing power, contributing to India's growing digital economy.*
- ➢ **Contribution to National Supercomputing Mission (NSM)**
    - o **Widespread Accessibility:** *Under the National Supercomputing Mission, PARAM Rudra is making high-performance computing accessible to researchers across academic institutions and national laboratories.*
    - o **Global Competitiveness:** *With supercomputers like PARAM Rudra, India is aiming to rank among the top nations in terms of supercomputing power, contributing to its global competitiveness in science and technology.*

What is Clause 6 of Assam Accord?

Syllabus: GS-3; Internal Security, Border Management

Context

➢ *After a meeting with representatives of the* **All Assam Students' Union (AASU),** *Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma set the ball rolling for the implementation of 52 recommendations of the* **Justice Biplab Sarma Committee** *regarding Clause 6 of the Assam Accord, as announced by the Assam government earlier this month.*

About

➢ *Clause 6 of the Assam Accord is one of the key provisions of the Assam Accord signed on* **15th August 1985 between the Government of India and the leaders of the Assam Movement.**

➢ *The Assam Movement, led by the* **All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP),** *was primarily against the illegal migration of people from neighboring countries, particularly Bangladesh, into Assam.*

Key Features of Clause 6

➢ **Safeguards for Assamese People:** *Clause 6 emphasizes the need to provide constitutional, legislative, and administrative safeguards to protect, preserve, and promote the cultural, social, and linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people.*

➢ **Protection of Indigenous Interests:** *The provision aims to protect the indigenous people of Assam, who felt threatened by the influx of migrants, in terms of employment, political participation, and cultural preservation.*

➢ **Unimplemented Clause:** *Despite being part of the Assam Accord for decades, Clause 6 remains largely unimplemented, which has been a cause of discontent among various Assamese groups.*

Recent Developments

➢ *In 2019, the Government of India formed a high-level committee to make recommendations on how Clause 6 could be implemented.*

➢ *The committee was tasked with identifying who qualifies as "Assamese people" and how to safeguard their rights.*

➢ **The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019,** *triggered protests in Assam, with concerns that it contradicted the principles of Clause 6 by allowing more immigrants to settle in Assam, potentially diluting the local identity.*