

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**The next structural change?**

The renewed pitch for “One Nation One Election” if understood in terms of process improvement, or reforms, makes eminent sense.

Harmful Impact of year-round election cycles**1. Concerns with Rajya Sabha**

- First, the Rajya Sabha has simply stopped reflecting the current will of the people.
- No, this is not an argument to assert that Rajya Sabha should reflect the reality of the Lok Sabha mandate.
- But is it anybody’s case that the Rajya Sabha members should not reflect the current will of their respective state’s mandate?
- Case Study of UP : Eleven Rajya Sabha members were elected from Uttar Pradesh in June 2016: Seven of them were from the SP, two from the BSP and just one each from the BJP and Congress. These results reflected the reality of the then state assembly of UP. These seats will be up for re-election in June 2022. In between, the people of the state decisively voted in favour of the BJP in March 2017. The UP assembly is due for elections in February-March 2022. This would mean that the assembly elected in 2017 would have had zero say in its entire tenure on these 11 seats.

2. Confrontationist Attitude between the state and centre

- Second, assembly elections two years either side of Parliamentary elections, in states ruled by a different party than that at the Centre, have led to an almost continuous confrontationist attitude, severely compromising federal cooperation and governance delivery.
- Examples – Take the case of West Bengal. Before the 2019 general elections, Ayushman Bharat was suspended, PM Kisan was not implemented, CBI jurisdiction was impeded.

3. Delay in decision making

- Third, although governments are nominally elected for five years, the frequent imposition of the Model Code suspends decision making and implementation every few months.
- This has squeezed out space for ideas that may be vital but have no immediate electoral salience.

4. Electoral Swaying by short term promises

- Fourth, the competitive nature of electoral democracy inevitably means choosing to make the easiest promise. Routed in the general elections and fearing similar result six months later, who would want to invest time in arduous efforts to effect real, long-term changes?

5. No availability of evaluation time

- Fifth, the ubiquitous nature of social media has meant that almost everybody is now not just an informed political animal but a participating political animal. Once you have taken a position on a political issue, then the very nature of the beast will compel you to keep on participating with your political lens.

Conclusion

There have been various models proposed for implementing the idea of simultaneous elections. They will surely be debated and a plausible method to reconcile the practicalities be evolved. It took us about a decade to agree to GST. It was a one-time adjustment at the national and state level and we have already started seeing the benefits of this structural change. “One Nation One Election” is also about one-time structural change. First align various cycles and then evolve a structure, by consensus, which can serve us for the decades to come. It is an idea whose time has come.

President’s address to both Houses of Parliament

President Ramnath Kovind recently addressed joint sitting of Parliament outlining the govt’s goals for next five years.

What does the Constitution say about this?

- Article 87(1) says: “At the commencement of the first session after each general election to the House of the People and at the commencement of the first session of each year the

President shall address both Houses of Parliament assembled together and inform Parliament of the causes of its summons.”

- First Constitutional Amendment: Originally, the Constitution required the President to address both Houses of Parliament at the commencement of “every session”. This requirement was changed by the First Amendment to the Constitution.

President’s address: The President’s speech essentially highlights the government’s policy priorities and plans for the upcoming year. It is drafted by the Cabinet, and provides a broad framework of the government’s agenda and direction.

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

Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR)

In a bid to curtail the rampant cloning and theft of mobile phones across the country, the Telecom Ministry is ready to roll out a Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR) — a database of IMEIs, the 15-digit numbers that uniquely identify each mobile device.

Central Equipment Identity Register

- The concept of a central identity register is advocated by the GSM Association (GSMA), a body representing mobile operators, equipment manufacturers, and software and internet companies, among other stakeholders in the telecom ecosystem.
- In India, the plan to prepare the registry of mobile identification numbers was first conceived in the National Telecom Policy-2012.
- A pilot for the project was developed and conducted by state-owned BSNL’s IT Project Service unit in Pune.
- In the interim budget for 2019-20, the government allocated Rs 15 crore to the DoT for the CEIR project.

How will database work?

- In line with global practices, DoT’s identity register will be a database of IMEI numbers that will consist of three lists – white, grey and black.
- Mobile phones with IMEI numbers in the white list will be permitted for use, while those in the blacklist will be the ones that are reported stolen or lost and will not be allowed to access the network.
- Devices with IMEI numbers in the greylis will be the ones that do not conform to standards but will be permitted to connect under supervision.

Utility of CEIR

- Once implemented in the coming weeks, consumers in India whose mobile phones are lost or stolen can inform the Department of Telecom (DoT) via a helpline number after filing a report with police.
- The DoT can then blacklist the IMEI number, effectively blocking the mobile device from accessing any cellular network in the future.
- The CEIR will have access to GSMA’s global IMEI database, allowing comparison of IMEI numbers to identify counterfeit devices.

Why it is important?

- The theft and cloning of mobile phones have become a serious problem.
- The theft of mobile phones is not just a financial loss but also a threat to personal life of the citizens as well as national security.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

African Union (AU)

India has for the first time extended \$15 Million financial support to Niger as a support for organising African Union (AU) summit scheduled to be held in Niger. This will be the 1st time that Niger will be hosting an AU summit.

About AU:

- The African Union (AU) is a continental union consisting of 55 countries of the continent of Africa, with exception of various territories of European possessions located in Africa.

- The bloc was founded on 26 May 2001 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and launched on 9 July 2002 in South Africa.
- The intention of the AU is to replace the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), established on 25 May 1963 in Addis Ababa by 32 signatory governments.
- The most important decisions of the AU are made by the Assembly of the African Union, a semi-annual meeting of the heads of state and government of its member states.
- The AU's secretariat, the African Union Commission, is based in Addis Ababa.

Key objectives: To achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and Africans. To defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its Member States. To accelerate the political and social-economic integration of the continent.

INDIAN ECONOMY

Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)

FSDC meeting held recently was chaired by the Union Finance Minister.

About FSDC: The Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) was constituted in December, 2010. The FSDC was set up to strengthen and institutionalise the mechanism for maintaining financial stability, enhancing inter-regulatory coordination and promoting financial sector development. An apex-level FSDC is not a statutory body.

Composition:

- The Council is chaired by the Union Finance Minister and its members are Governor, Reserve Bank of India; Finance Secretary and/or Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs; Secretary, Department of Financial Services; Chief Economic Adviser, Ministry of Finance; Chairman, Securities and Exchange Board of India; Chairman, Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority and Chairman, Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority. It also includes the chairman of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board (IBBI).
- Recently, the government through a gazette notification, had included ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY) secretary in the FSDC in view of the increased focus of the government on digital economy.

What it does?

- The Council deals, inter-alia, with issues relating to financial stability, financial sector development, inter-regulatory coordination, financial literacy, financial inclusion and macro prudential supervision of the economy including the functioning of large financial conglomerates. No funds are separately allocated to the Council for undertaking its activities.

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

Facebook's cryptocurrency 'Libra'

There's a new cryptocurrency called Libra to be rolled out by Facebook by 2020. Facebook also announced a dedicated wallet app called Calibra, which will be built into WhatsApp and Messenger as well, to let users store and use these Libra coins.

What is Libra?

- Libra is a cryptocurrency built on a blockchain network, though Facebook was quick to insist that it will respect user privacy and transactions will in no way be linked to the user's real world identity.
- Libra is like any other cryptocurrency powered by blockchain technology.
- It wants to be a 'global currency', one that can be used to transfer money anywhere in the world without any transaction fees.
- The claim is that Libra will be accessible to anyone with a smartphone, even a low-cost budget phone, and a network connection.
- Of course, there are several mobile payment services already offering seamless payments, though with real-money.

Calibra Wallet

- Calibra is the digital wallet from Facebook to let users store these Libra coins.

- Facebook says this is a separate company, and data will not be shared with them and it will respect user privacy.
- Calibra will have a dedicated team of experts in risk management to prevent fraudulent use.
- Also if someone loses their Libra coins from the Calibra wallet, they will refund users. Libra will also work with other third-party wallets.
- Calibra will also be added to WhatsApp and Messenger.

How will Libra blockchain work?

- Libra is also being governed by the independent Libra Association, which is not what you see in typical cryptocurrency.
- A new programming language is also being built for Libra called Move, which the organisation claims is more secure and private.
- The Libra Blockchain will record the history of transactions and states over time, rather than the typical blockchain where each transaction is added a new block.

Buying Libras

- The network is still far from ready. The Libra blockchain will be tested over the coming months.
- While there's no word on exactly how someone will buy Libra, the Calibra wallet from Facebook will probably be one way.
- To purchase Libra, user will have to pay in their local currency, provided the laws allow it.

Its uniqueness

- Libra will also be backed by a reserve of assets designed in order to “give it intrinsic value” and ensure stability, which is not seen in typical cryptocurrencies.
- These assets includes securities and fiat currencies (like dollar, pound) etc as part of this reserve.
- The website says Libra will be backed by “short-term government securities in currencies from stable and reputable central banks.”
- Still the “value of the one Libra in any local currency may fluctuate,” cautions the page.
- The idea is to ensure Libra is stable to give more users confidence in this, while ensuring that currency does not fluctuate wildly like other cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin which had at point had reached a high of \$20,000.

Will Libra work in India?

- Cryptocurrency is illegal in India and the draft bill right now is recommending a maximum of 10 year punishment for those who mine, trade, buy or sell these.
- In India, if the bill passes, trading in cryptocurrency could result in hard punishment.
- So one of the biggest markets, which is India, will not be able to use Libra, which could limit its potential.
- The Supreme Court of India is hearing a matter regarding regulation of Bitcoin in India and the matter will now be heard on July 23, 2019.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

**Being brave means that you know you've failed, but
you are sure you won't fail forever.**

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: Critically Examine the proposal of ‘One Nation, One Election’.

Ans: The Centre’s proposal of One Nation, One election followed by the All party meeting is a crucial aspect for the Indian Democracy. Election is the most vital part of our democratic system and any changes in it will surely affect its credibility.

Harmful Impact of year-round election cycles

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