

GOVERNANCE**The concerns around Aadhaar-Voter ID linkage**

- ❖ **CONTEXT:** Reports have surfaced online of instances where block level officers have asked individuals to link their Aadhaar with their Voter IDs, failing which their Voter IDs could be cancelled. This comes in the aftermath of the Election Commission's (EC) campaign to promote the linkage of Voter ID and Aadhaar that began on August 1. In the first ten days since its launch, the campaign saw almost 2.5 crore Aadhaar holders voluntarily submitting their details to the EC.
- ❖ **Why does the government want this?**
 - The EC conducts regular exercises to maintain an updated and accurate record of the voter base. A part of this exercise is to weed out duplication of voters, such as migrant workers who may have been registered more than once on the electoral rolls in different constituencies or for persons registered multiple times within the same constituency. As per the government, linkage of Aadhaar with voter IDs will assist in ensuring that only one Voter ID is issued per citizen of India.
- ❖ **Is the linking of Aadhaar with one's Voter ID mandatory?**
 - In December 2021, Parliament passed the Election Laws (Amendment) Act, 2021 to amend the Representation of the People Act, 1950, inter alia. Section 23(4) was inserted in the Representation of the People Act, 1950. It states that the electoral registration officer may "for the purpose of establishing the identity of any person" or "for the purposes of authentication of entries in electoral roll of more than one constituency or more than once in the same constituency" for citizens already enrolled, require them to furnish their Aadhaar numbers.
 - To reflect this amendment, in June 2022, the government notified changes to the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960. Rule 26B was added to provide that "every person whose name is listed in the roll may intimate his Aadhaar number to the registration officer". Although, the use of discretionary language throughout the amendments have been accompanied by assurances by both the government and the EC that linkage of the Aadhaar with Voter ID is optional, this does not seem to be reflected in Form 6B issued under the new Rule 26B.
 - Form 6B provides the format in which Aadhaar information may be submitted to the electoral registration officer. Form 6B provides the voter to either submit their Aadhaar number or any other listed document. However, the option to submit other listed documents is exercisable only if the voter is "not able to furnish their Aadhaar number because they do not have an Aadhaar number". To that extent, the element of choice that has been incorporated in the amendments seem to be negated or at the very least thrown into confusion.
- ❖ **Why is the mandatory linking of Aadhaar to the Voter ID an issue?**
 - The preference to use Aadhaar for verification and authentication, both by the state and private sector, stems from two reasons. First, at the end of 2021, 99.7% of the adult Indian population had an Aadhaar card. This coverage exceeds that of any other officially valid document such as driver's licence, ration cards, PAN cards etc that are mostly applied for specific purposes. Second, since Aadhaar allows for biometric authentication, Aadhaar based authentication and verification is considered more reliable, quicker and cost efficient when compared to other IDs.
 - But these reasons do not suffice the mandating of Aadhaar except in limited circumstances as per the Puttaswamy judgment. It needs to be considered whether such mandatory linkage of Aadhaar with Voter ID would pass the test of being "necessary and proportionate" to the purpose of de-duplication which is sought to be achieved. In Puttaswamy, one of the questions that the Supreme Court explored was whether the mandatory linking of Aadhaar with bank accounts was constitutional or not. The Court observed that the mandatory linking of Aadhaar with bank accounts was not only for new bank accounts but also existing ones, failing which the individual will not be able to operate their bank account. The Court held that depriving a person of their right to property for non-linkage fell foul of the test of proportionality. Even though the situation at hand is slightly different in that other means of verification and authentication are allowed if the person does not hold an Aadhaar, given the wide coverage of Aadhaar, the current design would in effect mandate Aadhaar linkage. In this context, it needs to be considered whether requiring an Aadhaar holder to mandatorily provide Aadhaar for authentication or verification would not be

considered violative of their informational autonomy (right to privacy) which would allow them to decide which official document they want to use for verification and authentication.

- Moreover, in Lal Babu Hussein (1995), the Supreme Court had held that the Right to vote cannot be disallowed by insisting only on four proofs of identity — voters can rely on any other proof of identity and obtain the right to vote.

❖ **What are the operational difficulties?**

- First, the preference to Aadhaar for the purposes of determining voters is puzzling as Aadhaar is only a proof of residence and not a proof of citizenship. Therefore, verifying voter identity against this will only help in tackling duplication but will not remove voters who are not citizens of India from the electoral rolls.
- Second, the estimate of error rates in biometric based authentication differs widely. As per the Unique Identification Authority of India in 2018, Aadhaar based biometric authentication had a 12% error rate. This led the Supreme Court to hold in Puttaswamy that a person would not be denied of benefits in case Aadhaar based authentication could not take place. This concern is also reflected in the previous experiences of using Aadhaar to clean electoral rolls. A similar exercise undertaken in 2015 in Andhra and Telangana led to the disenfranchisement of around 30 lakh voters before the Supreme Court stalled the process of linkage.
- Lastly, civil society has highlighted that linking of the two databases of electoral rolls and Aadhaar could lead to the linkage of Aadhaar's "demographic" information with voter ID information, and lead to violation of the right to privacy and surveillance measures by the state. This, however, would seem to be the case with the use of any other officially valid document to verify or authenticate the identity of the voter. This would leave the EC with the option of verifying its information only through door-to-door checks. It also needs to be noted that the Puttaswamy judgment, after reviewing the Aadhaar architecture, held that the use of biometric based authentication and verification, did not lead to the creation of a "surveillance state". To address these concerns, one needs to have enforceable data protection principles that regulate how authentication data will be used.

❖ **What is the way forward?**

- Even as the amendments have been made and the EC has launched a campaign for linkage, a writ petition has filed with the Supreme Court challenging the same. It challenges the amendments as being violative of the right to privacy. The Supreme Court has transferred the writ to the Delhi High Court.
- In the meantime, it is important that the government clarifies through correction in Form 6B that the linking is not mandatory and expedites the enactment of a data protection legislation that allays concerns of unauthorised processing of personal data held by the government.
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PRELIMS

1. **Full court meeting**

❖ **CONTEXT:** Within hours of taking over, the new Chief Justice of India U U Lalit called a meeting of the 'full court' Saturday where the judges discussed how to deal with issues relating to listing and backlog of cases.

❖ **What is a full court meeting?**

- A full court meeting literally means one which is attended by all the judges of the court.

❖ **When is it held?**

- There are no written rules dealing with this. As per convention, full-court meetings are called by the Chief Justice of India to discuss issues of importance to the judiciary. The senior designations of practising advocates in the Supreme Court and high courts are also decided during the full court meetings.

❖ **What is the significance of a full court meeting?**

- The basic idea is to take everyone along. Full court meetings are an ideal occasion to arrive at common solutions to deal with problems that beset the country's legal system and to make any amends, if necessary, in the administrative practices of the court.

❖ **How frequently is it held?**

- As a full court meeting is convened at the discretion of the Chief Justice of India, it does not follow any particular calendar.
- Full court meetings have been held many times in the past. In March 2020, it was convened to discuss demands by associations of lawyers to close the court till further notice following the Covid-19 outbreak and its subsequent spread among court staff, and to decide the further steps to be taken.
- Also, a full court meeting held on May 7, 1997 decided that “every Judge should make a declaration of all his/her assets in the form of real estate or investment” held in own name or in the name of spouse or any person dependent within a reasonable time and thereafter make a disclosure “whenever any acquisition of a substantial nature is made”.
- The meeting resolved that an in-house procedure should be devised by the Hon’ble Chief Justice of India to take suitable remedial action against judges who by their acts of omission or commission do not follow the universally accepted values of judicial life, including those indicated in the “Restatement of Values of Judicial Life” that lays down certain judicial standards and principles to be observed and followed by SC and HC judges.

2. The One Nation One Fertiliser scheme

❖ **CONTEXT: The Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers announced that it has been decided to implement One Nation One Fertiliser by introducing a “Single Brand for Fertilisers and Logo” under the fertiliser subsidy scheme named “Pradhanmantri Bhartiya Janurvarak Pariyojna” (PMBJP).**

- According to the office memorandum, “the single brand name for UREA, DAP, MOP and NPK etc. would be BHARAT UREA, BHARAT DAP, BHARAT MOP and BHARAT NPK etc. respectively for all Fertiliser Companies, State Trading Entities (STEs) and Fertiliser Marketing Entities (FMEs)”.

❖ **Key takeaways**

- Under the new “One Nation One Fertiliser” scheme, companies are allowed to display their name, brand, logo and other relevant product information only on one-third space of their bags. On the remaining two-thirds space, the “Bharat” brand and Pradhanmantri Bharatiya Jan Urvarak Pariyojana logo will have to be shown.
- The government’s logic for introducing a single ‘Bharat’ brand for all subsidised fertilisers being marketed by companies is as follows:
 - (1) The maximum retail price of urea is currently fixed by the government, which compensates companies for the higher cost of manufacturing or imports incurred by them. The MRPs of non-urea fertilisers are, on paper, decontrolled. But companies cannot avail of subsidy if they sell at MRPs higher than that informally indicated by the government. Simply put, there are some 26 fertilisers (inclusive of urea), on which government bears subsidy and also effectively decides the MRPs;
 - (2) Apart from subsidising and deciding at what price companies can sell, the government also decides where they can sell. This is done through the Fertiliser (Movement) Control Order, 1973. Under this, the department of fertilisers draws an agreed monthly supply plan on all subsidised fertilisers in consultation with manufacturers and importers. This supply plan is issued before the 25th of each month for the following month, with the department also regularly monitoring movement to ensure fertiliser availability as per requirement, including remote areas.
 - (3) When the government is spending vast sums of money on fertiliser subsidy (the bill is likely to cross Rs 200,000 crore in 2022-23), plus deciding where and at what price companies can sell, it would obviously want to take credit and send that message to farmers.

❖ **A couple of issues are immediately apparent:**

- (1) It will disincentivise fertiliser companies from undertaking marketing and brand promotion activities. They will now be reduced to contract manufacturers and importers for the government. Any company’s strength ultimately is its brands and farmer trust built over decades.
- (2) Currently, in case of any bag or batch of fertilisers not meeting the required standards, the blame is put on the company. But now, that may be passed on fully to the government. Politically, the scheme might well boomerang rather than benefit the ruling party.

3. Nuclear Matrix

- ❖ **CONTEXT:** Using a novel method, a group of researchers has established a way to study the nuclear matrix of the fruit fly (*Drosophila melanogaster*) without removing the nucleus from the embryo.
- Every cell that makes up an organism contains a copy of its genome, which is embedded in the jelly-like nuclear matrix inside the nucleus.
- The nuclear matrix (NM), or nuclear skeleton, is the non-chromatin, ribonucleo-proteinaceous framework that is resistant to high ionic strength buffers, nonionic detergents, and nucleolytic enzymes.
- It fulfils a structural role in eukaryotic cells. It maintains the shape of the nucleus and the spatial organization of chromatin.
- The nuclear matrix is a dynamic material providing access for the regulation of different genes in different cells.
- **Removal** - Using biochemical means, the nucleus is treated with an enzyme that digests the entire DNA, then washed with a solution of high salt concentration so that viable DNA proteins are removed.
- Now what is then left is a fibrous meshwork of proteins called the nuclear matrix.

Packaging of the genome

Different cell types have different functions, and in each the genome is packaged differently

- The usual way to study the nuclear matrix is to take the nucleus out and remove the DNA biochemically

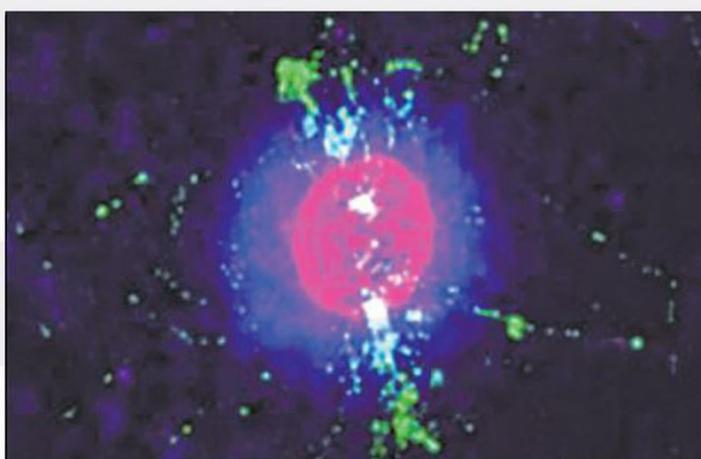
- The nuclear matrix that is left is analogous to a building from which all movables have been sucked out

- The new method treats the nuclei within the embryo itself, known as *in situ* nuclear matrix preparation

- The researchers collect embryos which are between zero and 16 hours old

- Next is the *in situ* nuclear matrix preparation using this entire collection of embryos

- Some are in very early developmental stages and made up of nuclei only, or just making a mono layer of nuclei across the embryos or have gone through differentiation



A *Drosophila* cell showing oozing out of genomic DNA (in blue and green) upon extraction with high salt. After treatment, what stays is the meshwork of nuclear architecture.

- On imaging them, the entire array is made available in one single preparation

- This allows the study of the mitotic waves, stages of cell cycle, early dividing embryos

or late embryogenesis

- This opens the field of *Drosophila* genetics to study nuclear architecture using genetic and cell biology approaches

ANSWER WRITTING

Q. South China Sea has assumed great geopolitical significance in the present context. Comment.

South China Sea is a marginal sea of Pacific Ocean having the area of 3,500,000 square kilometer situated on the south of China. South China Sea has been “apple of discord” between US and China in international affairs for decades. Not only US-China rivalry but also regional countries have been motivated to involve on the territory as it’s one of the lucrative territories in both geopolitical and strategic dynamics. Now, it has become a global issue even small countries are involving vis-à-vis position. Philippine already has gone to Permanent Court of Arbitration against China and the court verdict is in favour of its claim.

Geopolitical significance of South China Sea

- South China Sea is the sea route for 50% global trade. It is the link between the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean. Malacca strait is the economical sea passage of Persian Gulf. Thus it becomes an imp Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOC) for US, China, Japan, Korean Peninsula and East Asian countries.
- It's the territory where a vast number of gas, petroleum and mineral resources are preserved, hence SCS attains strategic place as energy store house, important for both developed and developing countries.
- South China Sea covers 12% of global fish products. China, Philippine, Vietnam etc produce a huge number of fisheries resources.
- There are some other valuable materials like Limonite, Monazite, Zircon, Cassiterite, Arenaceous quartz etc. which are very important raw materials for industries. South China Sea is also rich in salt.

While geopolitics indicates geographical relations with politics, it also has strategic importance. The power politics, military interests have made South China Sea important. The concept of Exclusive Economic Zone could be another conflicting zone between China and its neighbours.

MCQs

1. Consider the following statements:
 1. Aadhaar card can be used as a proof of citizenship or domicile.
 2. Once issued, the Aadhaar number cannot be deactivated or omitted by the Issuing Authority.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) Both 1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2**
2. What are the advantages of fertigation in agriculture?
 1. Controlling the alkalinity of irrigation water is possible.
 2. Efficient application of Rock Phosphate and all other phosphatic fertilizers is possible.
 3. Increased availability of nutrients to plants is possible.
 4. Reduction in the leaching of chemical nutrients is possible.
 Select the correct answer using the code given below:
 - a) 1, 2 and 3 only
 - b) 1, 2 and 4 only
 - c) 1, 3 and 4 only**
 - d) 2, 3 and 4 only
3. Consider the following statements about the genetic materials DNA and RNA:
 1. DNA chemically is less reactive and structurally more stable as compared to RNA.
 2. DNA is better for the transmission of genetic information as compared to RNA.
 3. Both DNA and RNA can mutate.
 Which of the statements given above are correct?
 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 and 3 only
 - c) 1 and 3 only**
 - d) All of the above
4. Consider the following statements:
 1. CRISPR-Cas9 technology enables geneticists and medical researchers to edit parts of the genome.
 2. It is the most versatile and precise method of genetic manipulation.
 Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?
 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) Both 1 and 2**
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2

5. With reference to full court room meeting of Supreme Court consider the following?
1. Full court meetings are called Chief justice as it is mandated by Supreme Court rule, 1966
 2. The senior designations of practising advocates in the Supreme Court and high courts are also decided during the full court meetings
- Which of the above statement/s is/are not correct?
- a) **1 only**
 - b) 2 only
 - c) Both 1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
6. National Sports Day celebrated every year on which of the following year?
- a) 28th August
 - b) **29th August**
 - c) 30th August
 - d) 31st August
7. With reference to PM Jan Dhan Yojna, which was in news recently due to its completion of eight years consider the following statements?
1. Universal access to banking services
 2. Basic savings bank accounts with overdraft facility of Rs. 10,000 to every eligible adult
 3. Financial Literacy Programme
 4. Creation of Credit Guarantee Fund
 5. Insurance
 6. Pension scheme for Unorganized sector
- Which of the above is /are among the pillars based upon the scheme was launched?
- a) 1,3 and 6 only
 - b) 1,2,3 and 4 only
 - c) All except 5 and 6
 - d) **All of the above**
8. Artemis lunar exploration program, recently seen in the news, is an initiative of which among the following?
- a) **NASA**
 - b) ROSCOSMOS
 - c) JAXA
 - d) European Space Agency
9. The United Nations General Assembly has declared which of the following year as the International Year of Millets
- a) **2023**
 - b) 2024
 - c) 2025
 - d) 2022
10. INS Sumedha recently visit to Port Klang, the port belongs to which of the following country?
- a) Philippines
 - b) Myanmar
 - c) **Malaysia**
 - d) Bangladesh
11. Exercise Samudra Lakshmana is a bilateral marine exercise between India and which of the following country?
- a) USA
 - b) **Malaysia**
 - c) Oman
 - d) UAE