

**CONSTITUTION AND POLITY****None of The Above (NOTA) votes**

Election Commission has release a report on NOTA votes cast in recent elections.

**Key findings:**

- Bihar registered the maximum None of The Above (NOTA) votes of about 8 lakh, with the highest share of 5.04% reported from the Gopalganj constituency.
- The high NOTA percentage was an indicator that people were frustrated with the state of affairs in their constituency, did not find any of the candidates worthy enough and therefore, even after reaching the polling station, decided to press the NOTA button.
- In Andhra Pradesh, the fourth highest NOTA figure of 4.46%, involving 47,977 voters, was recorded in Araku and in only five constituencies of the State, was it below 1%.
- Gujarat, where the highest of 3% was seen in Dahod, had only eight constituencies where the NOTA share was below 1%; while in Haryana, nine of the 10 seats registered less than 1% voters rejecting all candidates.
- In as many as 23 constituencies of Karnakata, NOTA vote share was again less than 1% and the highest of 1.39% was in Uttara Kannada in the State. In Kerala and Delhi, all the constituencies had below 1% NOTA share.

**The use of NOTA in elections:**

- The option of NOTA for Lok Sabha and assembly elections was prescribed by the SC in 2013. The option of NOTA in RS polls was introduced by the EC in 2014. Thus, India became the 14th country to institute negative voting.
- The EVMs have the NOTA option at the end of the candidates' list. Earlier, in order to cast a negative ballot, a voter had to inform the presiding officer at the polling booth. A NOTA vote doesn't require the involvement of the presiding officer.
- NOTA gives people dissatisfied with contesting candidates an opportunity to express their disapproval. This, in turn, increases the chances of more people turning up to cast their votes, even if they do not support any candidate, and decreases the count of bogus votes. Also, the Supreme Court has observed that negative voting could bring about "a systemic change in polls and political parties will be forced to project clean candidates".
- NOTA option will force the political parties to select the honest candidates, i.e with no criminal records.
- NOTA ensures people's 'right to freedom of speech and expression'.
- This will increase the polling percentage.

**Dissolution of Lok Sabha:**

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has given its approval to the Resolution advising the President to dissolve the Sixteenth Lok Sabha, which was constituted on 18.05.2014.

**What is dissolution of Lok Sabha?**

In India, the Lok Sabha has a five-year term, but can be dissolved earlier. According to Article 83(2) of the Constitution, completion of five years from the first day of its meeting amounts to dissolution of the Lower House. In this case, an election is held to elect the new Members of Parliament. The Lower House can also be dissolved earlier by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister. It can also be dissolved if the President feels that no viable government can be formed after the resignation or fall of a regime.

**GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.****EQUIP project**

Ministry of Human Resource Development plans to launch an ambitious Rs. 1.5 lakh crore EQUIP project to improve the quality and accessibility of higher education over the next five years.

**Key features:**

- EQUIP stands for the Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme and was crafted by ten committees led by experts within the government.

- Aims: EQUIP is meant to bridge the gap between policy and implementation. The project is made to bring transformation in the higher education system in the upcoming 5 years.
- Objectives: To improve access to higher education, especially for underserved communities; improve the gross enrolment ration; improve teaching and learning processes; build educational infrastructure; improve the quality of research and innovation; use technology and online learning tools; and work on accreditation systems, governance structures and financing.

### **INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**

#### **WHO strategy to tackle global snakebite 'emergency'**

The World Health Organisation has unveiled a new strategy to dramatically cut deaths and injuries from snakebites, warning a dearth of antivenoms could soon spark a “public health emergency”.

#### **The Strategy**

- The UN agency called for “the restoration of a sustainable market for snakebite treatment”, insisting on the need for a 25-per cent increase in the number of competent manufacturers by 2030.
- WHO said it planned a pilot project to create a global antivenom stockpile.
- The strategy also called for integrating snakebite treatment and response into national health plans in affected countries, including better training of health personnel and educating communities.
- WHO, which two years ago categorised “snakebite envenoming” as a Neglected Tropical Disease, presented a strategy aimed at cutting snakebite-related deaths and disabilities in half by 2030.
- An important part of the strategy is to significantly boost production of quality antivenoms.

#### **Snakebite: An Emergency**

- Each year, nearly three million people are bitten by poisonous snakes, with an estimated 81,000-138,000 deaths.
- Another 400,000 survivors suffer permanent disabilities and other after-effects, according to WHO figures.
- Snake venom can cause paralysis that stops breathing, bleeding disorders that can lead to fatal haemorrhage, irreversible kidney failure and tissue damage that can cause permanent disability and limb loss.
- Most snakebite victims live in the world’s tropical and poorest regions, and children are worse affected due to their smaller body size.
- It causes nearly 50,000 deaths in India every year.
- Four snake varieties – Indian Cobra, Russel’s viper, saw-scaled viper and Indian common krait are mostly responsible for most snakebite deaths.
- Production of life-saving antivenoms has been abandoned by a number of companies since the 1980s, and availability of effective and safe products is disastrously low in Africa especially, with a similar crisis also looming in Asia.

#### **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)**

The Second Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Mass Media Forum is being held at Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The Forum aims to strengthen the exchange and cooperation in the field of mass media amongst SCO countries.

It offers a unique platform for active work through mass media to create an objective vision of the organization and strengthen its positive image in the global information space. The representative of state bodies supervising mass media of the SCO countries (Member States, Observer Countries, Dialogue Partners); representatives of leading mass media of the SCO countries and representatives of the SCO Secretariat are participating in the Forum.

**Background:** The first SCO Media Summit was held in Beijing on 1 June 2018. This event was held under the motto “Development of the “Shanghai Spirit” and opening of a new era in the mass media

cooperation”, where over 110 media outlets from 16 countries participated, including the SCO Member States, Observer States and Dialogue Partners.

#### About SCO:

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, also known as the Shanghai Pact, is a Eurasian political, economic, and military organisation which was founded in 2001 in Shanghai.
- Founding members: China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The cooperation was renamed to Shanghai Cooperation Organisation after Uzbekistan joined the organisation in 2001.
- The SCO’s main goals are: strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states; promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, the economy, research, technology and culture, as well as in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, and other areas; making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region; and moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order. currently:
- Presently, the SCO comprises eight member states, namely the Republic of India, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People’s Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan;.
- The SCO counts four observer states, namely the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Belarus, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Mongolia.
- The SCO has six dialogue partners, namely the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the Republic of Turkey, and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

### **INDIAN ECONOMY**

#### Elephant Bonds

A high level government-appointed committee on trade and industry has suggested it to issue ‘Elephant Bonds’ to people for declaring undisclosed income to mandatorily invest 50%.

#### Elephant Bonds

- Elephant Bonds are the 25-year sovereign bonds in which people declaring undisclosed income will be bound to invest 50 per cent.
- The fund, made from these bonds, will be utilized only for infrastructure projects.
- It is like an Amnesty scheme to help State treasury raising tax revenues, adding beneficiaries in tax base who have not declared their assets previously.

#### Open market operations (OMO)

The Reserve Bank of India is planning to inject Rs. 15,000 crore into the financial system next month through purchase of government bonds via the auction route. The government securities will be bought under open market operations (OMO). The decision has been taken in view of the evolving liquidity situation.

#### What is OMO?

- Open market operations is the sale and purchase of government securities and treasury bills by RBI or the central bank of the country.
- The objective of OMO is to regulate the money supply in the economy.
- RBI carries out the OMO through commercial banks and does not directly deal with the public.
- Features: When the RBI wants to increase the money supply in the economy, it purchases the government securities from the market and it sells government securities to suck out liquidity from the system.

### **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC**

#### ISRO’s new commercial arm NewSpace India officially inaugurated

NewSpace India Limited, the commercial arm of ISRO was officially inaugurated in Bengaluru.

### NewSpace India Limited (NSIL)

- NSIL's main objective is to scale up industry participation in Indian space programmes.
- NSIL was incorporated on March 6 2019, for commercially utilising research and development activities carried out by ISRO in the area of space with an authorised share capital of Rs 100 crore and initial paid up capital of Rs 10 crore.
- NSIL will act as an aggregator for all space related activities in industry and develop private entrepreneurship in space related technologies.

### Services to be provided

- Specifically, it will be responsible for manufacturing and production of Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) and Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) through technology transfer mechanisms.
- It will also cater to emerging global commercial SSLV market demand, providing satellite building and satellite-based services.
- Its services will include supply of sub-systems for various domestic and international application needs and will enable space technology spin-offs through Indian industry interface.
- It will enable space technology spin-offs via Indian industry interface.

### Athena and LISA missions

Researchers have proposed to combine the observing power of two future ESA missions, Athena and LISA, to study the effects when two supermassive black holes collide. Currently in the study phase, both missions are scheduled for launch in the early 2030s.

Background: Supermassive black holes, with masses ranging from millions to billions of Suns, sit at the core of most massive galaxies across the Universe. We don't know exactly how these huge, enormously dense objects took shape, nor what triggers a fraction of them to start devouring the surrounding matter at extremely intense rates, radiating copiously across the electromagnetic spectrum and turning their host galaxies into 'active galactic nuclei'.

### Athena, the Advanced Telescope for High-ENERgy Astrophysics:

- Athena will be the largest X-ray observatory ever built, investigating some of the hottest and most energetic phenomena in the cosmos with unprecedented accuracy and depth.
- It is designed to answer two fundamental questions: how supermassive black holes at the centre of galaxies form and evolve, and how 'ordinary' matter assembles, along with the invisible dark matter, to form the wispy 'cosmic web' that pervades the Universe.
- Objectives: Athena is going to measure several hundreds of thousands of black holes, from relatively nearby to far away, observing the X-ray emission from the million-degree-hot matter in their surroundings.

### LISA, the Laser Interferometer Space Antenna:

- LISA will be the first space-borne observatory of gravitational waves—fluctuations in the fabric of spacetime produced by the acceleration of cosmic objects with very strong gravity fields, like pairs of merging black holes.
- LISA will detect low-frequency gravitational waves, such as the ones released when two supermassive black holes collide during a merger of galaxies.
- LISA will detect the gravitational waves emitted by the spiralling black holes about a month before their final coalescence, when they are still separated by a distance equivalent to several times their radii.
- Significance: Scientists expect that a fraction of the mergers found by LISA, especially those within distances of a few billion light years from us, will give rise to an X-ray signal that can be eventually seen by Athena.

### **QUOTE OF THE DAY**

**What consumes your mind, controls your life.**

## DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

**Qns: What is NOTA? Discuss its role in the context of the recently held General Election.**

None Of The Above (NOTA) is a ballot option designed to allow the voter to indicate disapproval of all of the candidates in a voting system. It was introduced in India following the 2013 Supreme Court directive in the People's Union for Civil Liberties v. Union of India judgment. However, NOTA in India does not provide for a 'right to reject'. The candidate with the maximum votes wins the election irrespective of the number of NOTA votes polled.

NOTA gives people dissatisfied with contesting candidates an opportunity to express their disapproval. This, in turn, increases the chances of more people turning up to cast their votes, even if they do not support any candidate, and decreases the count of bogus votes. Also, the Supreme Court has observed that negative voting could bring about "a systemic change in polls and political parties will be forced to project clean candidates.

***In the recently held General Elections:***

- Bihar registered the maximum None of The Above (NOTA) votes of about 8 lakh, with the highest share of 5.04% reported from the Gopalganj constituency.
- The high NOTA percentage was an indicator that people were frustrated with the state of affairs in their constituency, did not find any of the candidates worthy enough and therefore, even after reaching the polling station, decided to press the NOTA button.
- In Andhra Pradesh, the fourth highest NOTA figure of 4.46%, involving 47,977 voters, was recorded in Araku and in only five constituencies of the State, was it below 1%.
- Gujarat, where the highest of 3% was seen in Dahod, had only eight constituencies where the NOTA share was below 1%; while in Haryana, nine of the 10 seats registered less than 1% voters rejecting all candidates.
- In as many as 23 constituencies of Karnataka, NOTA vote share was again less than 1% and the highest of 1.39% was in Uttara Kannada in the State. In Kerala and Delhi, all the constituencies had below 1% NOTA share.
- So far, a small number of Indian voters have come to see NOTA as an instrument of protest. The perceived cynicism of Indian voters against the political class thus seems exaggerated. Nevertheless, it is important to note that these voters have used the democratic means of NOTA to express their resentment rather than boycotting the polls outright. This electoral option will become a meaningful means of negative voting only if it becomes a 'right to reject' rather than being a symbolic instrument to express resentment as it is now.

**DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS BASED MCQS**

1. Consider the following statements w.r.t the NOTA option in the EVMs.
  1. NOTA option was used for the first time in the General Election of 2014
  2. In the 17<sup>th</sup> General Election, Bihar had the highest percentage of NOTA in India.
  3. NOTA option is only available for the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.
 Which of the above statements is/are correct?
  - (a) 1 and 2
  - (b) 1 and 3
  - (c) 2 and 3
  - (d) 1, 2 and 3**
2. Consider the following statements w.r.t Lok Sabha
  1. It has a fixed tenure of 5 years.
  2. It can have a maximum 552 seats
  3. A certain no. of seats are reserved for the candidates from SC, ST community.
 Which of the above statements is/are correct?
  - (a) 1 and 2
  - (b) 1 and 3
  - (c) 2 and 3**
  - (d) 1, 2 and 3
3. The Project EQUIP has been launched by which of the following ministries?
  - (a) Ministry of Human Resource and Development**
  - (b) Ministry of Finance
  - (c) Ministry of Commerce
  - (d) Ministry of Foreign Affairs
4. Consider the following statements w.r.t the WHO.
  1. It was established in 1948 with the HQ at Geneva.
  2. Recently it has announced Snakebite as a public health emergency.
 Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?
  - (a) 1 only
  - (b) 2 only
  - (c) Both 1 and 2
  - (d) Neither 1 nor 2**
5. Consider the following statements w.r.t the SCO.
  1. It is a Eurasian political, economic, and military organisation which was founded in 2001.
2. India has an Observer Status in the SCO
3. SCO Mass Media Forum was recently held in Kyrgyzstan.
 Which of the above statements is/ are correct?
  - (a) 1 and 2
  - (b) 1 and 3**
  - (c) 2 and 3
  - (d) 1, 2 and 3
6. Consider the following statements w.r.t the 'Elephant Bonds'
  1. The fund raised through these bonds are invested in the Project Elephant programme
  2. It can also be used for developing Forest Infrastructure.
 Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?
  - (a) 1 only
  - (b) 2 only
  - (c) Both 1 and 2**
  - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
7. Consider the following statements w.r.t the NewSpace India Limited.
  1. It is the commercial arm of ISRO.
  2. Its main objective is to scale up industry participation in Indian space programmes.
 Which of the above statements is/are correct?
  - (a) 1 only
  - (b) 2 only
  - (c) Both 1 and 2**
  - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
8. Consider the following statements w.r.t Athena, the Advanced Telescope for High-ENergy Astrophysics
  1. Its objective is to measure the distance among the black holes.
  2. It has been proposed to combine the Athena with the LISA, the Laser Interferometer Space Antenna in a recent scientific study.
 Which of the above statements is/are correct?
  - (a) 1 only
  - (b) 2 only
  - (c) Both 1 and 2**
  - (d) Neither 1 nor 2