

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.

State Funding Of Elections

Recently, the Minister of State for Finance has informed Lok Sabha that the Election Commission of India (ECI) is **not in favour of state funding of elections**.

- The state funding of elections was recommended by the **Indrajit Gupta Committee in 1998**.
ECI's View
 - The ECI has stated that it would not be able to prohibit or check **candidates' expenditure or expenditure by others** over and above that which is provided for by the state.
 - It has also mentioned that for addressing the real issues with **political fundings**, there need to be changes in following elements of election funding process :
 - **Receipts of funds** by political parties.
 - **The manner** in which **received funds are spent** by the political parties.
 - **Complete transparency** in the political funding process.
 - The **scrutiny** over the above aspects will help to bring **better transparency** in political funding.

Recommendations on State Funding for Elections

- **Indrajit Gupta Committee (1998)**
 - The Indrajit Gupta Committee had suggested that **state funding** would ensure a **level playing field** for poorer political parties and argued that such a move would be in public interest.
 - It had also recommended that **state funds** should only be given to **recognised national and State parties**.
 - It had recommended that funding should be given **in the form of free facilities provided to these parties and their candidates**.
 - ECI **allows airtime** to recognised national and State parties for campaigning on state media.
- **Law Commission Report (1999)**
 - It had stated that a state funding of elections is 'desirable' provided that political parties are **prohibited from taking funds from other sources**.
- **National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2000)**
 - It **did not support** state funding of elections but mentioned that the appropriate framework for the regulation of political parties would need to be implemented before state funding is considered.

Recent Steps Taken by the Government

- The government has amended the **Income Tax Act and limited anonymous cash donations to Rs 2,000 to discourage cash transactions and bring in transparency** in the source of funding of political parties.
- The '**Electoral Bond Scheme**' was introduced in 2018 to establish a transparent political funding system in the country, with a well-established audit trail.
 - An electoral bond is a **bearer instrument** like a Promissory Note.
 - It can be purchased by **any citizen of India or a body incorporated in India** to donate to the political party of their choice. **Donor's name is not mentioned** on the bond.
 - These bonds can be used for making donations to the political parties registered under **Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951** and which have secured **not less than one per cent of the votes polled in the last general election to the House of the People or a Legislative Assembly**.

Current Scenario of Political Funding

- Political Funding implies the methods that political parties use to raise funds to finance their campaign and routine activities.
- **Methods of Political Funding in India:**
 - **Individual Persons:** Section 29B of RPA allows political parties to receive donations from individual persons.
 - **Indirect State Funding:** It includes methods except direct funding, like free access to media, free access to public places for rallies, free or subsidized transport facilities. **It is allowed in India in a regulated manner**.
 - **Corporate Funding:** In India, donations by corporate bodies are governed by **the Companies Act, 2013**.
 - **Electoral Trusts:** A non-profit company created in India for orderly receipt of voluntary contributions from any person like an individual or a domestic company.

Issues with Political Funding

- One of the biggest disadvantages of corporate funding is the **use of fake companies to route black money**.
- **Influence of people and companies over political parties** to which they provide funds.
- There are various gaps in Indian rules, the benefit of which political parties take to avoid any kind of reporting.
- **Hidden sources of funding** lead to more spending of funds in election campaigns, thus impacting the economy of the country.

RULES FOR FILING COMPLAINTS WITH THE LOKPAL

- **The Department of Personnel and Training** has issued a notification providing the rules and prescribed format for filing complaints with the Lokpal.

Key Points

- The notification, under the **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act**, lays down the rules called **the Lokpal (Complaint) Rules, 2020**.
- **Identity Proof:** According to the complaint form, a complainant has to give a valid proof of identity, as specified therein.
- **Foreign nationals** can also lodge complaints.
 - Only a **copy of their passports** will be accepted as proof of identity.
- **Mode of Complaint:**
 - The complaint can be filed **electronically, by post or in person**.
 - In case the complaint is filed electronically, its hard copy has to be submitted to the Lokpal within 15 days.
- **No complaints** can be filed against a public servant **under the Army Act, Navy Act, Air Force Act and the Coast Guard Act**.
- **Language:** A complaint may ordinarily be made in English, provided that the Lokpal may also entertain a complaint in any of the languages referred to in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution.
- The complaints, whose contents are illegible, vague or ambiguous, which are trivial or frivolous, do not contain any allegation, are not filed within the limitation period of seven years, or are pending before any other court, tribunal or authority, will have to be disposed of within 30 days.
- **Protection:**
 - The identity of the complainant or the accused official **will be protected by the Lokpal till the conclusion of inquiry or investigation**.
 - However, the protection will not be applicable in cases where the complainant herself reveals her identity to any other office or authority while making the complaint to Lokpal.

INDIAN ECONOMY

The Costly Covid-19

The **Coronavirus outbreak** is having a negative impact on the various sectors of the economy.

Impact on Indian Economy

- **GDP Growth Rate**
 - The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** has slashed India's growth forecast for 2020-21 by 110 basis points (bps) to 5.1%, warning that the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on business confidence, financial markets and the travel sector, including disruption to supply chains, could shave 50 bps off global growth in 2020.
- **Pharmaceuticals:** Given the pharmaceutical industry's deep linkages to China, the supply chain of raw materials of drugs has taken a hit.
 - The production facilities in Himachal Pradesh — largest pharma hub of Asia — have warned of suspension.
 - Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs), also called bulk drugs, are significant ingredients in the manufacture of drugs. The Hubei province of China, the epicentre of the coronavirus, is the hub of the API manufacturing industry.
 - India is heavily import-dependent for APIs from China. India's API imports stand at around \$3.5 billion per year, and around 70%, or \$2.5 billion, come from China.

- **Automobile Industry**
 - China is one of the leading suppliers of auto components in India, accounting for 27% of the total imports.
 - The coronavirus is expected to have an impact on the Indian automotive industry and therefore also on the automobile component and forging industries, which had already reduced their production rate due to the market conditions and on account of the impending change over to BS-VI emission norms from BS-IV from April 2020.
- **Stock Market**
 - On 28th February, the Indian stock market registered one of its worst crashes in a single day. Indian indices fell over 3.5%, marking the second biggest fall in Sensex history.
 - The Sensex plunged 1,448.37 points to close at 38,297.29, while the Nifty tanked 3.711% or 431.55 points to settle a little above the 11,200 mark.
 - The Sensex's worst fall in history was on 24th August, 2015, when the indices fell 1,624 points on the back of a slump in the Chinese markets and rising crude oil prices.
- **Currency**
 - The month of March is typically good for the Indian currency as remittances, from both overseas citizens and companies, tend to boost the exchange rate.
 - In the past decade, the rupee has appreciated seven times against the dollar in March. But March 2020 could be hard on the exchange rate and the rupee's sharp drop to 73.25 per dollar on 3rd March, 2020 is evidence of this. One of the reasons is an increase in the number of reported cases of coronavirus in India.

Global Scenario

- **Global Growth:** The world's economy could grow at its slowest rate since 2009 this year due to the coronavirus outbreak, according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The OECD has forecast growth of just 2.4% in 2020, down from 2.9% in November 2019
- **Fall in Customer Demand:** Some people are choosing to avoid activities that might expose them to the risk of infection, such as going out shopping. Restaurants, car dealerships and shops have all reported a fall in customer demand.
- **Travel Industry:** The number of cases diagnosed is increasing around the world every day. Thus, many countries have introduced travel restrictions to try to contain the virus's spread, impacting the travel industry massively.
- **Beneficiaries**
 - Consumer goods giant Reckitt Benckiser, for example, has seen a boost in sales for its Dettol and Lysol products. The disinfectant is seen as providing protection against the spread of the disease, although its effectiveness has not yet been scientifically proven.
 - The price of gold - which is often considered a "safe haven" in times of uncertainty - has also increased. Its spot price hit a seven-year high of \$1,682.35 per ounce in February 2020.

Global Response

- The COVID-19 outbreak was declared a **Public Health Emergency of International Concern** by the **WHO** on 30th January 2020.
- According to recommendations by the World Health Organization, the diagnosis of COVID-19 must be confirmed by the Real Time- Polymerase Chain Reaction (**PCRT-PCR**) or gene sequencing for respiratory or blood specimens, as the key indicator for hospitalisation.
- \$15 million dollars has been released from the UN's Central Emergency Fund to help fund global efforts to contain the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus, particularly vulnerable countries with weak health care systems.
- Vaccines are being developed.

Indian Response

- The Indian government arranged for the evacuation of 366 Indian citizens from Wuhan in a special Air India flight on 31st January 2020. The passengers were placed under quarantine for a period of 14 days.
 - A second batch of passengers, including seven Maldivian citizens evacuated by the government, arrived from Wuhan on 1st February 2020. The repatriated passengers were also monitored.

- The government has already introduced travel restrictions and suspended visas from affected countries.
- A detailed containment plan has been shared with states. States have been asked to identify possible isolation areas in hospitals that can accommodate larger numbers.
- The Indian health minister advised people to approach the government helpline numbers regarding the doubts related to symptoms of the deadly disease. The situation is being monitored at the highest level.
- PCR Test: If PCR test is positive, the sample is sent to the National Institute of Virology in Pune, which is the only government laboratory currently doing genome sequencing, for final confirmation.

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

Ink to Curb Fake Printing and Counterfeiting of currency notes

- The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)-National Physical Laboratory has developed a **bi-luminescent security ink** which **glows in red and green colours** when illuminated by two different excitation sources.
- The ink was given to **Bank Note Press (BNP)**, Dewas, a unit of **Security Printing Minting Corporation of India Ltd. (SPMCIL)**, New Delhi.
- The formulation can be used to **check the authenticity of passports, Government documents, tamper evident labels, identity cards**, etc.

BIO-DIVERSITY CONSERVATION

World Wild Life Day

- World Wildlife Day is celebrated every year on the **3rd of March since 2013**. The date chosen coincides with the day the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)** which was signed in 1973.
- The **UNGA resolution also designated the CITES Secretariat** as the facilitator for the global observance of this special day for wildlife on the UN calendar.
- **Theme: 'Sustaining all Life on Earth'**, highlights the unique place of wild fauna and flora as essential components of the world's biodiversity.
- The year 2020, known as **"biodiversity super year,"** will host several major global events that place biodiversity at the forefront.
- This aligns with UN **Sustainable Development Goals 1, 12, 14 and 15**, and their wide-ranging commitments on alleviating poverty, ensuring sustainable use of resources, and on conserving life both on land and below water to halt biodiversity loss.
 - **Goal 1: No Poverty**
 - **Goal 12: Responsible Consumption And Production**
 - **Goal 14: Life Below Water**
 - **Goal 15: Life On Land**
- Our planet is currently facing the **urgent challenge that is the loss of biodiversity** and up to a **million species could disappear in the coming decades if unsustainable human activity, climate change and habitat degradation** are left unchecked.
- There might come a time when these species remain only in videos for future generations to see.

IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT PRELIM

Red Crowned Roofed Turtle

- **Red Crowned Roofed Turtle** is **one of the 24 species endemic to India**, is characterised by the bright colours such as red, yellow, white and blue on the faces and necks of the males.
- **Common Names: Bengal roof turtle, Red-crowned roofed turtle.**
- **Distribution:**
 - It is a freshwater turtle species found in **deep flowing rivers with terrestrial nesting sites.**
 - The Red-crowned roofed turtle is native to **India, Bangladesh and Nepal.**
 - Historically, the species was widespread in the **Ganga River**, both in India and Bangladesh. It also occurs in the **Brahmaputra basin.**

- Currently in India, the **National Chambal River Gharial Sanctuary** is the only area with substantial population of the species, but even this **Protected Area** and habitat are under threat.
- **Major Threats:**
 - Loss or degradation of habitat due to **pollution** and **large scale development activities** like water extraction for human consumption and irrigation and irregular flow from the upstream dams and reservoirs.
 - **Sand mining** and growing of **seasonal crops** along Ganga River are majorly affecting the sandbars along the river that are used by the species for nesting.
 - Drowning by **illegal fishing nets**.
 - **Poaching and illegal trade**.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - **The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** : Critically Endangered
 - **Wildlife Protection Act (IWPA)** : Schedule I
 - **The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)** : Appendix II

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.” (Albert Einstein)

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. “Fraternity remains the least understood, least discussed and least practised of the four pillars of Constitutional morality spelt out in the preamble of Indian Constitution and from it Constitution also derives the unity of Nation.” Explain.

Ans.

Fraternity essentially means that all the citizens should behave members of the same family. No one should treat a fellow citizen as inferior. While the morals of Preamble like- Justice, Equality, Liberty have been explicitly and implicitly ensured through Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles and other constitutional provisions, this is not the case with Fraternity.

Meaning of Fraternity in Indian Context

- Sense of common brotherhood transcending religion, language, regional or sectional diversities (Article 51A). This is to be promoted through single citizenship. Despite this, communal violence like 2002 Gujarat riots, ongoing Citizenship Amendment Act protest and violence, North-South divide based on languages, and other social disturbances due to differences in diversity and inability to come to common terms for living in harmony are common.
- Dignity of Individuals by maintaining material betterment of individual and democratic setup. Challenges to this include income inequality based on caste, gender, low social status of women like rape, domestic violence, less economic participation, challenges to democratic setup like the use of money and muscle power in elections.
- Unity and Integrity of the nation at both levels: psychological and territorial. Still secessionist movements persist like demand for Greater Nagalim, lack of unified polity manifested in temporary provisions for certain states like Article 371, border disputes, especially with Pakistan and China. At psychological level issues include communalism, regionalism, linguism etc.

Conclusion

Fraternity is an important element for a strong nation-state that encompasses diversity as large as that of India's. This had been cherished during nationalist freedom struggle also reminded by 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act by adding the word integrity.

DAILY QUIZ

1. As of March 2020, the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) has covered how many appliances under the Star Labelling Programme?
 - a) 12
 - b) 16
 - c) 20
 - d) 26**
2. What is India's economic growth rate for 2020-21, as estimated by OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development)?
 - a) 4.6%
 - b) 4.8%
 - c) 5.1%
 - d) 5.4%
3. The Reserve Bank of India is conducting one-year and three-year tenor LTRO to help banks to reduce their lending rates. What does LTRO stand for?
 - a) Long term reverse operation
 - b) Long term-repo operation**
 - c) Liquidity term repo operation
 - d) Liquidity term reverse operation
4. What is the name of the recently launched scheme that aims to provide nutritional support to pregnant women and adolescent girls?
 - a) Pradhan Mantri Suposhit Yojana
 - b) Suposhit Maa Abhiyan**
 - c) Suposhit Janani Yojana
 - d) Suposhit Beti Abhiyan
5. What is 'RaIDer-X', which was recently developed by HEMRL, the lab of DRDO and Indian Institute of Science?
 - a) Artillery Gun
 - b) Explosive Detection Device**
 - c) Naval Exercise
 - d) Corona Vaccine