

CURRENT AFFAIRS

UPSC CSE 2026



**POLITY PRELIMS
MARATHON**

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AIR - 222, 207, 173



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Deputy Speaker

Why in news: Deputy Speaker's post has remained vacant since 2019, raising serious concerns on constitutional compliance and democratic balance. The post is not ceremonial; it ensures legislative continuity, neutral arbitration, and effective functioning of Parliament.

Do you know?

- Constitution does not specify a time frame, allowing delays in appointing Deputy Speaker.
- Article 95(1): Deputy Speaker performs the duties of the Speaker if the post is vacant.
- All powers of the Speaker apply to the Deputy Speaker when presiding over the House.
- The office of Deputy Speaker dates back to the Government of India Act, 1919, where he was known as Deputy President.
- Deputy Speaker is elected by simple majority of members present and voting in Lok Sabha.
- While usually elected in the second session, there is no bar on electing in the first session.
- Deputy Speaker M Ananthasayanam Ayyangar filled in after Speaker G V Mavalankar's death in 1956, and P M Sayeed did the same in 2002 after Speaker G M C Balayogi's death.
- Under Rule 9, the Speaker nominates a Panel of up to ten Chairpersons to preside in the absence of Speaker and Deputy Speaker.
- The first 4 Deputy Speakers (1952–1969) were from the ruling Congress.
- Article 178 mirrors Article 93 for state Assemblies, mandating election of Speaker and Deputy Speaker.
- Article 179 governs vacation, resignation, and removal of Speaker and Deputy Speaker in state Assemblies.
- Article 89 establishes Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha, elected only by Rajya Sabha.
- The Deputy Chairman plays a vital role in managing House proceedings and steps in for the Chairperson/Vice President when needed.

Constitutional Mandate and Conventions

- Article 93 mandates election of the Deputy Speaker "as soon as may be," implying urgency, not discretion.
- Article 94 ensures continuity of the Deputy Speaker's office until resignation, removal, or disqualification.
- Article 180 empowers the Deputy Speaker to act as Speaker in their absence, ensuring uninterrupted parliamentary proceedings.
- Rule 8 of Lok Sabha Rules (1952) requires the Speaker to fix a date for election to the post, reinforcing the procedural urgency.
- Conventionally, the Deputy Speaker's post is offered to the Opposition, fostering checks and balances and collaborative governance.
- The Deputy Speaker presides over important committees like Private Members' Bills and the Budget Committee.

Demand for inclusion of Kokborok and Bhojpuri in Eighth Schedule of Constitution

Why in news: Recently, Kokborok Sahitya Parishad requested inclusion of Kokborok language in Eighth Schedule of the Constitution in a letter to Tripura Chief Minister. The script for Kokborok can be either Bengali or Devanagari.

- On International Mother Tongue Day (February 21), there was a demand for inclusion of Bhojpuri in Eighth Schedule. Bhojpuri holds constitutional status in Mauritius and Nepal but remains unrecognised in India.
- Eighth Schedule of Constitution lists officially recognised languages; provisions are in Articles 344(1) and 351.
- Article 344(1) provides for a Commission to recommend the progressive use of Hindi for official

What is the Eighth Schedule?

It lists 22 languages officially recognised by the Indian Constitution.

These include:

Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santhali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu.

purposes of the Union.

- Article 351 mandates the Union to promote Hindi and enrich it using Sanskrit and other Eighth Schedule languages. 22 languages are listed in the Eighth Schedule. Sindhi was added by 21st Amendment Act (1967); Konkani, Manipuri, Nepali by 71st Amendment Act (1992); Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, Santhali by 92nd Amendment Act (2003). English is not included in the 8th Schedule.
- Ashok Pahwa Committee (1996) proposed criteria: official language of a state, significant population, independent language, Sahitya Akademi recognition, developed literary tradition.
- Sitakant Mohapatra Committee (2003) suggested: at least 5 million speakers, medium of instruction up to secondary/university level, script in use for at least 50 years.
- MHA states that no fixed official standard exists for selecting languages for the Eighth Schedule.

- Benefits of inclusion include: **translation services in Parliament, inclusion in UPSC language papers, and developmental funds from the Centre.**

Do you know?

- Last year, **'Classical Language' status was granted to Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali**, bringing the total number of classical languages to 11.
- Previously, only **six languages held the 'Classical' status: Tamil (2004), Sanskrit (2005), Kannada (2008), Telugu (2008), Malayalam (2013), and Odia (2014).**
- **Classical languages are custodians of ancient cultural heritage**, preserving **history, literature, and traditions.**
- The government grants this status to **honor and safeguard the linguistic milestones of India's diverse cultural landscape.**
- In **2004**, Centre created the **category of "classical languages"**. **Tamil became the first Indian language to receive classical status due to its high antiquity and rich literary tradition.**

Key criteria for a language to be considered a Classical Language in India:

- Must have an **early history of 1500–2000 years.**
- It should have a **body of ancient literature or texts** regarded as **heritage** by its speakers over generations.
- There must be **knowledge texts**, including **prose, poetry, and epigraphic/inscriptional evidence.**
- **Classical language & its literature** may be **distinct from its modern form** or may show **discontinuity** over time.

Additional information:

- **Department of Official Language** under **Ministry of Home Affairs** implements **constitutional provisions** and **Official Languages Act, 1963** relating to **Hindi and English** in official purposes of the Union. **Established in 1975**, it promotes **Hindi in official work** while supporting **linguistic diversity** as per **Articles 343–351 of the Constitution.**
- **Bharatiya Bhasha Anubhag (Indian Languages Section)** launched in **2025** to reduce **dominance of English**, promote **regional languages**, and enable **officials to communicate in mother tongues.** It includes **universal translation tools** (with **C–DAC support**) for **seamless communication**, aligned with **NEP 2020 emphasis** on indigenous languages.
- **Bhasha Sangam Initiative**, a **Ministry of Education** program under **Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat**, teaches **basic conversational sentences** in **22 languages** of the **Eighth Schedule.** It uses **digital platforms (DIKSHA/ePathshala)** and **booklets** for **school children** to foster **linguistic tolerance** and **cultural integration** nationwide.
- **Hindi Shabdsindhu**, an **online dictionary initiative**, developed by **Department of Official Language, Central Hindi Directorate**, and **scientific/technical committees.** It provides a **comprehensive repository of Hindi words for administrative, scientific, and technical usage**, making **Hindi versatile and widely accepted.**

Secularism

Why in news: On the eve of the **75th anniversary of the Constitution**, the **Supreme Court** upheld the inclusion of **"secular"** and **"socialist"** in the **Preamble.**

- These terms were added through the **42nd Amendment (1976)** during **Emergency.** Phrase **"unity of the nation"** was replaced with **"unity and integrity of the nation"**.
- In **Kesavananda Bharati (1973)**, even before the amendment, the Court declared **secularism as a basic structure** of the Constitution. It also held that **Preamble** was an **integral part** of Constitution, and was **subject to amending power** of Parliament, provided **Basic Structure** was not tinkered with.
- **S.R. Bommai Case (1994):** Reaffirmed secularism as part of the basic structure.
- Secularism was **implicit from day one**, made **explicit in 1976.** **Articles:** 14, 15, 16, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 325.
- Influence of **Ashoka's Dhamma: Rock Edict 7** promoted **coexistence of religions**, **Rock Edict 12** prohibited **religious glorification and condemnation.**
- **Motilal Nehru Report (1928)**, **Karachi Resolution (1931)**, and even **Hindu Mahasabha draft (1944)** endorsed **no state religion.** In **1949**, a proposal to begin the **Preamble with "God"** was **defeated by 17 votes.**

Presidential Reference

Why in news: The **Supreme Court** issued notices to the **Union Government** and all **States** on a **Presidential Reference** seeking opinion on whether the **President and Governors** can be judicially compelled to act within **timelines** on **Bills** passed by State legislatures. Court seeks the views of the Union and all State governments to get a comprehensive understanding of the issue before it gives its opinion.

- The Reference arises from the **Tamil Nadu Governor case**, where the SC held that **prolonged inaction by Governors is illegal** and imposed **judicially enforceable timelines.**

What Was the Presidential Reference?

- The Reference originates from **President Murmu's submission of 14 questions** after the SC's ruling against **Governor R.N. Ravi's delay** in assenting to **10 Tamil Nadu Bills**.
- It seeks clarity on whether **courts can prescribe the manner and timeframe** for constitutional authorities to act under **Articles 200 and 201**.
- **Article 200**: Governor's power to grant assent to State Bills.
- **Article 201**: Bills reserved by Governors for **Presidential assent**.
- **Question**: Can **judicial orders** impose **timelines and procedures** where none are constitutionally defined?

Advisory Role of the Supreme Court under Article 143

- **Article 143(1)**: Gives SC **advisory jurisdiction** to render opinions on legal or factual questions of **public importance**. SC must **limit itself** to the questions referred and **cannot exceed the scope** of the Reference.
- **Discretion to decline**: SC has declined before (e.g., **Special Courts Bill, 1978**; **Ayodhya-Babri Masjid Reference, 1993**, where it termed the Reference "unconstitutional").

Binding Nature of Advisory Opinions

- **Article 141**: Law declared by the Supreme Court is binding on all courts within the territory of India. This provision ensures that there is a uniform and consistent application of laws across the country.
- **Advisory opinions** under Article 143 are **not binding**, but have persuasive value.

Can Article 143 Be Used to Overturn a Ruling?

- **Article 143** cannot be used by the executive to seek **review or reversal** of SC rulings. Only **review or curative petitions** can challenge settled SC judgments. **Cauvery Water Disputes Reference** clarified this principle.
- The **Constitution does not permit** SC to act as an **appellate court** over itself, nor can the **President vest appellate jurisdiction** through Article 143.
- However, SC may **clarify or restate law** under Article 143(1) if the earlier **ratio decidendi** remains intact.

Extra:

- Under **Article 167**, the Chief Minister must keep the Governor informed on **contemplated laws**, enabling pre-legislative consultation, but **assent after passage is mandatory**.
- **Article 254(2) proviso** empowers Parliament to **neutralise repugnant State laws** by amending, varying, or repealing them.

All India Speakers' Conference

Why in news: At the **All India Speakers' Conference**, **Union Home Minister** highlighted the crisis of **frequent disruptions in Parliament and State Assemblies**, stressing that **debate must take place in a democracy**.

Do you know? (All India Speakers' Conference)

- **Recent Event:** The 2025 conference, the 85th All India Presiding Officers' Conference, was held in August 2025 in New Delhi.
- **Key Theme:** The event marked the 100th anniversary of Vithalbhai Patel's election as the first Indian Speaker.
- **Attendees:** Included speakers and deputy speakers from state legislative assemblies and councils, as well as other national and state dignitaries.

Vice-President resignation

Why in news: **Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar** resigned citing **health reasons** under **Article 67(a)** of the Constitution.

- His resignation letter was addressed to the **President of India**.
- He was elected as the **14th Vice-President in 2022** and had **two years remaining** in his term. This is the **first resignation of a Vice-President** in such a manner; earlier resignations were only to contest the **President's post**.

Constitutional Provisions for Election of Vice-President

- In case of **death, removal, or resignation**, the **Election Commission** must hold a **fresh election immediately**; meanwhile, the **Deputy Chairman** presides over Rajya Sabha proceedings.
- The Vice-President is elected by an **Electoral College** comprising **Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha members** (both elected and nominated).
- Members of the Electoral College can vote **freely** and are **not bound by party whip**.
- **Nomination rules** under the **Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Rules, 1974**:
 - Nomination paper must have **20 proposers** and **20 seconders**.
 - Paper is submitted between **11 a.m. and 3 p.m.** to the **Returning Officer** by the candidate or proposer/seconders. **Security deposit** is ₹15,000.

- By convention, the **Secretary-General of Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha** serves as **Returning Officer**, by rotation.
- Two senior officers are appointed as **Assistant Returning Officers**.

Election Process and Qualifications

- Election conducted under **Article 66(1)** through **proportional representation** by **single transferable vote** and **secret ballot**. Unlike the Presidential election, every vote has **equal value (one)**. Vice-President shall be elected by an electoral college composed of the **members of both Houses of Parliament** using a **secret ballot**.
- The **single transferable vote system** allows electors to give **multiple preferences**.
- Winning candidate must secure **50% of valid votes plus one**.
- **Eligibility criteria**: Must be a **citizen of India**, Must be at least **35 years old**, Must be qualified to be elected to the **Rajya Sabha**, Must be a **registered elector** in any parliamentary constituency, Must not hold any **office of profit** under Union or State governments (exceptions: **President, Governor, Minister**).
- The election is governed by the **Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952** and the **Elections Rules, 1974**. Conduct of election falls under the EC's powers as per **Article 324** of the Constitution.

Fundamental Rights

Digital access

Why in news: Inclusive and meaningful digital access to e-governance and welfare delivery systems is a part of the **fundamental right to life and liberty - Article 21**, the Supreme Court held in a judgment.

Rights of Pedestrians

Why in news: The **Supreme Court (SC)** passed an order **affirming the constitutional rights of pedestrians**.

- The SC stated that the **right to unobstructed and disabled-friendly footpaths** is guaranteed under **Article 21 (Protection of life and personal liberty)**.
- **SC directions** include: all **public roads must have footpaths** accessible to **persons with disabilities**, **Removal of encroachments** from footpaths is **mandatory**, **States and UTs** must **evolve policies** to ensure the **availability and maintenance of footpaths and footways**.

Personality Rights

- **Personality rights** refer to an individual's right to **control unauthorized use of personal attributes** like **name, image, voice, likeness, and distinctive expressions**.
- **Components of Personality Rights**:
 - **Right to publicity**: Protects **image and likeness** from **commercial exploitation**, partially governed by **Trademarks Act, 1999** and **Copyright Act, 1957**.
 - **Right to privacy**: Protects against **public representation of personality without permission**, broadly under **Article 21** and **Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) Case, 2017**.
- **Posthumous Personality Rights in India**: No specific statutory recognition; **Emblems Act, 1950** prohibits commercial use of images of **Mahatma Gandhi and Prime Minister**.
- **Deepa Jayakumar v. AL Vijay (2019)**: Personality rights, reputation, or privacy enjoyed during a person's lifetime **end after death**.

Right to vote?

Why in news: **Natural rights** are inherent and inalienable; not directly enforceable by courts unless embodied in fundamental rights. **Fundamental rights** are in **Part III** of the Constitution; enforceable under **Article 32**; prohibit state from violating equality and liberty.

- **Constitutional rights** exist **outside Part III** (e.g., right to property, free trade); enforceable under **Article 226** or relevant laws. **Statutory/legal rights** are granted through **ordinary laws** (e.g., rights under **MGNREG Act, Forest Rights Act**); enforceable through respective legal provisions.

Right to Vote under the Constitution and Law

- **Article 326** provides for **universal adult franchise** for citizens aged 18 and above, subject to disqualifications.
- The **61st Constitutional Amendment (1989)** reduced the voting age from **21 to 18 years**.
- **RP Act, 1950: Sec 16** disqualifies non-citizens. **Section 19** requires the person to be **18 years** and **ordinarily resident** in a constituency.
- **RP Act, 1951: Sec 62** grants right to vote to those on the electoral roll; excludes those disqualified or in prison.

Judicial Interpretation on Right to Vote

- **N.P. Ponnuswami (1952)** and **Jyoti Basu (1982)**: Right to vote is a **statutory right**, not fundamental or common law.
- **PUCL (2003)**: Justice P.V. Reddy stated it is a **constitutional right**, even if not fundamental.
- **Kuldip Nayar (2006)** and **Anoop Baranwal (2023)**: Reaffirmed **right to vote is a statutory right**.
- **Raj Bala (2015)**: Division Bench called it a **constitutional right**, citing PUCL.
- In **Kesavananda Bharati (1973)**, democracy was held part of the **basic structure**.

Current Legal Position

- The **right to vote is a statutory right** under current Supreme Court interpretation. (**Right to Vote is a constitutional right – UPSC 2017**)

Do you know?

- The **ECI** is a **permanent, independent, and constitutional authority** responsible for conducting **free and fair elections** in the Union and the States of India.
- The **ECI** is empowered to **supervise, oversee, and manage elections** to **Parliament, state legislatures**, and the offices of **President and Vice-President of India**.
- Since the **ECI** does not oversee elections to **state-level urban bodies** like **municipalities and panchayats**, there is a separate **State Election Commission**.
- The Constitution has **Articles 324–329** to empower the **Election Commission** and provide insight into its **roles and functions**.
- **Article 324**: The **superintendence, direction and control** of preparation of **electoral rolls** and conduct of all elections to **Parliament, State Legislatures**, and elections to the offices of **President and Vice-President**.
- **Article 325**: No individual to be **excluded from electoral rolls** on the basis of **religion, race, caste, sex** or any of them.
- **Article 326**: **Adult suffrage** shall be the **basis for elections** to the **House of the People** and **Legislative Assemblies of States**.
- **Article 327**: **Parliament** may enact laws from time to time relating to **elections to Parliament** and **Legislative Assemblies of States**.
- **Article 328**: A **state's Legislature** may by law make provisions regarding **elections to the State Legislature**.
- **Article 329**: The article **prohibits courts** from becoming involved in **electoral matters**.

Preventive Detention

Why in news: The Supreme Court in **Dhanya M. vs State of Kerala** set aside a **preventive detention order** under the **Kerala Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act, 2007 (KAAPA)**.

- The Court **reaffirmed constitutional safeguards** and cautioned against **misuse of preventive detention powers**.
- It clarified that **individual liberty** cannot be curtailed **lightly**, distinguishing **“public order”** from **“law and order”**, and held that it **cannot substitute prosecution** or **bypass bail orders**.

Constitutional and Historical Background

- **Articles 22(3) – (7)** constitutionalised **preventive detention**, creating a space where **liberty, equality, and due process** often vanish. Provisions allow **detention without trial**, posing a serious threat to **fundamental rights**.
- Preventive detention traces back to the **Bengal Regulations of 1818**, used by the **British** for **colonial control**.
- The **Gol Act, 1935** empowered provincial legislatures to make **preventive detention laws** for **public order**.

Judicial Interpretation and Safeguards

- In **S.K. Nazneen vs State of Telangana (2023)**, the Court held that preventive detention is **unjustified** in mere **law and order** issues.
- **Rekha vs State of Tamil Nadu** declared preventive detention as an **exception to Article 21**, applicable **only in rare cases**.
- **Banka Sneha Sheela vs State of Telangana (2021)** reiterated that preventive detention must meet **Article 21's** test of **fairness, justice, and reasonableness**.
- **Maneka Gandhi vs Union of India (1978)** held that **“procedure established by law”** must be **fair, just, and reasonable**, integrating **due process** into Indian law. The judgment established that **fundamental rights** are **interlinked**, reinforcing **Article 21** as a safeguard against **arbitrary detention**.

Federalism

Emergency

Why in news: Fifty years after the Emergency, new material and books shed more light on a dark chapter in India's history, centering around Indira Gandhi.

- The declaration of Emergency converts the federal structure into a de facto unitary one, giving the Union complete control over state governments.
- During Emergency, Parliament may extend the Lok Sabha term by one year, make laws on State List subjects, and extend Union executive powers to the states.
- The President can modify, with parliamentary approval, constitutional provisions on allocation of financial resources between the Union and states.
- Under Article 352, President may proclaim emergency if security of India or any part is threatened by war, external aggression, or armed rebellion.
- In 1975, the ground used was "internal disturbance", not armed rebellion.
- This was the only instance of Emergency proclaimed due to "internal disturbance".
- The earlier emergencies, proclaimed in 1962 and 1971, were both on grounds of war.

Major Constitutional Amendments during Emergency:

- **38th Amendment (1975):** Barred judicial review of Emergency declarations, making the President's satisfaction 'final and conclusive' under Articles 352, 356, and 360.
- **39th Amendment (1975):** Changed the method of deciding election disputes for President, Vice President, Prime Minister, and Speaker, keeping these offices effectively beyond judicial scrutiny.
- **42nd Amendment (1976):**
 - Gave primacy to Directive Principles over Fundamental Rights under Article 31C.
 - Curtailed powers of Supreme Court and High Courts:
 - Article 32A denied SC power to consider constitutional validity of State laws (later omitted by 43rd Amendment).
 - Articles 131A & 226A denied HC power to check constitutional validity of Central laws.
 - Extended Lok Sabha term from 5 to 6 years.
 - Gave Parliament power to amend Constitution virtually unchecked via clauses 4 & 5 of Article 368.
- During the Emergency, civil liberties and fundamental rights were suspended (ADM Jabalpur case), media was censored, and mass arrests occurred under laws like MISA.

Horizontal Devolution

Why in news: 16th Finance Commission will make recommendations for financial devolution from April 1, 2026. 22/28 States, including BJP-ruled ones, have demanded an increase in the divisible tax pool share from 41% to 50%.

- Union government has reduced divisible pool by increasing revenue through non-shareable cesses & surcharges. Cesses and surcharges rose from 12.8% (2015-20) to 18.5% (2020-24) of Centre's gross tax revenue.
- As a result, States' effective share in gross tax revenues dropped from 35% to 31% over the same period.
- Post-GST regime, States face limited revenue-raising avenues, making them critically dependent on central transfers. Despite good GST collections, States still lack adequate fiscal autonomy.
- The current horizontal devolution formula heavily relies on population and income distance, seen as penalising economically progressive Southern States.

Do you know?

- Horizontal devolution refers to the distribution of states' share from the divisible tax pool among different states using specific criteria to ensure equity and fiscal balance.
- The 15th Finance Commission allotted 41% of the divisible tax pool to states, with the horizontal devolution formula determining how this share is divided.
- The formula uses multiple weighted criteria: Income distance (45%), Population 2011 (15%), Area (15%), Forest & Ecology (10%), Demographic performance (12.5%), Tax & fiscal effort (2.5%).
- Income distance (gap between a state's per capita income and the richest state) has the highest weight to promote fiscal equity by allocating more funds to economically weaker states.
- Demographic performance rewards states with better population control efforts (fertility rate reduction).

J&K & Ladakh

Why in news: The Supreme Court sought a detailed response from the Centre on restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir in Zahoor Ahmed Bhat vs UT of J&K, highlighting concerns over federalism, basic structure, and ongoing public unrest in Ladakh demanding Statehood and Sixth Schedule protections.

Constitutional Processes of State Creation

- **Admission of a State** → Political unit with organised government may be admitted (e.g., **J&K's Instrument of Accession, 1947**).
- **Establishment of a State** → Through acquisition under **international law** (e.g., **Goa, Sikkim**).
- **Formation of a State** → Under **Article 3** by separation, unification, alteration of **boundaries/area/name**.
- The Union may diminish a State's area but cannot convert a State into a Union Territory permanently → **J&K's statehood must be restored** to uphold federal features.

India's Federal Design

- India is a **Union of States (Article 1)**; States **cannot secede**.
- The term **Union** preserves unity and integrity; federal traits ensure **equitable distribution of resources**.
- India's **federal character** is part of the **Basic Structure**.
- **Rajya Sabha's permanence (Article 83(1))** ensures States' representation; withholding statehood undermines this design.

Judicial and Political Context

- In **2023**, SC upheld abrogation of **Articles 370 & 35A** but directed **restoration of statehood & Assembly elections**.
- Restoring statehood would empower the **elected government** and reduce the **LG's powers**; denying it erodes **constitutional federalism**.

Leh Protest and Rising Unrest

- Key demands: **Statehood, Sixth Schedule inclusion, local job reservation, greater political representation**.
- Two coalitions lead the agitation: **Leh Apex Body (LAB)** and **Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA)**, united on a **four-point agenda** for constitutional safeguards and autonomy.
- In **2019**, Ministries of **Home, Tribal Affairs, and Law and Justice** approved recommending Ladakh's inclusion under the **Sixth Schedule**.

MHA offered Article 371 provisions to Ladakh

- **Article 371** deals with "**Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions**" and exists under **Part XXI**.
- **It is currently applicable in 12 States**: Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Sikkim, and Karnataka.

Do you know?

Sixth Schedule

- The **Sixth Schedule** contains provisions regarding the **administration of tribal areas** in the states of **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram**.
- Inclusion under the **Sixth Schedule** would allow **Ladakh** to create **Autonomous District Councils (ADCs)** and **Autonomous Regional Councils (ARCs)**.
- **ADCs and ARCs** are **elected bodies** with powers to **administer tribal areas** and make **laws** on subjects such as **forest management, agriculture, administration of villages and towns, inheritance, marriage, divorce, and social customs**.
- The Schedule also grants **ARCs and ADCs** the authority to **collect land revenue, levy taxes, regulate money lending and trading, collect royalties from mineral extraction, and establish public amenities** such as **schools, markets, and roads**.

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes

- **Constitutional body** established in 2004 to safeguard the rights and welfare of STs.
- Created by the **89th Constitutional Amendment Act** of 2003, which split the previous combined commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes into two.
- **Composition**: The commission consists of a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, and three other members, all appointed by the President of India.
- **Advisory role**: It advises the government on matters related to the socio-economic development and welfare of STs. It addresses and investigates grievances of Scheduled Tribes.
- **Online complaint system**: The commission provides an online platform, NCSTGRAMS Network.

Citizenship

Assam – 6A, FTs & 1950 Act

Why in news: Under the **National Security Act, 1980** and the **Foreigners Act, 1946**, **non-citizens** in India can be detained. Many detainees spend **years in detention camps** facing **harsh conditions** and **legal uncertainty**.

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The Assam experience

- In Assam, 19 lakh people were excluded from the **National Register of Citizens (NRC) in 2019**. Citizenship required **proof of residence before 1971**, but such documents are often **unavailable, lost, or damaged** due to Assam's flood-prone nature.
- In India, **detention must be backed by judicial power (conviction, trial, preventive detention)** under **Article 22**. **Liberty deprivation** must be constrained by law and **judicial oversight**; **arbitrary detention is unconstitutional**.
- The **Supreme Court**, in Rajubala Das, permitted deportation **without verifying addresses**, but **nationality verification** and **acceptance by receiving states** remain necessary.
- Assam CM announced implementation of the **1950 Act to push back foreigners into Bangladesh** based on **District Collectors' prima facie findings**. This action will be **in addition to the ongoing pushbacks** of people already **declared foreigners by FTs**.
- CM cited the **2024 Supreme Court judgment** that upheld the **constitutional validity of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act**. Section 6A sets **March 24, 1971 as the cut-off date for citizenship in Assam**.
- Under current law, **identification of foreigners is done through FTs** in Assam.
- The Supreme Court's judgment included a **direction to apply the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950 in conjunction with Section 6A for identifying illegal immigrants**.

Do you know?

- **Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs) are quasi-judicial bodies** that give opinions on **whether a person is a foreigner under the Foreigners Act, 1946**.
- In **1964**, the **Foreigners' (Tribunals) Order** was passed by the Centre under **Section 3 of the Foreigners Act**.
- FTs handle cases based on **references from border police** and **individuals marked as D (Doubtful) voters** in electoral rolls.
- **Section 9 of Foreigners Act** places the **onus of proving citizenship on the person concerned**, not the state.
- Under repealed **Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983**, burden of proof lay on **complainant**.
- In **2005 (Sarbananda Sonowal vs Uoi)**, SC **struck down IMDT Act**, calling it **hurdle in deporting illegal migrants**.

Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950

- It empowers the **Central Government** and **delegated local officers** to **expel immigrants from Assam**.
- Expulsion can be ordered if presence is considered **harmful to public interest** or the **rights of Scheduled Tribes**.
- The Act was enacted in response to **post-Partition migration**.
- It enabled **removal orders** to be issued **directly**, often **without judicial process**.
- **Exemption**: Persons **displaced due to civil disturbances in Pakistan** and residing in Assam were **not covered** under expulsion.

Proof of citizenship

Why in news: The **Bombay High Court** rejected the **bail plea** accused of **illegally entering India from Bangladesh** and obtaining **forged Indian identity documents**. The court observed that the **Citizenship Act, 1955** is the controlling law on nationality, and documents like **Aadhaar, PAN, or voter ID** do not confer citizenship.

Bills, Acts, Laws and Policies

Draft Registration Bill

Why in news: The **Ministry of Rural Development** has circulated the **draft Registration Bill, 2025**, to replace the **117-year-old Registration Act, 1908** that provides the legal framework for **registration of immovable property and related transactions**. The new **Bill introduces provisions for online registration**, including **electronic presentation and admission of documents**.

- It enables **issuance of electronic registration certificates & digital maintenance of records**. Bill allows for **Aadhaar-based authentication** along with **alternative verification mechanisms** for those without or not using Aadhaar. The new law enables **electronic integration with other record-keeping systems**.
- It aims to make the **registration process more accessible and citizen-centric**, especially for **individuals and small businesses**. Bill promotes **plain language drafting, transparent procedures, simplification without compromising legal certainty**.
- Since 2006, the administration of the Registration Act has been under the **Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development**. (Before 2006, it was under MHA).

Emblems Act

Why in news: The **Supreme Court** rejected a plea to include and protect **V.D. Savarkar's name** under the **Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950**.

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About the Act

- **Objective:** Prevents improper use of **certain names and emblems** for trade, business, or professional purposes.
- **Schedule:** Lists names/emblems protected under Act; amended by **Central Govt via notification** in Gazette.
- **Prohibition:**
 - **No person** can use protected names/emblems for commercial/professional purposes.
 - **Prohibits** registration of companies, firms, trademarks, patents bearing protected names/emblems.
- **Penalty:** Contravention punishable with fine.

Examples in the Schedule

- **National symbols:** Indian National Flag, Government of India seal. **High offices:** President, Prime Minister, Rashtrapati Bhavan. **Freedom fighters/historical figures:** Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi, Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. **International organisations:** UN, WHO, Interpol. **Indian organisations:** Tuberculosis Association of India, St. John's Ambulance, Ramakrishna Math, Bharat Scouts & Guides, Auroville.
- **Recent additions:** 2004: Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, National Human Rights Commission. 2013: FIFA.
- **Naveen Jindal case (2004):** SC held that flying the National Flag is a **fundamental right under Article 19(1)(a)** as an expression of patriotism. But this right is **qualified**, subject to restrictions under: Article 19(2) (reasonable restrictions), The 1950 Act, and *Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971*.

Fair use exemption

Why in news: YouTube channels in India have complained that **Asian News International (ANI)** is “threatening” to issue copyright complaints for using its footage without licensing.

- **ANI syndicates content** (news reporting, photography, videography) to others **for a fee**.
- ANI has **demanding damages and licence fees** from YouTubers who used its footage without payment.
- Under YouTube policy, copyright holders can **seize revenue or issue strikes**, with **three strikes in 90 days** possibly leading to **channel termination**.
- **India's fair use (fair dealing) exemptions**, under **Section 52 of the Copyright Act, 1952**, include **personal use, criticism/review, court reproduction, and reporting of current events**. YouTube does **not decide copyright ownership**, but allows **claims and counterclaims** using its platform mechanisms.

Law making power vs Contempt of court

Why in news: SC ruled that **no law passed by Parliament or State legislature can amount to contempt of court**.

- A Bench of **Justices** made the observation while dismissing a **2012 contempt plea**. The plea alleged **non-compliance** by the **Chhattisgarh government** with the Court's **2011 directions** to stop support to **vigilante groups like Salwa Judum** and disarm **Special Police Officers (SPOs)**.
- Petitioners claimed **Chhattisgarh Auxiliary Armed Police Force Act, 2011**, enacted after the Court's order, **legalised existing SPOs**, thereby violating the earlier judgment. They also alleged failure to **vacate schools and ashrams occupied by security forces** and to **compensate victims** of Salwa Judum and SPOs.
- The Court stated that **enactment of a law after its order does not amount to contempt**, unless declared **unconstitutional** by a competent court. It emphasized that **State legislatures have plenary powers**, and their laws hold validity **until struck down by a constitutional court**.
- Court urged both the **State of Chhattisgarh and the Union Government** to take **coordinated steps for peace and rehabilitation** in violence-affected regions. Under **Article 315**, it is the **duty of both governments** to ensure peace and restore normalcy.

Do you know?

- **Contempt of Court** means **disobedience or disrespect** towards a **court**, undermining its **authority, dignity, and administration of justice**.
- It is defined and regulated by the **Contempt of Courts Act, 1971**.
- **Civil Contempt** refers to **willful disobedience** of any **judgment, decree, order, or breach of court undertaking**.
- **Criminal Contempt** includes acts that **scandalize/lower authority of court, interfere with judicial proceedings, or obstruct justice**.
- **Punishment** can be **simple imprisonment up to 6 months, fine up to ₹2,000, or both**. Courts may **waive punishment** if a **satisfactory apology** is offered.
- **Article 129** gives SC power to punish for contempt. **Article 215** gives HCs power to punish for contempt.
- **2006 Amendment** allows **truth and good faith** as defense and restricts punishment to acts that **substantially interfere with justice**.
- **Fair and accurate reporting** of proceedings or **criticism** of judicial orders after case disposal is **not contempt**.

DIGIPIN

Why in news: The Indian government has launched a new digital address system called DIGIPIN to enable precise location identification across the country.

- DIGIPIN is a unique ten-character alphanumeric code generated for any 4 by 4 square meter property on Indian land. Unique DIGIPINs can be created for properties in urban, rural, and maritime zones.
- The Department of Posts developed DIGIPIN's technology in collaboration with IIT Hyderabad and the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) under ISRO.
- Each DIGIPIN is encoded with geographic coordinates, and does not store any personal information.
- DIGIPIN will not replace the existing six-digit PIN code system, but will serve as an additional precision layer over traditional postal addresses.

Do you know?

Postal Index Number

- PIN was introduced on August 15, 1972 to simplify mail sorting and delivery in India. The PIN system helps manage issues arising from similar place names and the use of multiple languages in addresses.
- A PIN code consists of six digits:
 - 1st digit indicates postal region — Northern, Eastern, Western, Southern, and 9 for Army Postal Service.
 - The second digit represents the sub-region.
 - The third digit indicates the sorting district.
 - The last three digits pinpoint the specific post office for delivery.

NAKSHA:

- In Budget 2025, govt launched National Geospatial Mission to develop foundational geospatial infrastructure and data. Mission, using PM Gati Shakti, will support modernisation of land records, urban planning, and infrastructure design.
- Under this Mission, Union Rural Development Minister launched 'NAKSHA' (National geospatial Knowledge-based land Survey of urban HABitations) in February 2025. NAKSHA is a city survey initiative under the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP). It is led by Department of Land Resources under Ministry of Rural Development, is 100% centrally funded
- NAKSHA aims to create a comprehensive and accurate geospatial database for urban land records.
- The initiative integrates aerial and field surveys with GIS technology to improve land governance, streamline property ownership, and aid urban planning.
- Accurate geospatial data under NAKSHA ensures efficient decision-making, better land use planning, and certainty in property transactions.

Cooperative policy

Why in news: Cooperation Minister urged that all States must announce their cooperative policy by January 31, 2026.

- The National Cooperative Policy launched and will remain effective from 2025 to 2045.
- Discipline, innovation, and transparency will be promoted through the Model National Cooperative Policy Act.
- Creation of two lakh Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) is targeted for completion by February 2026.
- The Ministry of Cooperation, set up four years ago, aims to empower small farmers and rural populations.
- Key step being the creation of the National Cooperative Database. This database covers national to tehsil levels and supports the goal of establishing a cooperative in every village within five years.
- **Part IXB:** Added by the 97th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2011 – deals specifically with Co-operative Societies.
- **Article 43B (Directive Principles):** Promotes voluntary formation, autonomous functioning, and democratic control of cooperatives.
- **Article 19(1)(c):** Amended to include the right to form cooperative societies as a Fundamental Right.
- **State Subject:** Cooperatives fall under the State List (Entry 32) in the Seventh Schedule.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Cooperation was created in 2021 for streamlining cooperative movement and policy.
- **Cooperation Minister** informed Lok Sabha that 2 seats have been reserved for women on boards of multi-State cooperative societies. He added that 1 seat has been reserved for SC/ST communities on these boards.
- This is only the second national policy for the cooperative sector, after the first in 2002.
- **Vision:** To make cooperatives key drivers for Viksit Bharat 2047 through *Sahkar-se-Samridhi*.

- **Objective:** To bring **50 crore citizens** (either non-members or inactive members) into **active participation** in the cooperative sector.
- The policy **envisions six strategic mission pillars** to achieve its goals.
- **Legislative and Institutional Reforms:** States to **amend cooperative laws** to enhance **transparency, autonomy, and ease of doing business.**
- **Financial Empowerment:** Proposes to **reduce cooperative taxes** and make them **eligible for sector-specific finance incentives** available to corporates.
- **Business Ecosystem Development:** Encourages States/UTs to **develop at least one model cooperative village** and support **branding under the 'Bharat' brand.**
- **Future-Readiness & Technology:** Plans to create a **national 'Cooperative Stack'** integrated with **Agri-stack and other databases.**
- **New Sectors:** Expansion of cooperatives into **clean energy, waste management, and technology sectors.**
- **Inclusivity:** Promotes **inclusive participation of women, youth, and SC/STs.**
- **Targets:** To **triple the cooperative sector's GDP contribution by 2034** and **increase the number of cooperative societies by 30%.**
- **Implementation:** To be carried out by the **'Implementation Cell' under the Ministry of Cooperation.**
- **Monitoring:** Oversight by the **'National Steering Committee on Cooperation Policy'**, chaired by the **Union Minister of Cooperation.**

Do you know?

- Origin with the **Cooperative Credit Societies Act, 1904.** It is an **autonomous association of persons, united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.**
- India has **more than 8 lakh cooperative societies**, including **2 lakh credit cooperatives (e.g., PACS)** and **6 lakh non-credit cooperatives (e.g., Consumer, Housing Cooperatives).**
- **Top three cooperative sectors: Housing, Dairy, and Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS).**
- The **97th Constitutional Amendment, 2011** granted constitutional status to cooperative societies.
- **Multi-State Cooperatives** fall under the **Union List** and are governed by the **Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002.** **State Cooperatives** fall under the **State List** and are governed by **respective State Cooperative Societies Acts.**

LIMBS

Why in news: The **Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice**, inaugurated the **"Live Cases" dashboard** under the **Legal Information Management and Briefing System (LIMBS).** The dashboard is designed to provide **real-time data visualisation of court cases** and offer an **overview of upcoming hearings.**

- **LIMBS:** Web-based platform developed by the **Ministry of Law and Justice** to efficiently manage and monitor government litigation. It brings together stakeholders like ministries, government departments, and advocates on a single platform to track the entire lifecycle of court cases.

Social media content takedown

Why in news: MeitY will amend **social media takedown rules** to make officers sending notices to social media companies more **"accountable"**.

- The new safeguards will be introduced through an amendment to the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.**
- **Accountability of the government increases** with this change.
- Under the new rules, the government **will give a reasoned intimation** whenever any such order is passed.
- Orders will be passed at a **senior level — Joint Secretary and above** for the Central government, and **Deputy Inspector-General** at the State level.
- The social media platform **X** had challenged the use of **Rule 3(1)(d)** as an unconstitutional and arbitrary method for police officers to issue **"censorship" orders.**

Boosting transparency

The amended rules on social media takedown notices seek to build clarity in government communication and reduce arbitrary or unclear takedown action. The amendment will be notified within a week and is expected to take effect from November 15

■ **What is Rule 3(1)(d) of the Information Technology Rules, 2021?**

This rule allows government officials to flag online content that may violate Indian laws or pose risks. When flagged under Rule 3(1)(d), social media companies lose 'safe harbour' protection, meaning they can be held legally responsible for the content — like publishers, not just intermediaries



ISTOCK PHOTO

■ **What is changing?**

Notices under these rules will now: Include a clear explanation ("reasoned intimation")

■ **Each notice must now:**

- ✓ Clearly state it is a "warning", not a takedown order
- ✓ Explain why safe harbour does not apply
- ✓ Be issued only by authorised senior officers

Be issued only by Joint Secretary & above (Central level) and Deputy Inspector General & above (State level)

- A **single judge Bench of the Karnataka High Court** upheld the government’s right to empower officials to issue such notices.

130th Constitutional Amendment Bill, 2025

Why in news: The **Centre introduced three Bills**, including the **Constitution (130th Amendment) Bill, 2025**, to mandate that the **Prime Minister, Chief Ministers, and Ministers** lose office if detained in custody for **30 consecutive days** in offences punishable with **5+ years imprisonment**.

- Re-entry to office permitted **only after release or acquittal**.
- Similar provisions extend to **J&K and Puducherry** through amendments to their governing laws.
- Bill requires **two-thirds majority in both Houses** for passage.

Key Provisions

- **Amendments to Articles 75** (Deals with the Council of Ministers at the Union level, including the Prime Minister), **164** (Concerns the Council of Ministers at the state level, including the Chief Minister), **239AA** (Provides special provisions for the Union Territory of Delhi, including its Council of Ministers and Chief Minister):
 - **Ministers** removed after 30 days in custody → either on **advice of PM/CM** or **automatically on 31st day**. **President**, on the **advice of the PM**, must **remove** the Minister from office by the **31st day of such custody**. If such advice is not given, the Minister shall **automatically cease** to hold office. For **State Ministers**, the **Governor** shall act on the **advice of the Chief Minister**.
 - In the case of the **Prime Minister or Chief Minister**, they must **resign by the 31st day** of detention, failing which they **automatically cease to hold office**.
- Applies to **all offences with punishment ≥ 5 years**, not just corruption/moral turpitude.
- The Bill does **not account for default bail** under **Section 167(2) CrPC** (now **Section 187 BNSS**), where an accused has a **right to bail** if investigation is not completed within **60–90 days**.
- **Special laws** such as: **PMLA, NDPS (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act)**, and **UAPA (Unlawful Activities Prevention Act)** impose **twin conditions for bail** absent in the CrPC/BNSS:
 1. The accused must **prove they are not guilty**.
 2. The accused must **prove they will not commit an offence while on bail**.
- Given the **stringent bail conditions** under these statutes, prolonged custody of Ministers — even without conviction — could lead to **automatic disqualification**, raising serious **constitutional and political concerns**.

Stray Dogs

Why in news: **SC suo motu** took up issue after **rising stray dog attacks** in Delhi, including on **children and infants**.

- Initially directed **Delhi govt. & civic bodies** to **capture and confine all stray dogs** in pounds within **6–8 weeks**, never releasing them back.
- After objections, SC **modified directive**: Strays must undergo **sterilisation, deworming, immunisation** then **released back to localities**, per **Rule 11(19), Animal Birth Control Rules 2023**.
- **Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2023**: mandate **capture–neuter–vaccinate–release (CNVR)**; forbid permanent relocation except rabid/incurably ill/aggressive dogs.

Criticisms of Initial Order

- Contradicted **WHO guidelines** and **NAPRE 2030** strategy (vaccinate 70% of dogs for 3 years).
- Contradicted **ABC Rules, 2023 & SC ruling** upholding them.
- **Article 51A(g)** imposes duty to show **compassion for living creatures**.

Data & Rabies Control Strategy

- **WHO**: 99% of human rabies caused by **dog bites**.
- **National Action Plan for Dog-Mediated Rabies Elimination (NAPRE) 2030**:
 - Joint initiative by India's Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying to eliminate dog-mediated rabies by 2030.

DOG BITES IN INDIA

THE LARGEST population of stray dogs is in India; numbers are not known, but are estimated to run into crores. In 2019, the government told Lok Sabha that stray dogs numbered 1.53 crore; it repeated this data in 2022.

MORE THAN 37 LAKH cases of dog bites were reported in the country in 2024, up from 30.5 lakh in 2023 and 21.9 lakh in 2022, according to government data from February this year. Nearly 4.3 lakh dog bites were reported in January this year.

IF THE DOG IS RABID, its bite can infect the victim with rabies, a viral disease that affects the central nervous system and is almost always fatal if not treated immediately. According to government data from February 2025, 54 people died from rabies in 2024, up from 50 deaths in 2023 and 21 deaths in 2022.

36% OF RABIES DEATHS in the world occur in India, according to estimates by the World Health Organization. Dog bites are responsible for about 96% of the mortality and morbidity associated with rabies in India, the WHO says. 30-60% of reported rabies cases and deaths in India occur in children under the age of 15 years, according to WHO.

- Key components include mass dog vaccination, the control and management of stray dog populations through the implementation of ABC Rules, 2023, strengthening surveillance and diagnostics, and raising public awareness.
- **Targets:** Vaccinate **over 70% of dogs for 3 years** → elimination; Reduce human deaths from rabies by 75% by 2030; Reduce dog bites by 50% by 2025.
- **Goa case study:** Achieved 70% vaccination. Result: **Human rabies eliminated by 2019**, canine rabies down 92%.

State-Level Response: Rajasthan Model

- **First State** to issue detailed guidelines post-SC directive. Framework by **Department of Local Self Government** for strict ABC compliance. **Mandates:**
 - **Feeding zones** in every ward/locality. **Sterilisation, vaccination, deworming centres.**
 - Humane capture methods (no **tongs, wires, nooses**). Training for personnel in **net/hand capture.**
 - Municipalities to file **compliance reports in 30 days.**

Do you know?

- **Dog bite is dangerous** due to **bacteria** in mouth: **staphylococcus, pasteurella, capnocytophaga** → can cause **serious infections.**
- **Complications like sepsis** may be **life-threatening** if untreated.
- **Rabies = fatal viral disease** transmitted through **dog saliva.**
- **Rabies survival extremely rare;** once symptoms appear, fatality rate is **nearly 100%.** Only **few human survivors worldwide** → due to **aggressive critical care** or **weakened viral strain.**
- **Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)** (rabies vaccine series) must be taken **before onset of symptoms,** otherwise outcome is **fatal.**
- **Medical care within 24 hours** of any animal bite is **vital** to reduce risk of **infection, tetanus, rabies.**
- **Minor bites** can also drive bacteria deep → causing **infections** (symptom: **redness, swelling, discharge, fever**).
- **Rabies can infect any mammal,** not just dogs. Other **possible carriers: cats, cattle, horses, goats, ferrets, bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes, coyotes, monkeys.**

Online Gaming Act, 2025

Why in news: Cabinet approved the **Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025** to prohibit **real money games (RMGs).** Lok Sabha passed the Bill by voice vote; **Rajya Sabha cleared it;** received **Presidential assent.**

Rationale for the Act:

- **Financial losses:** Indians lose ~₹15,000 crore annually on RMGs.
- **WHO findings:** RMGs linked to **compulsive behaviour, financial distress, family disruption.**
- **Parliamentary Panel (2023):** Gaming portals connected to **terror funding.**
- **Financial Intelligence Report (2022):** ~₹2,000 crore **tax evasion** through gaming firms.
- **Opaque algorithms:** Ensure users cannot emerge as net winners.

Key Provisions of the Act

- **Broad definition of RMGs:** Any online game involving **monetary deposits/stakes** with expectation of monetary or stake-based reward.
- **Categories of games:**
 - **E-sports:** Recognised under **National Sports Governance Act, 2025;** prize-money based.
 - **Social gaming:** Recreational/educational; promoted by govt. with budgetary allocation from **Consolidated Fund of India.**
 - **RMGs:** Banned → includes **Poker, Rummy, Fantasy Cricket, Ludo.**
- **Prohibited activities:** Offering, operating, facilitating, advertising, promoting, or participating in RMGs.
- **Penalties:**
 - Offering RMGs → up to **3 years jail / ₹1 crore fine / both.**
 - Advertising RMGs → up to **2 years jail / ₹50 lakh fine / both.**
 - Offences **cognisable & non-bailable** (per BNSS, 2023).
- **Enforcement:**
 - **CERT-IN** empowered to block apps. **Interpol** may be roped in for offshore operators.
 - Players/users **not penalised** (clarified by IT Minister).
- **Regulatory authority:** To register, categorise games, and promote **e-sports/social gaming.**
- **Constitutional challenge likely: Article 19(1)(g)** – right to practice any trade/profession may be violated.
- **Seventh Schedule, List II (Entries 34 & 62)** → betting & gambling are **State subjects.**

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- States like **Telangana (2017), Andhra Pradesh (2020), Tamil Nadu (2022)** had already banned online gambling.

National Sports Governance Act 2025

Why in news: The **National Sports Governance Bill, 2025** has received **assent from the President**, marking a major reform in India's sports administration.

- **Sports regulation** falls within the **jurisdiction of the states** under **Entry 33 of the State List (Seventh Schedule)**.
- The **Cabinet has approved the National Sports Policy 2025**, which **supersedes the 2001 policy**.
- The **NSP 2025** is structured around **five core pillars** focusing on **global excellence, economic and social development through sports, sports as a people's movement, and integration of sports with education**.
- The Act provides for establishing **national sports bodies** such as the **National Olympic Committee, National Paralympic Committee, and National and Regional Sports Federations** for each sport.
- These bodies will be **affiliated with international bodies** and have **state and district-level units**.
- These bodies will be **governed by international charters and statutes**.
- A **National Sports Board (NSB)** will be established to **grant recognition** to sports bodies and **register affiliate units**.
- Only **recognised bodies** will be **eligible to receive central government funding**.
- Every **National Sports Body** must formulate a **Code of Ethics** to ensure **ethical conduct** of stakeholders.
- A **recognised organisation** under the Act will be **considered a public authority under the RTI Act, 2005**.
- The **central government** will decide the **composition of the NSB** and appoint its members on the **recommendations of a search-cum-selection committee**.
- Eligibility for NSB members includes **special knowledge or experience in public administration, sports governance, or sports law**.
- A **National Sports Tribunal** will be constituted to **adjudicate sports-related disputes**. The Tribunal **will not have jurisdiction** over disputes relating to **international games or internal disputes of national sports bodies**.
- Every **national sports body** must form an **electoral panel** to supervise elections of its **affiliated units**.
- The **central government** may **exempt a national body or affiliate** from provisions of the Act in **public interest** for the **promotion of that sport**.

Judiciary

CJI appointment process

Why in news: Justice **Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai** was **sworn in as the 52nd Chief Justice of India**. He is the **first Buddhist Chief Justice of India**. He will have a **tenure of over six months**.

About CJI appointment process:

- **Authority:** The **President of India** appoints the **CJI** under **Article 124(2)** of the Constitution.
- **Seniority Convention:** The **senior-most judge** of the SC is recommended, based on **service length** (not age).
- **Recommendation:** The **outgoing CJI** traditionally recommends the successor to the **Union Law Minister**.
- **Government's Role:** **Law Minister** forwards the recommendation to PM, who advises the **President**.
- **Consultation Clause:** If there are doubts over the **fitness** of the senior-most judge, other **Supreme Court judges** are consulted as per **Article 124(2)**.
- **Eligibility Criteria:** Candidate must be an **Indian citizen** and have served as **HC judge for 5 years**, or **advocate for 10 years**, or be a **distinguished jurist** as per the **President's opinion**.
- **Memorandum of Procedure:** The process is guided by the **MoP** for **transparency** and **consistency**.
- **Oath:** The new **CJI** takes the **oath of office** administered by the **President**.
- **Tenure:** The **CJI** remains in office until the age of **65 years**.
- **Removal:** By the **President** after **Parliament** presents an **address** with a **special majority** in both Houses.

ADR

Why in news: **Doctrine of Panch Parmeshwar** embodies principle of **collective consensus in dispute resolution**.

- The **India Justice Report 2025** highlights major **challenges** in India's justice system — particularly **access, delays, and accountability**.
- According to the **National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG)**, the **total number of pending cases** in India is **4,57,96,239**.

- The **constitutional basis of ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution)** in India is enshrined in **Article 39A**, which mandates the State to **provide equal justice and free legal aid**.
- Various **ADR processes** — **arbitration, conciliation, mediation, and judicial settlement (Lok Adalat)** — are recognised under **Section 89 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908**.
- The **Arbitration Act, 2021** provides for the establishment of an **Indian Arbitration Council**, giving **legal backing to arbitration agreements**.
- The law **fixes a maximum period of 180 days** for dispute resolution, ensuring **faster justice**.
- If a party is **dissatisfied**, they can **exit the process after two sessions of mediation**.
- **Lok Adalats** are governed by the **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987**, inspired by **Article 39A**.
- Apart from **Permanent Lok Adalat (Section 22-B)**, provisions of the **National Lok Adalat** and **e-Lok Adalat** are helpful in strengthening the justice system, provided **awareness** is made **effective and widespread**.
- The **first Lok Adalat** in India was organised in **Gujarat in 1999**.
- The **biggest feature** of Lok Adalats is that their **decisions are final** and **no appeal** is allowed. This is because these courts **resolve disputes before litigation**, but a **dissatisfied party** can still **file a suit in a court**.
- **Mediation** is viewed as a **tool for social change**, aligning **social norms** with **constitutional values** through **dialogue and information exchange**.
- The **NJDG** provides **real-time data** on **case pendency** and **disposal**, offering a **comprehensive view** of the judicial system's performance for district, subordinate, high courts, and the Supreme Court. The NJDG is a key part of the eCourts Project, which aims to modernize the Indian judiciary through technology and contains details on both civil and criminal cases.
- The **India Justice Report** ranks States based on **performance indicators** such as **case pendency, court infrastructure, and judge availability**.

Mediation

Why in news: Chief Justice of India scheduled to launch a 90-day mediation campaign.

- The campaign is **conceptualised by the National Legal Services Authority** and the **Mediation and Conciliation Project Committee**. The campaign is titled '**Mediation for the Nation**'.
- It aims to **tackle pending cases from taluka courts to State High Courts**.
- The **pan-India mediation campaign** intends to take mediation to "**every nook and cranny**" as an **alternative and people-friendly mode of dispute resolution**. Parties can **opt to participate online, offline, or in hybrid mode**.

Do you know?

- **90-day Mediation Campaign** launched by **NALSA** and **MCPC** to resolve **pending cases in Taluka, District, and High Courts** through **mediation**. Campaign involves **trained mediators** conducting **physical, online, or hybrid sessions seven days a week**, focusing on **amicable settlement of matrimonial, commercial, and criminal compoundable cases**.
- **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)** constituted under **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987**, established in **1995**, provides **free legal services** and organizes **Lok Adalats** for **justice to weaker sections** and **reducing judicial burden**. **NALSA** is headed by the **Chief Justice of India** as **Patron-in-Chief**; promotes **legal awareness, ADR, and victim compensation**.
- **Mediation and Conciliation Project Committee (MCPC)** was set up by the **Supreme Court in 2005** to promote **mediation as a dispute resolution mechanism**. **MCPC** conducts **mediator training**, coordinates **mediation efforts across courts**, and oversees **Section 89 CPC implementation**. **MCPC** also **accredits mediators**, supports **mediation centers**, and works with **NALSA** to expand **mediation usage in India**.

SC judge removal process

Why in news: A motion for removal requires the support of at least **100 MPs in the Lok Sabha** or **50 MPs in Rajya Sabha**.

- He was **transferred from Delhi High Court to Allahabad High Court** after **burnt currency notes** were found at his residence. He **submitted to an in-house inquiry**, which later became a matter of concern before SC.

Constitutional and Legal Framework

- Removal of a judge is governed by **Article 124(4)** of the Constitution and the **Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968**.
- **Article 121** prohibits discussions in Parliament about the conduct of Supreme Court and High Court judges while they are in the discharge of their duties, with the exception of a motion for the removal of a judge.

Procedure for Removal Under Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968

- Once a notice is submitted, the **Speaker of the Lok Sabha** or **Chairman of the Rajya Sabha** may **accept or reject the motion**. If admitted in **both Houses**, a **three-member inquiry committee** is constituted jointly by the Speaker and the Chairman.

- **The committee consists of:** A Supreme Court judge, A Chief Justice of a High Court, A distinguished jurist.
- The committee must **investigate the charges** and submit its report within **three months**.
- The **Secretary-General** of Parliament facilitates the process.

Final Stage of the Process

- The **committee's report** is tabled in Parliament.
- The report is followed by a **discussion and voting** in both Houses.
- If both Houses pass the motion by the required **special majority**, the judge stands **removed from office**.

Do you know?

- Under **Article 124(4)**, a judge can be removed by Parliament only on two grounds — **"proved misbehaviour"** and **"incapacity."** **Article 218** states that the same provisions apply to a **High Court judge**.
- For impeachment of an SC or HC judge, at least **two-thirds of those present and voting** in both **Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha** must vote in favour, and this must also be **more than 50% of the total membership** of each House.
- **Notices** for removal must be **signed by MPs** from different parties, and the motion must be moved by **at least 100 members** in the **Lok Sabha**.
- Once submitted, the **presiding officer** of the House can **accept or reject** the motion.
- After a motion is **adopted** by either House, **Speaker or Chairman** must form a **three-member inquiry committee** headed by the **CJI or a Supreme Court judge**, a **Chief Justice of a High Court**, and a **distinguished jurist**.
- If the committee **finds the judge guilty**, its report is **adopted by the House**, and the **judge's removal is debated**.

Women in Courts

Why in news: According to the **India Justice Report 2025**, women constitute only **14% of judges in High Courts** and a mere **3.1% in the Supreme Court**.

- Among the **34 judges of the Supreme Court**, there is **only one woman**, and out of **25 High Courts**, only **one is headed by a woman Chief Justice**.
- In contrast, **lower courts fare better**, as judges are **selected through competitive examinations**, ensuring **equal opportunities** for women and men.
- As a result, **women make up nearly 38% of the lower judiciary**, with potential for further growth through **better promotions** and **gender-friendly infrastructure**.
- The **President of India** suggested the creation of an **All-India Judicial Service (AIJS)** to recruit judges through a **merit-based, competitive, and transparent process**.
- Such a system would **provide opportunities to less-represented social groups** and help build a **more inclusive judiciary**. However, the proposal has faced **resistance from the judiciary and the Bar**, who oppose the idea of a **centralised recruitment process**.
- An **open competitive examination** for judges would bring **uniform merit-based selection, transparency, and reduce biases and patronage**.
- **Article 312 of the Constitution** empowers **Parliament to create new All-India Services**, including an **All-India Judicial Service**, to ensure **uniform recruitment, training, and service standards**.

Criminal Justice System

e-Zero FIR initiative

Why in news: The Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (**I4C**) has launched a new system that **automatically converts financial cybercrime complaints above ₹10 lakh into FIRs**.

- **e-Zero FIR initiative** was **launched on a pilot basis in Delhi**.
- The initiative aims to **expedite investigations** and **crack down swiftly on cybercriminals**.
- The move addresses **difficulties faced by victims in recovering money lost to financial cybercrime**.
- The process integrates systems of **I4C's National Cybercrime Reporting Portal, Delhi Police's e-FIR system, and NCRB's Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS)**.
- The **Ministry of Home Affairs** has stated that the initiative will be **extended nationwide soon**.

Do you know?

I4C:

- **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)** was established in **2018** under **Ministry of Home Affairs** to coordinate & address **cybercrime-related issues** at national level.

National Cybercrime Reporting Portal:

- Started in **2019** under **MHA**, managed by **Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C)**. Enables victims to report **cybercrimes** like **online financial frauds, hacking, identity theft, cyberbullying, child pornography**, etc.
- Provides both **secure** and **anonymous complaint** mechanisms, with focus on **women and children-related crimes**. Victims can **upload evidence, track complaint status online**, and access **cyber safety tips**.
- Aims to strengthen **coordination among law enforcement agencies, banks, and financial institutions** for **faster action against cyber fraud**.

Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS):

- Initiated in **2009** by **MHA** as **Mission Mode Project** under **National e-Governance Plan**. Connects **17,130+ police stations** nationwide, creating **centralized platform** for **crime investigation, detection, law enforcement**.
- Records **crime data, FIRs, investigations, and charge-sheets** in digital format for **nationwide tracking and analysis** of criminals.
- Provides **complaint tracking, verification, and police clearance** through an **integrated online portal**.
- Linked with the **Integrated Criminal Justice System (ICJS)**, connecting **police, courts, prisons, prosecution, and forensic labs** for **efficient justice delivery**.

Poor prisoners scheme

Why in news: Union government has raised concerns over **States and Union Territories** not utilizing funds allocated under the **Support to Poor Prisoners Scheme**.

- **Union Home Ministry** emphasized that the scheme aims to **provide relief to poor prisoners unable to get bail or release due to financial constraints**.
- As per SOP, if an **undertrial prisoner is not released within a week after bail**, jail authorities must inform the **Secretary, District Legal Services Authority (DLSA)**. DLSA will check if the prisoner **cannot furnish financial surety** and forward such cases to the **District Level Empowered Committee** every 2–3 weeks.
- After examining cases, **Empowered Committee may recommend relief up to ₹40,000 per case**.

Do you know?

- **Support to Poor Prisoners Scheme** launched by the **Ministry of Home Affairs** in **2023**.
- Provides **financial assistance** to **poor prisoners** who cannot **pay fines** or **secure bail** due to **financial constraints**.
- Involves **district-level Empowered Committees** that assess cases and sanction up to **₹40,000 per case**.
- **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** acts as the **Central Nodal Agency** for **fund disbursement**.
- Aims to **relieve indigent prisoners** and **reduce jail overcrowding** caused by **economic inability to secure release**.

Elections

SIR - 1

Why in news: Bihar witnessed a **56% voter turnout** in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, significantly below the **national average of 66%**, highlighting the issue of **migrant voter disenfranchisement**.

- ECI initiated a **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls in Bihar — the **first since 2004** — in preparation for the upcoming Legislative Assembly elections.
- Over **50% of Bihar households experience migration**, especially among working-age males, leading to **absentee voters** and **gender disparities** in turnout.

Migrant Voting

- India lacks a **national mechanism for remote voting** for migrants, despite a 2024 proposal by the ECI.
- **Remote Electronic Voting Machine (RVM)** was **piloted in 2023** in 72 constituencies, but raised concerns around **voter verification and logistics**.
- **Postal ballots**, currently for armed forces, can be **extended to migrants** through **advance registration**.
- **Constituency switching** for long-term migrants (residing >6 months) could allow voting where they live, aligning with provisions under **RPA 1950**, which does not disqualify temporarily absent individuals if they intend to return.
- **Long-term migrants** (living in a place for over 6 months) could be **allowed to vote** from their new constituency, as the **Representation of People Act, 1950** permits enrollment at the place of ordinary residence. It **does not disqualify people temporarily** away from their home if they intend to return.
- The **SIR must distinguish** between **short- and long-term migrants**, encouraging long-term migrants to **register at their place of work**, not just their native villages.

SIR Facts

- Under **Article 324**, the ECI has authority to supervise electoral roll preparation.
- The **RP Act, 1950**:

- **Section 16** disqualifies non-citizens.
- **Section 19** requires an individual to be **18+ and ordinarily resident**.
- **Section 20** clarifies that **property ownership doesn't equal residence**, and **temporary absence doesn't negate it**. **Section 21** allows special revisions when justified — in Bihar's case, due to **urbanisation, migration, and duplicate entries**.
- The **2025 SIR** uses **July 1, 2025** as the qualifying date — different from the standard **January 1**.
- Unlike the 2003 SIR (door-to-door), the 2025 SIR requires **each elector to submit an enumeration form**.
- Pre-2003 voters may use **roll extract**, but post-2003 voters must furnish **birth-related documents**.
- **At least one document** (among 11 prescribed) is needed to prove **date/place of birth** — including birth certificate, passport, caste certificate, pension papers, or self-declaration.

Expansion of ERO Powers and Implementation Concerns

- ECI empowered **Electoral Registration Officers (EROs)** to refer suspected foreign nationals to authorities under the **Citizenship Act, 1955**. However, there's **no defined methodology or checklist** for such referrals.
- While the **Home Ministry** holds the authority on citizenship, it may **delegate powers to states**.
- For voters without required documents, the **ERO is empowered** to decide on their **inclusion or exclusion** from the voters' list, as per the **Election Commission's March 2023 manual**.
- The ERO's decision is based on **field verification, BLO reports, and testimonials** from **village heads and families**.
- In the absence of documents, **oath from parents or Sarpanch**, and even **visible examination by the BLO**, can serve as **proof of age**. ERO can conduct **local enquiries** to establish **residence proof** if documentation is missing.

Legal and Administrative Framework

- EROs are appointed under **Section 13B of the Representation of the People Act, 1950**.
- Typically, **civil service or revenue officers**, such as **sub-divisional officers**, are appointed as EROs.
- In **Bihar**, EROs are from the **Bihar Administrative Service**, generally of **Senior Deputy Collector rank** or above.
- **Domicile or permanent residency certificates** issued by **tehsildars or local officials** are being advised when no other documents are available. However, these do not prove **age or place of birth**, requiring **certification by panchayat heads and BLOs**. **Physical verification** by EROs can also be used to judge **voting age**.
- **Aadhaar was excluded** as valid proof of citizenship or birth (**Current update: Aadhaar is included** as a valid proof of identity for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar In **September 2025**, the Supreme Court of India directed the Election Commission of India (ECI) to accept Aadhaar as the **12th valid document** for this process.), citing its **legal disclaimer**, though it is the **primary ID** for many poor. Under **Form 6 of the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960**, Aadhaar is accepted for **residence and DOB verification**, yet the ECI requires **additional documentation**, complicating access for the rural poor.
- **RP Act suggests migrants should register where they live**, but preserves rights of **temporarily absent individuals**
- **Rule 8 of the Registration of Electors Rules** states that applicants must provide info "**to the best of their ability**", meaning **absence of full documents cannot be grounds for rejection**.

Recent Supreme Court Direction:

- The **Supreme Court** asked **EC** to consider **Aadhaar (now approved - September 2025)**, **EPIC**, and **ration card** as proof for **voter registration**. The EC argued **Aadhaar is also issued to non-citizens** who are ordinarily resident. The Court stated that the **SIR is about identity only**, not citizenship, and the listed documents serve to prove **identity**, not **citizenship**.

Related News:

ECI's Form 6

- **ECI's Form 6**, used to register new electors, earlier required only a **signed declaration of citizenship**, without **citizenship documentation**.
- For the Bihar revision, the **ECI has introduced a new declaration form requiring proof of citizenship**.

Revision of Bihar Electoral Rolls

- **ECI directed a fresh preparation** of Bihar's **electoral rolls**.

WHAT WILL SERVE AS PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP

In addition to the enumeration form, electors added to the rolls after 2003 will have to provide the following to prove their citizenship.

- Those born in India before July 1, 1987 will have to submit any document from the specified list to establish their date of birth and/or place of birth;
 - Those born in India between July 1, 1987 and December 2, 2004, will have to submit an additional document establishing one parent's date and/or place of birth; and
 - Those born in India after December 2, 2004, will have to submit documents establishing date and/or place of birth of both parents.
- These categories are based on the requirements for acquisition of citizenship in the Citizenship Act, 1955

INDIANS BORN ABROAD will have to submit proof of birth registration by an Indian Mission abroad; and

CITIZENS BY NATURALISATION will have to submit their certificate for the registration of citizenship.

- All electors must submit an **enumeration form**, and those registered **post-2003** must provide **citizenship documentation**.
- This **“special intensive revision”** will eventually be **extended to all States and UTs**.
- **Article 324(1)** of the Constitution empowers ECI to **supervise electoral roll preparation**.
- **Section 21(3)** of the **Representation of the People Act, 1950** allows the ECI to **order special revision** at any time.
- Under **Registration of Electors’ Rules, 1960**, revisions may be **intensive, summary, or both**.
- **Intensive revision** = fresh roll; **summary revision** = amending existing roll.
- **Summary revisions** occur **annually**, while **special summary revisions** are conducted **before elections**.
- Past intensive revisions took place in **1952–56, 1957, 1961, 1965, 1966, 1983–84, 1987–89, 1992, 1993, 1995, 2002, 2003, and 2004**.
- Voters often **fail to delete names from earlier addresses**, leading to **duplicate entries**.
- ECI stressed its **constitutional obligation** to ensure **only citizens are enrolled**.

Bihar Becomes First State to Use Mobile App for Voting

- **Bihar pioneered mobile phone voting** during **municipal bypolls** and elections in **six Nagar Panchayats**.
- Facility was extended to **senior citizens, disabled persons, and pregnant women**.
- Voters also accessed the **State Election Commission website** for voting.
- Eligible voters could install **E-SECBHR app**, made by **C-DAC**.
- App required voters to **link their mobile number with the voter list**.
- **Two voters per mobile number** were allowed (It refers to a feature of the Voter Helpline App that enabled the use of a single mobile number for logging in multiple registered voters during the SIR with **identity verification** through **voter ID, blockchain, face-matching, and scanning technology** for **security and transparency**).

Electoral forms

Why in news: The Election Commission of India (ECI) has completed the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls in **Bihar** and is extending it to other States. Questions on procedures, verification, digital gaps, and election-time regulation have come into focus.

Legal Framework and Purpose of SIR

- Governed by **Section 21 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950**.
- EC conducts **summary revisions** before elections and may conduct **SIR** anytime as permitted by law.
- **Nationwide SIR** initiated starting with **Bihar**, with **July 1** as the qualifying date.

EC Revives Economic Intelligence Panel Ahead of Bihar Polls

- EC reactivated the **Multi-Departmental Committee on Election Intelligence (MDCEI)** after six years.
- **Aim:** curb **money, liquor, drugs, freebies** used to influence voters.
- **Includes 17 departments and agencies, such as:** CBDT, CBIC, ED, DRI, CEIB, FIU-India, RBI, NCB, RPF, CISF, BSF, CRPF, SSB, BCAS, AAI, Department of Posts, Indian Banks’ Association.

- **Purpose:** coordinate enforcement strategy for poll-bound Bihar.

Electoral Roll Revamp: Case for Digital Transformation

- Digital integration (**Aadhaar, ECI-Net**) can help eliminate **duplication**, track **residential shifts**, and create a digital **audit trail**. Gender ratio drop from **934 (Sept 2025)** to **892 (final roll)** suggests **data anomalies**.

Various forms with respect to electoral rolls as per RER

Form Number	Description
Form 6	Application to be submitted by new voters to be registered as an elector. As per section 19 of the RP Act, the qualifying dates for completion of 18 years of age, are 1st day of January, April, July and October of the year in which the electoral roll is prepared or revised.
Form 6A	Form for inclusion by an Overseas Elector. Non-Resident Indians who have shifted out of India, on account of education, employment or otherwise, can register as an elector in the constituency in which their address as per passport is located.
Form 7	Objection for proposed inclusion/deletion of name from existing roll. This form can be filed by a registered elector in a constituency in respect of any other registered elector or proposed inclusion in the roll or for deletion of applicant’s own name.
Form 8	Form for shifting residence/correction of entries. This form can be filed by a registered elector for shifting of residence or correction of entries.
Form 5	Notice of publication of draft electoral roll by the ERO.
Form 9	List of applications for inclusion of names received in Form 6.
Form 10	List of applications for objection to inclusion of names received in Form 7.
Form 11	List of objections/applications for correction of entries received in Form 8.
Form 11A	List of applications for shifting of address within the constituency received in Form 8.
Form 11B	List of applications for shifting of address outside the constituency received in Form 8.

*Forms 9 to 11B are prepared and published by the ERO



Field work: A Booth-Level Officer check the special intensive revision of the elect Bihar, on July 8. Shashi Shekhar Kashyap

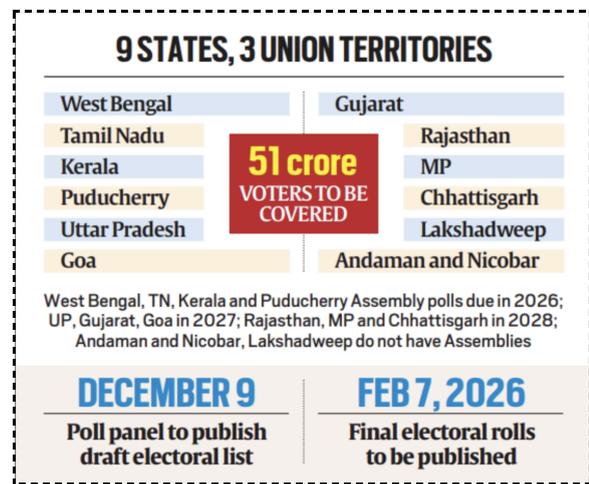
- Lack of **machine-readable publication** of additions/deletions prevents independent audits.
- **ECI-Net**, maintained by **C-DAC**, stores nearly one billion voter records and flags inconsistencies.

EC Bars Print Ads on Poll Eve and Voting Day

- No political party, candidate, or individual may publish **print advertisements** on poll eve or polling day without pre-certification from the Media Certification and Monitoring Committee.
- Candidates must declare **authentic social media accounts** while filing nominations.
- Bulk SMS and audio messages are banned during the **48-hour silence period** before polls conclude.

SIR Across 12 States/UTs

- SIR extended across **12 States/UTs** after Bihar.
- Verification burden placed partly on **citizens and political party Booth Level Agents**, raising concerns.
- EC directs **BLOs to make three house visits** for verification.
- No documents to be collected from electors during **enumeration**.
- For non-returned forms, BLOs must conduct inquiries and **record reasons** (death, duplication, etc.).
- Booth-wise lists of excluded electors to be **publicly displayed** in Panchayat Bhavans, urban local bodies, and Block Development Offices.



Addition, deletion, and correction of voter names

Why in news: The **Election Commission (EC)** has launched a **new e-sign feature** on its **ECINet portal and app** to enhance **voter identity verification**.

- The feature requires applicants seeking **voter registration, deletion, or corrections** to **verify their identity using Aadhaar-linked mobile numbers**.
- **ECINet** is a **unified digital platform** integrating **over 40 earlier EC mobile and web applications**.
- Earlier, applicants could submit **Forms 6, 7, and 8** (for **addition, deletion, and correction**) by linking a **phone number with an EPIC number**, but **no verification** of ownership was done. Now, after filling the form, applicants are **redirected to an external portal** hosted by **CDAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing)**.
- There, they must **enter their Aadhaar number**, generate an **OTP sent to the Aadhaar-linked phone**, and **consent to authentication** before submission. Only after **successful Aadhaar OTP verification** can the applicant **submit the voter-related form** on ECINet.
- The **new e-sign feature** aims to **prevent fraudulent voter addition or deletion** from electoral rolls.

De-listing of political parties

Why in news: **ECI** has begun steps to **de-list 345 Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs)** that haven't contested elections in six years and whose offices could not be physically located.

Definition and Registration of Political Parties

- The right to form associations is a **fundamental right under Article 19(1)(c)** of the Constitution.
- **Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951** governs registration of political parties with the ECI.
- A political party must submit a **memorandum/constitution within 30 days** of formation affirming allegiance to the **Constitution, socialism, secularism, democracy, and sovereignty** of India. ECI registers such parties as **RUPPs** after verifying internal democracy provisions like periodic elections for office bearers.
- RUPPs enjoy benefits such as **tax exemption under Section 13A of the Income Tax Act, common election symbols, and 20 star campaigners**.
- They must report **donors contributing over ₹20,000 annually** to the ECI, as per **Section 29C of the RP Act**.
- Donations above ₹2,000 must be received **only via cheque or bank transfers**.
- India has over **2,800 RUPPs** but only around **750 contested the 2024 general elections**.
- **RP Act does not empower ECI** to de-register a party for not contesting elections or violating internal democracy. The **Supreme Court (2002)** held that de-registration is only possible in **exceptional cases** like fraud, disloyalty to the Constitution, or declaration as unlawful by the government.

Removal of CEC

Why in news: The INDIA bloc is considering moving a motion against Chief Election Commissioner (CEC). It flagged the **Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023**, which provides immunity to the CEC and Election Commissioners for all past and present decisions.

- The CEC can only be removed from office through a process similar to that for a Supreme Court judge. This removal is typically done through impeachment, which requires a special majority vote in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. The grounds for removal are the same as those for a Supreme Court judge.
- Removal requires a two-thirds majority of members present and voting in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.

Census

Next Census

Why in news: India's next Census will conclude by **March 1, 2027**, marking the **first enumeration in 16 years**.

- **Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** announced the move but has **not yet notified the start date**.
- **Registrar-General of India (RGI)** issued the official **notification under Section 3 of the Census Act, 1948**.
- **Freezing of administrative boundaries** (districts, tehsils etc.) is now in force until Census is completed.
- **Reference date** for most States: **March 1, 2027**; for **snow-bound regions** (J&K, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand): **October 1, 2026**.

Significance of the 2027 Census

- **Most consequential Census** post-independence due to:
 - **Inclusion of caste data** for the **first time since 1931**. (**Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011** collected **caste data** along with socio-economic information but the **caste data was never officially released** due to significant **data issues**, including **46 lakh different caste names**, making classification and deduplication difficult).
 - Basis for **delimitation of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats** after 2026.
 - Data to support **one-third reservation for women** in legislatures from **2029 elections**.
 - First **digital Census** in Indian history, aiming to **speed up data processing** and policy-making.

Digital Innovations and Operational Framework

- **Enumerators** will use **smartphones and mobile apps** for real-time data entry.
- **Tools include:**
 - Two mobile apps and a **Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS)** portal.
 - **Self-enumeration** option available to public.
- **CMMS features:**
 - Monitors appointments, training, field progress. Allows **auto-generation of some Census records**.

Do you know ?

The Indian Census is the largest administrative and statistical exercise in the world. The responsibility for conducting the decadal census lies with the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, which is part of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

Legal and Historical Framework

- **Census governed** under **Union List**, Census Act, 1948.
- **Census Commissioner** appointed by the Centre; **State staff** (mainly teachers) conduct enumeration.
- Process conducted in **two phases:**
 - **House listing** phase (35 questions in 2011).
 - **Population enumeration** phase (reference date: March 1).
- **Historical references:** **Kautilya's Arthashastra**, **Ain-i-Akbari, 1872** (non-synchronous), and **1881** (first synchronous Census under W.C. Plowden).

Do you know ?

*Despite its deep roots in Indian tradition, the modern understanding and usage of the word "caste" came through European intervention. The term 'caste' is not an English but a Portuguese word; when Portuguese came to India, they found that society was classified in a certain way and called it caste. Sociologist Surinder S Jodhka notes in *Caste: Oxford India Short Introductions* (2012), the term "caste" is the English translation of the Spanish word *casta*, meaning "race". Portuguese traders, who arrived on India's west coast in the 15th century, were the first to use the term in relation to Indian society. Anthropologist Morton Klass points out that there is no exact equivalent for "caste" in Indian languages.*

Concerns

- **Southern, Northeastern, and smaller northern States** are concerned about **loss of representation** due to population-based delimitation.
- **Lack of clarity** in notification on caste enumeration and **exclusion of ST faiths. ST religions classified under "Other Religious Persuasion (ORP)"**, unlike recognized religions (Hinduism, Islam, etc.). **2011 Census: Only 0.66% (79 lakh)** under ORP, despite **STs forming 8.6% (10.43 crore)** of total population. It means, in the **2011 Census**, many ST faiths were **not listed as distinct religions** and were **clubbed** under the vague category **"Other Religious Persuasion (ORP)"**, unlike major recognized religions.

Do you know?

- The **84th Amendment**, enacted in **2002 froze states' share of Lok Sabha seats**. The freeze was based on **allocations from the 1971 Census**. This freeze will remain **"until the relevant figures for the first Census taken after the year 2026 have been published"**.
- The **previous reference year** for this freeze had been **2000**.

National Population Register

- **Census enumeration and NPR update** were approved by the Cabinet in **2019**, originally scheduled for 2020 but **postponed due to Covid-19**.
- **NPR is the precursor to NRC**, as per law. It is governed by the **Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003**, framed under the **Citizenship Act, 1955**.
- **Rule 3(4)** empowers the Central Government to **set a date** for preparing the Population Register by collecting details of **usual residents**.
- **Rule 3(5)** states that after **verification**, the **Local Register of Indian Citizens** will include verified individuals from the Population Register.
- **Rule 4(4)** mentions that those with **doubtful citizenship** will be marked during verification and informed through a **specified proforma**.
- **NPR data was first collected in 2010**, during the **2011 Census house listing phase**, and **updated in 2015** via a door-to-door survey.
- **Section 14A**, added through the **2003 amendment**, allows **compulsory registration of all Indian citizens** and the issuance of **national identity cards**, with the **Registrar General** designated as the **National Registration Authority**.

Constitutional, Non-constitutional & Other Bodies

8th Central Pay Commission

Why in news: The **Union Cabinet** has approved the **Terms of Reference (ToR)** for the **eighth Central Pay Commission (CPC)**, which will determine the **pay structure and retirement benefits of Union government employees**.

- The **8th CPC** will comprise **one chairperson, one part-time member, and one member-secretary**, and is expected to **submit its recommendations within 18 months** of its constitution.
- **Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai (retd.)** has been appointed as the **Chairperson** of the Commission.
- The **CPC's recommendations** will directly affect around **50 lakh Central government employees**.
- While formulating its report, the Commission is required to **consider multiple economic and fiscal factors**, including:
 - The **current economic conditions** of the country.
 - The importance of **fiscal prudence** and **sustainable expenditure**.
 - The need to **maintain adequate resources** for **developmental and welfare programmes**.
 - The **unfunded liabilities of non-contributory pension schemes**.
 - The **impact of pay revisions on State finances**.
 - The **existing emolument structure** of government employees.
- The establishment of **8th Central Pay Commission** continues India's periodic review mechanism for government pay and pension reforms, following the **7th CPC**, whose recommendations were implemented in **2016**.

UPSC

Why in news: The **UPSC** marks a **century of its establishment on October 1**, celebrating **100 years** of service to the nation as a guardian of **meritocracy** and fairness in governance.

Historical Background and Evolution

- The idea of an **independent commission** to recruit higher civil servants took root **before Independence**.

- **Government of India Act, 1919** first provided for such a body. In **1926**, **Public Service Commission** was set up, following **Lee Commission (1924)** recommendations to protect civil service from **political or personal influences**. Headed by **Sir Ross Barker**, it began with **limited powers** under colonial rule.
- The **Government of India Act, 1935** elevated it to the **Federal Public Service Commission**, giving **Indians a greater role** in administration. With **adoption of Constitution in 1950**, it assumed its present status as the **UPSC**.
- UPSC has launched a **new online application portal** and **face-recognition technology** to ensure **zero impersonation**.
- **PRATIBHA Setu** initiative provides **employment opportunities** for those reaching the interview stage but not in the final list. Future plans include using **digital technologies and AI** for **efficient and transparent functioning**.

Article	Subject
315	Establishes Public Service Commissions for the Union (UPSC) and for the states (SPSC).
316	Covers the appointment and term of office for members of the commission.
317	Outlines the procedure for the removal and suspension of a member.
318	Grants the President the power to make regulations regarding the conditions of service for commission members and staff.
319	Prohibits members of the commission from holding certain offices after they cease to be members.
320	Specifies the functions of the Public Service Commissions, including conducting examinations, direct recruitment by selection, and advising the government on recruitment and disciplinary matters.
321	Provides the power to extend the functions of the commissions.
322	Deals with the expenses of the Public Service Commissions.
323	Concerns the reports of the Public Service Commissions.

NCSC

Why in news: The **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)** has issued **new guidelines** specifying conditions under which complaints may be **rejected or closed** – in some cases, **without a hearing**.

- The move aims to **address high pendency of cases** and to prevent **non-SC individuals** from misusing the complaint mechanism.
- The directive applies to all three wings of the Commission – **Service Safeguard Wing, Economic and Social Development Wing, and Atrocities and Protection of Civil Rights Wing**.
- Complaints may be **rejected** if they are **unsigned, improperly addressed, anonymous, or lack a self-declaration of SC status**.
- The Commission will **not entertain complaints** that are already **decided or pending before courts**, or those merely seeking **implementation of court orders**. **Policy-related complaints** may also be rejected.
- The NCSC allows **closure of atrocity-related complaints without a hearing** if the petitioner **withdraws the case**, is **satisfied with the action taken**, or the complaint **lacks contact information**.
- Complaints that **do not establish a clear link to the complainant’s Scheduled Caste status** will also be **closed**.
- On **systemic or organisational issues**, the Commission clarified that **general administrative or institutional grievances** will **not be entertained** unless they have a **specific Scheduled Caste context**.

NCSC:

- **Constitutional Body (Art. 338):** Established by *89th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003*, which bifurcated the earlier NCSCST into **NCSC** and **NCST**.
- **Appointment & Tenure:** Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and other Members are **appointed by the President**; their conditions of service and tenure are also determined by the President (not fixed by the Constitution).
- **Powers – Civil Court Authority:** The Commission has powers of a **civil court** while investigating matters: summoning, requiring document production, receiving evidence, etc.
- **Monitoring Safeguards:** It investigates and monitors all **constitutional and legal safeguards** for SCs, including implementation of laws like the *Protection of Civil Rights Act* and *SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act*.
- **Reports:** Submits annual (or special) reports to the **President**, who lays them before **Parliament** along with a memorandum of action taken.

Lokpal-1

Why in news: SC shifted a **suo motu case** on **Lokpal’s jurisdiction over High Court judges** to another Bench. The Lokpal concluded that **High Court judges are “public servants”** under the **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013**.

- The **Lokpal assumed jurisdiction** to inquire or investigate complaints against **High Court judges** on **constitutional and legislative history**. It cited that **High Courts were constituted** under **British parliamentary Acts** – the **Indian High Courts Act, 1861**, and the **Government of India Act, 1935**, and **Letters Patent**.
- The **Lokpal rejected the claim** that High Court judges were outside its scope, calling it **“too naive”**.

- The Lokpal cited **Clause (f) of Section 14(1)** of the **2013 Act** to justify its jurisdiction over **High Court judges** arguing that since **High Courts are established by Acts of Parliament**, their judges qualify as “**public servants**” under the Lokpal Act. The **Supreme Court has stayed this order**, emphasizing that all **judges, including High Court judges, are appointed under the Constitution**. The Court held that judges are **immune from Lokpal’s jurisdiction** pending further **judicial review**.

Lokpal-2

Why in news: The number of complaints received by the **Lokpal** has **declined sharply** from a **peak of 2,469 in 2022–23** to just **233 in 2025–26**.

- The **Lokpal**, India’s **anti-corruption ombudsman**, has **jurisdiction to inquire into corruption allegations** against the **Prime Minister, Union Ministers, and government officials**.
- A large number of **complaints are being dismissed on technicalities**, such as **format or procedural errors**, while **serious corruption allegations remain unaddressed**.
- The **Lokpal has not uploaded any annual reports since 2021–22**, raising concerns about **transparency and accountability**.
- The **Lokpal currently has seven members**, including its **Chairperson**, against a **sanctioned strength of eight members**.

Related news:

- The **Anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal** is currently a **seven-member body** headed by former Supreme Court judge. Lokpal has **floated a tender** for the procurement of **seven BMW cars**, raising eyebrows.
- The tender invites bids for **seven BMW 3 Series 330Li cars** for the Lokpal of India.

Lokpal:

- The **Lokpal** is an **independent anti-corruption authority** created to represent public interest and hear corruption cases against **Central government public officials**.
- It was established under the **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013**, enacted after the **Jan Lokpal movement** led by **Anna Hazare in 2010**. India got its **first Lokpal in 2019**.
- Under the 2013 Act, the Lokpal consists of a **chairperson** and **members not exceeding eight**, with **50% judicial members**. Not less than **50% of the Lokpal members** must be from **SCs, STs, OBCs, minorities, and women**.
- Members are appointed by the **President** on the recommendation of a **Selection Committee** comprising the **Prime Minister, Speaker of Lok Sabha, Leader of Opposition/ largest opposition party leader, Chief Justice of India, and an eminent jurist**.
- For states, the Act mandates that **every State shall establish a Lokayukta** within one year of the Act’s commencement.
- **Section 11** requires the Lokpal to constitute an **Inquiry Wing**, headed by a **Director of Inquiry** (not below Joint Secretary rank), appointed by the Central Government.
- The Lokpal also has a **Prosecution Wing**, headed by the **Director of Prosecution**, for prosecuting public servants.
- Lokpal’s jurisdiction covers **public servants**, including **PM, ministers, MPs, and Groups A, B, C and D central government employees**. Even **Lokpal members themselves** fall under the definition of public servants.
- For allegations against the **Prime Minister**, Lokpal cannot inquire if they relate to **international relations, external/internal security, public order, atomic energy, or space**.
- Complaints against the Prime Minister cannot be probed unless **the full bench considers the inquiry and at least 2/3rd members approve**. Such an inquiry, if conducted, must be held **in camera**, and if dismissed, records must **not be published or shared**.

Independence Day – Special Edition

PM’s Independence Day Address

Why in news: PM called for **self-reliance in economy, defence, and technology**, announced **Mission Sudarshan Chakra** (an indigenous air defence system by 2035), and warned of a **conspiracy to alter India’s demographic composition**.

- **Announced Mission Sudarshan Chakra:**
 - Fully **indigenous air defence system** by **2035**. Inspired by **Lord Krishna’s shield**.
 - Designed for **neutralising and retaliatory strikes**.
 - To secure **strategic & civilian infrastructure** (hospitals, railways, centres of faith).

Do you know?

- The **PM** also mentioned **India's Deep Ocean Mission**. It is aimed at exploring **resources under the sea**.
- Two Indian **aquanauts** recently completed trips up to **5,000 metres** in the **Atlantic Ocean**.
 - **Cdr (Retd) Jatinder Pal Singh** and **R Ramesh** dived to **5,002 metres** and **4,025 metres** respectively in the **French submersible Nautilus**. This is the **deepest an Indian has ever gone underwater**.
 - Earlier, most **Indian submarine dives** were limited to **500 metres**, with the previous record of **670 metres** held by **Cdr Singh**. The dives gave Indian aquanauts exposure to **mission protocols, vessel handling, and recovery operations**.
 - The dives are part of the preparation for **Samudrayaan**, India's **first manned deep-sea mission** aiming to send **three aquanauts to 6,000 metres** in the **indigenously developed Matsya6000 submersible by 2027**.
 - So far, only **five countries** — **USA, Russia, China, France, and Japan** — have successfully carried out **crewed deep-ocean missions**; **India is set to join this club**.
- Nations manage their **maritime territory and exclusive economic zones**, while the **high seas and international ocean floor** are governed by **UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas)**.
- **UNCLOS applies to states regardless of ratification or signing**.