

**NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC****Operation Thirst**

- Indian Railways have launched “Operation Thirst”, as an all India drive to curb the menace of selling unauthorized packaged drinking water in railway premises.
- With the increase in the number of passengers traveling by railways (due to the closure of schools & festive/marriage season) during peak summer, the demand for drinking water also increases.
- The operation thirst drive was carried out in all major railway stations of the country on 8 and 9th July 2019.
- During the drive, 1371 persons were arrested by the railway protection force for selling of packaged drinking water of unauthorized brands.
- Stalls on platforms were also found selling packaged drinking water bottles of brands which are not authorized by the Indian Railway.

**National Creche Scheme**

The National Crèche Scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

**About National Creche Scheme**

- It is a centrally sponsored scheme being implemented with effect from 1st January, 2017.
- It aims at providing a safe place for mothers to leave their children while they are at work, and thus, is a measure for empowering women as it enables them to take up employment.
- It is also an intervention towards protection and development of children in the age group of 6 months to 6 years.
- The scheme provides for day care facilities to the children of working mothers.
- It also provides supplementary nutrition, health care inputs like immunization, polio drops, basic health monitoring, sleeping facilities, early stimulation (for children below 3 years), pre-school education for children aged between 3-6 yrs.

**INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS****Multidimensional Poverty Index 2019**

Recently the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2019 was published by the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP).

**Overview**

- The report states that India has registered the fastest absolute reduction in the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) value among ten countries.
- Ten developing nations for which the comparison is made include countries across income categories,
  - Upper middle (Peru)
  - Lower middle (Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Vietnam)
  - Low (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti)
- India has lifted 271 million out of poverty, significantly reducing deprivations in many of the ten indicators as per the report.
- The progress is seen particularly in ‘Assets, cooking fuel, sanitation, and nutrition’ parameter.
- The report states that Jharkhand is among the poorest regions in the world improving the fastest.
- Jharkhand has reduced multidimensional poverty from 74.9 % to 46.5% in the ten years since 2005-06.

**About the report**

- It is an international measure of acute poverty covering over 100 developing countries.
- It complements traditional income-based poverty measures by capturing the severe deprivations that each person faces at the same time with respect to education, health and living standards.

- MPI assesses poverty at the individual level. If someone is deprived in at least 3 of ten indicators, the index identifies them as ‘MPI poor’.
- It was developed by Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) for inclusion in UNDP’s flagship Human Development Report in 2010.

### **INDIAN ECONOMY**

#### **Inter Creditor Agreement**

Recently sixteen lenders of Reliance Infrastructure Limited have signed an ‘Inter Creditor Agreement (ICA)’ in an effort to resolve its debt.

#### **About the ICA**

- It provides the ground rules for the finalization and implementation of a resolution plan (RP) for borrowers with credit facilities from more than one lender.
- Under the framework, a Resolvency Plan has to be agreed to by 75% of the lenders by value of debt and 60% by number of lenders.
- With the ICA, the Reliance company has achieved a 180-day standstill period.
- Purpose of the standstill period is to give the senior creditor an exclusive period of time during which it may assess its rights.
- ICA is aimed at the resolution of loan accounts with a size of Rs. 50 crore and above that are under the control of a group of lenders.
- It is part of the ‘Project Sashakt’ approved by the government to address the problem of resolving bad loans.

### **ISSUES RELATED TO INTERNAL SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

#### **Unlawful activities (Prevention) Act**

The Centre has banned a separatist group, Sikhs for Justice, on grounds of secessionism under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

#### **Background:**

- Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), formed in 2007, is a US-based group seeking a separate homeland for Sikhs — a “Khalistan” in Punjab.
- Operating out of the United States, the group has been trying to build a campaign for secession of Punjab.

#### **About the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA):**

- This law is aimed at effective prevention of unlawful activities associations in India.
- Its main objective is to make powers available for dealing with activities directed against the integrity and sovereignty of India.
- The Act makes it a crime to support any secessionist movement or to support claims by a foreign power to what India claims as its territory.
- The UAPA, framed in 1967, has been amended twice since: first in 2008 and then in 2012.

#### **The law is contested for few draconian provisions:**

- The Act introduces a vague definition of terrorism to encompass a wide range of non-violent political activity, including political protest.
- It empowers the government to declare an organisation as ‘terrorist’ and ban it. Mere membership of such a proscribed organisation itself becomes a criminal offence.
- It allows detention without a chargesheet for up to 180 days and police custody can be up to 30 days.
- It creates a strong presumption against bail and anticipatory bail is out of the question.
- It creates a presumption of guilt for terrorism offences merely based on the evidence allegedly seized.
- It authorises the creation of special courts, with wide discretion to hold in-camera proceedings (closed-door hearings) and use secret witnesses but contains no sunset clause and provisions for mandatory periodic review.

**EDITORIAL****A welcome debate on electoral reforms**

A short-duration discussion in the Rajya Sabha on electoral reforms occurred. It was initiated by Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Derek O'Brien, with the backing of as many as 14 Opposition parties.

**Dimensions of reforms**

The TMC MP touched on six major themes —

- Appointment system for Election Commissioners and Chief Election Commissioner (CEC);
- Money power;
- Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs);
- The idea of simultaneous elections;
- The role social media;
- And lastly, the use of government data and surrogate advertisements to target certain sections of voters.

**Appointment process**

- On the issue of appointments of Election Commissioners, Mr. O'Brien quoted B.R. Ambedkar's statement to the Constituent Assembly that "the tenure can't be made a fixed and secure tenure if there is no provision in the Constitution to prevent a fool or a naive or a person who is likely to be under the thumb of the executive."
- Collegium system- All parties demanded the introduction of a collegium system.

**Money power –**

- As regards the chronic problem of the crippling influence of money power, Mr. O'Brien spoke about various reports and documents — a 1962 private member's Bill by Atal Bihari Vajpayee; the Goswami committee report on electoral reforms (1990); and the Indrajit Gupta committee report on state funding of elections (1998).
- Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) – Congress MP Kapil Sibal, citing an independent think tank report on poll expenditure released in June, discussed at length the regressive impact of amending the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) and removing the 7.5% cap on corporate donations.

**Funding of elections**

- Congress MP termed electoral bonds "a farce" and gave a proposal for state funding (of political parties) based on either a National Electoral Fund or the number of votes obtained by the respective parties.
- He also proposed crowdfunding in the form of small donations.
- He said that the current expenditure cap on candidates is unrealistic and should either be raised or removed to encourage transparency.

**EVM –**

- The old issue of returning to ballot papers was raised by several parties.
- The TMC said that "when technology doesn't guarantee perfection, you have to question technology."
- The BJD said that to strengthen public faith in Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trails, five machines should be counted right in the beginning. The BSP added that postal ballots should be scanned before counting so as to increase transparency.

**On simultaneous elections**

- Many BJP MPs highlighted issues linked to electoral fatigue, expenditure and governance and also reports of the Law Commission and NITI Aayog to push for simultaneous elections.
- But the TMC said that the solution lies in consulting constitutional experts and publishing a white paper for more deliberation.

**Internal democracy**

- Internal democracy within political parties was also mentioned by a couple of speakers.

- The BJD suggested that an independent regulator should be mandated to supervise and ensure inner-party democracy.

#### Wider representations

- For improving the representativeness of elections, the demand for proportional representation system was put forth by the DMK, the CPI and the CPI (M).
- The DMK cited the example of the BSP's performance in 2014 Lok Sabha elections, when the party got a vote share of nearly 20% in Uttar Pradesh but zero seats.
- A number of MPs argued for a mixed system, where there was a provision for both First Past the Post and Proportional Representation systems.

#### Common electoral roll

- The important issue of the "fidelity of electoral rolls" was raised by the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP).
- The idea of a common electoral roll for all the three tiers of democracy was supported by the BJP and the SP.

#### Reforms in a streamlined manner

- Reducing the number of phases in elections by raising more security forces.
- Depoliticisation of constitutional appointments by appointing Commissioners through a broad-based collegium;
- State funding of political parties by means of a National Electoral Fund or on the basis of the number of votes obtained;
- Capping the expenditure of political parties;
- Giving the Election Commission of India (ECI) powers to de-register recalcitrant political parties;
- Inclusion of proportional representation system;
- Revisiting the Information Technology Act, to strengthen social media regulations.

#### Conclusion

- The governments should also rise above their obsession with immediate electoral gains and think of long-term national interests.
- The TMC MP was right in saying that Parliament must not only urgently "debate and deliberate but also legislate" on electoral reforms.
- The time has come to find and enact concrete solutions in the national interest.
- Having heard a number of practical and constructive proposals raised in the Rajya Sabha last week, I remain hopeful that Parliament will take it upon itself to enable the world's largest democracy to become the world's greatest.

### **ODISHA DEVELOPMENT**

#### Odisha to use V-Sat to augment banking service in Maoist-hit Areas

The Odisha government has decided to use solar V-Sat technology to augment banking service in Maoist-hit areas of the state where it has been severely affected due to lack of Internet connectivity.

#### V-Sat

- V-Sat (Very Small Aperture Terminal) is a satellite communications system that serves home and business users.
- It offers telecom services such as data transfer, Internet, voice and video. It can be used in areas where conventional media like copper cable, optical fibre cannot be used.

#### Concerns:

- Maoists regularly destroy mobile phone towers, affecting Internet services, so that their movements cannot be reported to the police. Districts like Malakngiri, Koraput, Kalahandi and Rayagada are mainly affected due to this problem
- Urging banks to open more branches in rural areas, Odisha Govt asked them to identify agriculture and education as priority sectors for the overall development of the state.

### **QUOTE OF THE DAY**

**Great things never come from comfort zones.**

**DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE****Qns: Critically examine the issues related to electoral politics in India.**

Ans: India is the largest Democracy in the World. Elections are the most important and integral part of politics in a democratic system of governance. The elections at present are not being held in ideal conditions because of the enormous amount of money power and muscle power needed for winning the elections. In addition there are many other factors on the basis of which election is fought like poverty, casteism, communalism, criminalization of politics, poll violence, booth capturing, non-serious independent candidates, unemployment, etc

**Money power**– In each constituency, a prospective candidate has to spend millions of rupees towards campaigning, transport, publicity etc. The gap between the expenses incurred and legally permitted is increasing over the years.

**Muscle Power**– use of Violence, pre-election intimidation, booth capturing are mainly the products of muscle power and are prevalent in many parts of the country like Bihar, Western UP etc. and is slowly spreading to south India.

**Criminalisation of politics and politicization of criminals**– are like two sides of the same coin and are mainly responsible for the manifestation of muscle power at elections.

Politicization of criminals: criminals enter into politics to gain influence and ensure that cases against them are dropped or not proceeded with. Also, the political parties field criminals in elections for fund and in return provide them with political patronage and protection

**Misuse of Government Machinery:** It is generally complained that the government in power at the time of election misuse official machinery to improve their candidates election prospects . The misuse of official machinery takes different forms, such as use of government vehicles for canvassing ,advertisements at the cost of government and public exchequer highlighting their achievements, disbursements out of the discretionary funds at the disposal of the ministers, etc. which gives an unfair advantage to the ruling party at the time of elections.

**Non serious Independent candidates** -Non-serious candidates are largely floated by serious candidates either to cut sizeable portion of votes of rival candidates or to split the votes on caste lines or to have additional physical force at polling station and counting centers

**Casteism:** There are cases of certain castes lending strong support to particular political parties. Thus political parties make offers to win different caste groups in their favor and caste groups also try to pressurize parties to give tickets for its members elections, . Caste based politics are eroding the „unity principle in the name of regional autonomy. Thus caste has become a prime factor in winning elections and Candidates are selected not in terms of accomplishments, ability and merit but on the appendages of caste, creed and community

**Communalism:** The politics of communalism and religious fundamentalism during post independence has led to a number of separate movements in various states and regions of the country. Communal polarization has posed a serious threat to the Indian political ethos of pluralism, parliamentarianism, secularism and federalism.

**Lack of Moral Values in Politics:** Gandhian values of selflessness service to the people and self sacrifice have been destroyed systematically over the years and both the politicians and political parties have lost their credibility.

**Qns: Discuss the major electoral reforms taken post-2000 to address the electoral problems in India.**

Ans: The reports of various election reform commissions and a number of formal and informal group discussions at various forums and by individuals, have categorically pointed out the defects in the electoral system and came out with some useful suggestions. Yet the problems remaining to be as critical and challenging as ever.

However, government has accepted recommendations of many commission reports only partially. some of the important committees are-the Dinesh Goswami Committee on electoral reforms1990,

committee on criminalization of politics by Vohra, committee on state funding of elections by Indrajit Gupta, subsequent reports by the law commission, election commission, national commission to review the constitution headed by the M N Venkatachaliaha, second ARC on ethics in governance headed by Veerapa Moily, law commission report headed by A P Shaw 2015.

#### Reforms since 2000

- Restriction on exit polls-exit poll is an opinion survey regarding how electors have voted etc Thus conducting exist polls and publishing results of exit polls during the election to the Loksabha and state legislative assemblies during the period notified by the election commission shall be punishable with imprisonment up to 2 years and with fine or both.
- Ceiling on election expenditure– ceiling on election expenditure for a Loksabha seat has been increased to 40 lakhs in bigger states and it varies between 16 to 40 lakhs in other states and union territories. Similarly, ceiling on election expenditure has been increased in assembly elections to 16 lakhs in bigger states and it varies between 8 to 16 lakhs in other states and union territories.
- Appellate authority- appellate authority within the district is before the district /additional district magistrate/officer of equivalent rank against the orders of the electoral registration officers instead of chief electoral officer of the state and appeal against the order of district magistrate will now lie before the chief electoral officer.
- Voting through postal ballot– allows government servants and certain other class of persons to vote via postal ballot following the Election Commission’s consent.
- Voting rights to citizens of India living abroad – for employment , education etc ,who has not acquired the citizenship of any other country and has his name registered in the electoral roll of a particular constituency (place of his residence) can vote.
- Awareness Creation- to encourage more young voters to take part in the electoral process. The Government of India has decided to celebrate January 25th of every year as ‘National Voters Day ‘ . It started from January 25, 2011 to mark Commission’s foundation day.
- To report contributions- Political parties need to report any contribution in excess of Rupees 20000 to the EC for claiming income tax benefit.
- Others–
  - Creation of a fully computerized database of electors, comprehensive photo electoral roll; de-duplication technologies to eliminate bogus and duplicate entries.
  - Video recording of the polling and counting procedures, The Commission developed a system of online communication (COMET) that made it possible to monitor every polling booth on the day of election. Real time monitoring of polling booths using GPS and a web-enabled facility through the Google search engine.
  - The Model Code of Conduct for the guidance of political parties and candidates (1990)
  - Requisition of staff for election duty from other government institutions to compensate manpower and fair conduct of elections
  - Facility to vote through Proxy (armed forces people),
  - Reduction of effective campaigning period to check malpractices
  - Free supply of electoral rolls to the candidates of the recognized political parties for the Loksabha and Assembly elections,
  - Allocation of time on electronic media to address public, based on past performances of the recognized political party, exemption of travelling expenditures during elections etc
  - Declaring of criminal antecedents ,assets etc by the candidates and declaring false information in the affidavit is now an electoral offence punishable with imprisonment up to 6 months or fine or both etc.

**DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS BASED MCQS**

1. Which of the following initiatives has been launched by Indian Railways to curb the menace of selling unauthorized packaged drinking water in railway premises?
  - (a) Operation Swatchh
  - (b) Operation Thirsty
  - (c) Operation Thirst
  - (d) Operation Purity
2. Consider the following statements w.r.t the National Creche Scheme.
  1. It is a Central Sector Scheme
  2. It provides healthcare for children below 3 years.
  3. It provide pre-school education to children below 6 yearsWhich of the statements are correct?
  - (a) 1 and 2
  - (b) 1 and 3
  - (c) **2 and 3**
  - (d) 1, 2 and 3
3. Consider the following statements w.r.t the Multidimensional Poverty Index 2019.
  1. It is published by the UNDP.
  2. It assesses poverty at the individual level, not social level.
  3. In India, Jharkhand is the poorest performer in the Index.Which of the statement are correct?
  - (a) 1 and 2
  - (b) 2 and 3
  - (c) 1 and 3
  - (d) **1, 2 and 3**
4. Consider the following statements w.r.t Inter Creditor Agreement.
  1. It is part of the 'Project Sashakt' approved by the government to address the problem of resolving bad loans
  2. Under the framework, a Resolvency Plan has to be agreed to by 75% of the lenders by value of debt and 60% by number of lenders.Which of the 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 Unlawful activities (Prevention) Act.
  1. It empowers the government to declare an organisation as 'terrorist' and ban it.
  2. It allows detention without a chargesheet for up to 180 days and police custody can be up to 30 days.Which of the statements is/are incorrect?
  - (a) 1 only
  - (b) 2 only
  - (c) Both 1 and 2
  - (d) **Neither 1 nor 2**
6. Which of the following statements is/are correct w.r.t VSAT?
  1. It access satellites in geosynchronous orbit to relay data from small remote Earth stations.
  2. It can be used for telecommunication purpose.Select the correct answer using codes given below
  - (a) 1 only
  - (b) 2 only
  - (c) **Both 1 and 2**
  - (d) Neither 1 nor 2