

POLITY

❖ **Parliamentary Session**

➤ **CONTEXT:** Recently, the Winter Session of Parliament has begun and will last until December 29. With 25 Bills, including two financial Bills, on the agenda for a 17-day Winter Session of Parliament, opposition parties have expressed concern about the limited time available for meaningful debate on the proposed legislation.

➤ **Winter Session**

- Every year, the winter session of Parliament is held from mid-November to mid-December. It is the shortest session of all.
- It considers matters that could not be considered earlier and compensates for the absence of legislative business during the Parliament's second session.

➤ **Parliamentary Sessions**

- A session of the Indian Parliament is the period during which a House meets almost every day, without interruption, to conduct business. A year is typically divided into three sessions. A session is made up of many meetings.
- The process of summoning all members of Parliament to a meeting is known as Summoning of Parliament. The President summons Parliament.
- The President summons each House of Parliament on a regular basis. The time between two sessions of the Parliament cannot exceed six months, implying that the Parliament meets at least twice a year.
- In general, the sessions are as follows:
 - ✓ Budget session (February to May)
 - ✓ Monsoon session (July to September)
 - ✓ Winter session (November to December)

➤ **Issues regarding productivity of Parliamentary Sessions**

- Last year, with a productivity of only 21%, the Monsoon Session was the third least productive Lok Sabha session in the recent two decades.
- The Government and Opposition parties could not agree on the themes to be debated, causing frequent disruptions in both Houses.
- The worst session in terms of productivity for both Houses since 1999 was the Winter Session of 2010. Rajya Sabha productivity dropped to 2% during that session, while Lok Sabha did marginally better at 6%.
- In terms of productivity, the Winter Sessions of 2013 and 2016 were the second worst for the Lok Sabha.
- Parliamentary working hours are being reduced on a daily basis. When a contentious issue arises, the government hesitates to debate it, resulting in Opposition MPs violating the conduct rules and disrupting Parliamentary proceedings.
- The majority of the bills were passed without any scrutiny because they were introduced and passed in the same session.
- Parliamentary debate is a manifestation of a representative type of democracy in operation, in the sense that the people's representation directly questions the government on matters of governance.

➤ **Concern regarding less time**

- During an all-party meeting, the opposition pointed out that there would be even less time to raise any other relevant issues.
- The Winter Session of Parliament begins on Wednesday and will last until December 29.
- The meeting is called before each session to discuss the legislative agenda.
- Most parties chastised the government for rushing through debates on major legislation.
- Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, the party's floor leader, also expressed concern about the government's failure to follow through on the agreements reached at the all-party meeting held during the session.

➤ **Deliberation on EC appointment**

- The party has also demanded a debate on the appointment of former IAS officer Arun Goel as Election Commissioner, citing the Supreme Court's rebuke last month regarding the "tearing hurry" with which he was appointed.
- The party has also demanded a discussion on the 10% reservation for economically disadvantaged sections.
- The Congress initially welcomed the Supreme Court decision on quotas, but later changed its position in response to strong opposition from allies such as Dravida Munnetra Kazhgam.

➤ **Role of the Parliament**

- Parliament is the most important symbol of Indian democracy. Parliament enables citizens to participate in decision-making and hold the government accountable by summoning the House and calling MPs to participate in legislative and other business through discussion, debates, committee dispensations, and other mechanisms.
- Standing Committees are a microcosm of Parliament. They were designed to examine the technical details of bills referred to them, leaving the House to consider broader policy issues.

- The government should not forget that the committee system has stood the test of time. Not referring bills to committees and passing them without proper debate is a direct assault on the foundation of our democracy.
- **Why is it necessary to refer bills to parliamentary committees?**
- Parliamentary committees allow legislators to interact with experts, stakeholders, and government officials to better understand the ramifications of bills.
- They discuss the implications of various provisions and provide recommendations for changes.
- Bills referred to them have fallen sharply in recent years. Unfortunately, far fewer bills are now referred to committees. Approximately 27% of bills were referred to committees during this government's first term (2014-19).
- According to data on the Lok Sabha website, less than 10% of bills in the 17th Lok Sabha were referred to committees, compared to 71% in the 15th Lok Sabha under the UPA-II government.
- **The impasse over appointment of judges**
- **CONTEXT: Recently, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar commented on the on-going heated debate between the Central government and the Supreme Court over the matter of judicial appointments. Referring to the 2015 verdict of the SC which struck down the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) and the 99th Amendment, Mr. Dhankhar asked how the judiciary could have run down a unanimously-passed constitutional provision which reflected “the will of people”.**
- **What was the NJAC?**
- In August 2014, Parliament passed the Constitution (99th Amendment) Act, along with the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act, which together provided for the creation of an independent commission to appoint judges to the Supreme Court (SC) and High Courts (HC). This commission was to replace the collegium system.
- The two Bills were ratified by the required number of State Legislatures and got the President's assent on December 31, 2014.
- Articles 124 and 217 of the Constitution deal with the appointment of judges to the SC and HCs of the country. Article 124(2) states “every Judge of the Supreme Court shall be appointed by the President” after “consultation” with the judges of the SC and the HCs.
- While the collegium system itself does not figure in the Constitution, its legal basis is found in three SC judgments — usually referred to as the ‘Judges Cases’.
- In order to replace this system which received criticism over the years for its lack of transparency, among other provisions, the Constitution (99th Amendment) Act, introduced three primary Articles.
- Article 124A which created the NJAC, a constitutional body to replace the collegium system, Article 124B which conferred the NJAC with the power to make appointments to Courts and Article 124C which accorded express authority to Parliament to make laws regulating the manner of the NJAC's functioning.
- Under the NJAC Act, the Chief Justice of India and Chief Justices of the HCs were to be recommended by the NJAC on seniority while SC and HC judges were to be recommended on the basis of ability, merit, and “other criteria specified in the regulations”. Notably, the Act empowered any two members of the NJAC to veto a recommendation if they did not agree with it. In the collegium system, senior-most judges make appointments to the higher judiciary.
- **Why was the NJAC challenged?**
- In early 2015, the Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association (SCAORA) filed a plea challenging the provisions which had by then become laws.
- The SCAORA contended in its petition that both the Acts were “unconstitutional” and “invalid”. It argued that the 99th Amendment which provided for the creation of the NJAC took away the “primacy of the collective opinion of the Chief Justice of India and the two senior-most Judges of the Supreme Court of India” as their collective recommendation could be vetoed or “suspended by majority of three non-Judge members”. It invoked the Second Judges Case to say that CJI primacy had to be protected.
- It also stated that the amendment “severely” damaged the basic structure of the Constitution, of which the independence of the judiciary in appointing judges was an integral part. The Second Judges Case of 1993 emphasised the role of the CJI in appointing judges to SC and HCs. “The role of the CJI is primal in nature because this being a topic within the judicial family, the Executive cannot have an equal say in the matter,” .
- The “basic structure” doctrine meanwhile refers to the idea that the Constitution could not be amended or read in a manner that destroyed the document's basic structure.
- **What were the arguments between the Centre and the Supreme Court?**
- Former Attorney-General Mukul Rohatgi, for the Union government, had argued in court that the Second Judges case, invoked by the petitioners was not valid in the case of the NJAC as the “very basis” of the ruling was now gone.
- The Centre also argued that the Act in no way took away the primacy of the judiciary but in fact, diluted the power of the executive as only one member, the Law Minister, was in the NJAC as opposed to three SC judges. It also said that the amendment was “perfectly consonant” with the basic structure as it strengthened the “independence of the judiciary, checks and balances and democracy”.

- Solicitor-General Ranjit Kumar further argued that the collegium was a “failure” and worked on a system of “intra-dependence”, where there was “no transparency”.
- In October 2015, the five-judge bench of the top court hearing SCAORA’s plea gave its ruling, with a 4:1 majority, that the NJAC was “unconstitutional” and violated the “basic structure of the constitution”. Significantly, the Bench admitted that all was not well even with the collegium system of “judges appointing judges”, and that the time was ripe to improve the system of judicial appointments.
- **The debate around conjugal visits for prisoners**
- **CONTEXT: The State of Punjab has furthered the cause of right to life and personal liberty of prisoners by allowing conjugal visits for inmates. It is expected that this initiative will lead to strengthening of matrimonial bonds and also ensure good conduct of prisoners.**
- **What are conjugal rights?**
 - Conjugal rights are rights created by marriage, that is, the right of the husband or the wife to the company of their spouse.
 - In the context of prisons, however, conjugal visits refer to the concept of allowing a prisoner to spend some time in privacy with his spouse within the precincts of a jail.
 - It is often argued that conjugal visits can have positive impacts in the form of psychological health benefits for prisoners, preservation of marital ties and, reduction in the rates of homosexuality and sexual aggression within prisons.
 - It is also argued that conjugal visits are a fundamental right of the spouses of the prisoners. Prisoner rights are internationally recognised through the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights etc. Through such instruments, prisoners are guaranteed the right to life and inherent dignity. The right to maintain family relations including conjugal visits are included in these treaties.
 - Most prison Acts and Rules across the country accept the importance of maintenance of continuity in family and social relations.
- **What are the judicial views?**
 - In the case of Sunil Batra vs Delhi Administration (1979, SC), Justice observed that “visit to prisoners by family and friends are solace in isolation: and only a dehumanised system can derive vicarious delight in depriving prison inmates of this humane amenity.”
 - On the specific question of conjugal rights of prisoners, however, High Courts have differed in their rulings. In the case of Jasvir Singh vs State of Punjab, a couple convicted of murder and on death row made a petition to the court to enforce their right to procreate.
 - The primary question before the law was whether the right to conjugality and procreation is a part of the right to life. The High Court held that this right to conjugality is available to prisoners under Article 21, subject to restrictions.
 - In the case of Meharaj vs State (2022), the Madras HC while considering the question of whether conjugal rights form part of the right to life and personal liberty guaranteed by Article 21, observed that there have to be differential standards in enforcement of Article 21 for law abiders and law violators.
 - The Court observed that even though conjugal visits could not be held as a fundamental right, the prisoner would still be eligible to avail leave for conjugal visits if there are ‘extraordinary reasons’ such as ‘infertility treatments.’
- **What is going to be the Punjab model?**
 - The State guidelines clarify that conjugal visits are a matter of privilege rather than a right. It has been notified that the average time for conjugal visits shall be two hours, allowed once every two months.
 - The visiting spouse will have to furnish a proof of marriage and medical certificates declaring that he or she is free from HIV or any other sexually transmitted disease, COVID-19 or any other infectious disease.
 - Such a facility will not be extended to high risk prisoners, terrorists, child abuse and sexual offenders, death row convicts, prisoners who suffer from HIV etc.

PRELIMS

1. One District One Product(ODOP)

➤ **CONTEXT: ODOP operationally merge with District as expert hub initiative**

- One District One Product (ODOP) is an initiative which is seen as a transformational step forward towards realizing the true potential of a district, fuel economic growth and generate employment and rural entrepreneurship, taking us to the goal of AtmaNirbhar Bharat.
- One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is operationally merged with ‘Districts as Export Hub’ initiative being implemented by DGFT, Department of Commerce, with Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) as a major stakeholder.
- This scheme is basically a Japanese business development concept, which gained prominence in 1979. It is aimed at promoting a competitive and staple product from a specific area to push sales and improve the standard of living of the local population. Over time, it has been replicated in other Asian countries as well.

- One District One Product (ODOP) scheme was initiated in 2018 with a budget of Rs.25,000 crores, by the Government of Uttar Pradesh to revive the indigenous art form by providing financial and marketing support.
- ODOP support the art producers by expanding the industrial world to recreate the lost productive manufacturing and creative process.

➤ **Objectives of the Scheme:**

- To address and resolve the economic and regional imbalance among the art producers' community
- To safeguard the traditional knowledge of production and creativity in manufacturing art and craft products
- Create additional MSME sectors in all districts of Uttar Pradesh to increase local art production
- Increase the quality and quantity of local craft production through manufacturing sectors
- Provide a stable marketing platform to improve income, local employment, skills and livelihood
- Develop a common marketing platform between ODOP and tourism sector for live demo sessions and promote the ODOP products as gifts and souvenirs
- Create a marketing platform to promote, design packaging and establishing a brand to increase production and income.

➤ **Component under the ODOP Scheme:**

- Common Facility Centre (CFC) Scheme: This scheme would provide financial assistance of up to 90 per cent of the project cost. It is provided by the state government.
- Marketing Development Assistance Scheme: The financial assistance would be provided to all participants of national and international exhibitions and fairs. They can use it for displaying and selling their products selected under ODOP programme.
- Finance Assistance Scheme (Margin Money Scheme): This scheme benefits with not whole but a margin of the project cost. The applicants receive it in the form of subsidy to set up the project.
- Skill Development Scheme: In this, all skilled artisans would be trained through RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning). They would be certified through various Sector Skill Councils, SSCs, whereas the unskilled artisans would be trained for 10 days and provided with an advanced toolkit which will be free of cost

2. **"Nai Roshni" scheme**

➤ **CONTEXT: Since inception, about 4.35 lakh beneficiaries have been trained under the 'Nai Roshni' scheme.**

➤ **Objectives**

- It is a welfare scheme introduced by the Government to improve the knowledge of minority women.
- Through this scheme, the Government aims to teach minority women some basic techniques and give them tools that would help them to make use of government banks and other schemes.
- The main target of the government is to fight against poverty through this scheme.
- This scheme also empowers minority women to stand and fight for their rights.
- It consists of several training modules like Women Leadership, Educational Programmes, Health and Hygiene, Swachh Bharat, Financial Literacy, Life Skills, Legal Rights of Women, Digital literacy, and Advocacy for Social and behavioral change.

➤ **Target Groups:** Includes women belonging to all minorities under Section 2 of the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992 viz. Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, and Jains. This scheme also allows a mix of women from non-minority groups not exceeding 25% of a project proposal.

➤ **Eligible Organizations**

- The organization should have experience and resources to conduct training in recognized Government training institutes or in their own institute. It is necessary that these organizations have manpower and resources to carry out programs in villages/localities.

Organizations eligible for applying for financial assistance under this scheme are:-

- ✓ Only the Societies registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- ✓ Any public trust which is registered under any law for ages.
- ✓ Private non-profit companies registered under section 25 of the Indian Companies Act, 1956.
- ✓ Universities/ Institutions of higher education recognized by the University Grants Commission (UGC)
- ✓ The Panchayati Raj Training institutes are administered by any state government or Union Territory.
- ✓ Cooperative societies of women/ Self Help Groups which are registered.

➤ **Implementation**

- The leadership development training scheme is to be implemented by the Ministry of Minority Affairs through the selected organization's
- The selected organizations should implement the project directly through their organizational set-up in the locality/village/area.

➤ **NITI Aayog Survey**

- According to the survey done by NITI Aayog, this program was appreciated by the majority of the groups of the population and it helped in raising confidence among minority women and enriching the leadership qualities in them. 15 districts, 30 blocks, 87 villages, 27 NGOs spread over 8 states namely Assam, West Bengal, Punjab,

Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. This survey was conducted to know the drawbacks of implementing this scheme.

3. Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Yojana(RGSA)

➤ **CONTEXT:** Under RGSA scheme, funds to the tune of Rs. 1,538.32 crore has been released to States/ UTs during the last three years which includes construction of 7,972 Panchayat Bhawans and procurement of 16,407 number of computers and peripherals.

- To develop and strengthen the capacity of Panchayati Raj Institutions for the making the rural governance more responsive towards local government needs and for optimum use of the resources towards the Sustainable Development goal-related issues, Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Yojana (RGSA) was announced in budget 2016-17.
- RGPSA scheme was modified into the RGSA scheme to strengthen the Panchayati Raj system. The main motto of RSSA is to develop the rural areas which will lead towards the overall development of the country. The total budget of the Scheme is which will be sponsored by both under Central and State level Government of India.

➤ **Objectives of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Yojana**

- To strengthen the capacity building of the elected members of the Panchayati Raj System.
- To create opportunities for knowledge creation under the Panchayat System.
- For effective Gram Sabhas functions like people participation, transparency, and accountability under the Panchayat System.
- The Panchayats were formed under various frameworks whose effectiveness decreased over the years. To strengthen such mandated frameworks RGSA was initiated.
- To promote the powers and responsibilities of the Panchayats for the rural development of India.

➤ **Implementation**

- The Panchayats are given many powers by the State and the Central Government for the rural development of India. Many training centers are also formed under the Panchayats for the knowledge and training of the people.
- The center assisted the State Government to promote the RGSA Scheme so that the objectives under the Gram Panchayats can be fulfilled.
- The members of the Gram Panchayats will be selected through elections for administrative purposes who will be further assisted by the State Government to arrange the training and skill centers. The centers will have regular classes along with distant learning programs for the elected members of the Panchayats.
- The State will fund 25% of the Scheme whereas the Central level will fund 75% of the Scheme. The Non-Government organizations will receive 100% assistance from the Central level. But for the capital expenditure, if the Central Government provides any assistance, it will not be taken into consideration.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. Discuss the multi-dimensional implications of uneven distribution of mineral oil in the world.

Petroleum is not distributed evenly around the world. Slightly less than half of the world's proven reserves are located in the Middle East (including Iran but not North Africa). Following the Middle East are Canada and the United States, Latin America, Africa, and the region made up of Russia, Kazakhstan, and other countries that were once part of the Soviet Union.

This uneven distribution of mineral oil across the globe has many multi-dimensional implications.

- **Economic:** Uneven distribution of the mineral oil across the world, affects the balance of trade between the importing and the exporting countries. This in turn affects the foreign exchange reserves of the country. It also leads to economic consequences like inflation, for the importing country.
- **Political:** Many historical and present-day conflicts involve nations trying to control resource-rich territories. For example, the desire for diamond and oil resources has been the root of many armed conflicts in Africa. USA's interference in the geopolitics of West Asia is also one of the reasons for uneven distribution of oil minerals.
- **Employment & Migration:** Availability of oil reserves leads to more job opportunities in the Middle east. That is the reason why India has a large diaspora in the middle east.
- **Uneven Growth:** Uneven distribution of mineral oil has also led to uneven growth across the globe. Rise in import prices directly hamper the capabilities of the government to spend on welfare objectives.
- **Energy Security:** The uneven distribution of the mineral oil resource is the reason for energy insecurity in the oil deficient countries. It also directly affects their strategic autonomy.

The uneven distribution of the mineral oil resources leads to various implications ranging from economic to energy security. This highlights the need for India to diversify its energy basket both in terms of content and geography.

MCQs

1. Who is benefited from the Nai Roshni Scheme
 1. Women and children from all communities
 2. Only children from minority communities
 3. Only Women from minority communities
 4. Citizens from all minority communities

Choose from the options given below:

- a) 1 and 2 are correct

- b) 2 and 3 are correct
 c) **Only 3 is correct**
 d) 1, 2 and 4 are correct
2. Consider the following statements about Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Yojana (RGSA).
1. It was proposed in budget 2016-17
 2. It focuses on the economic development of the overall nation.
 3. The Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Yojana (RGSA) is funded by only the Central Government.
 4. It is implemented to strengthen the capacity building of the Panchayat System for rural development of India.
- Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?
 a) 1 only **b) 1 and 4 only** c) 1 and 3 only d) All the statements are correct.
3. With reference to the One District One Product scheme (ODOP), consider the following statements:
1. It was launched by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries.
 2. One District One Product (ODOP) scheme was initiated in 2022-23 budget
 3. This initiative is carried out with the 'Districts as Exports Hub' initiative by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), Department of Commerce.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 a) 1 and 2 only b) 2 and 3 only c) 3 only **d) 1 and 3 only**
4. Consider the following statements:
1. The 44th Amendment to the Constitution of India introduced an Article placing the election of the Prime Minister beyond judicial review.
 2. The Supreme Court of India struck down the 99th Amendment to the Constitution of India as being violative of the independence of judiciary.
- Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?
 a) 1 only **b) 2 only** c) Both 1 and 2 d) Neither 1 nor 2
5. The winter session of parliament started recently, consider the following statements regarding the Sessions of Parliament in India.
1. India does have a fixed parliamentary calendar and meets for three sessions in a year.
 2. Usually, the Budget session has the longest period.
 3. The summoning of Parliament is based on the Government of India Act's provisions, 1935.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
 a) 1, 2 only b) 1, 3 only **c) 2, 3 only** d) 2 only
6. Recently conjugal rights often mentioned in news, which of the following statements describes conjugal rights?
- a) These are rights vested to the properties of Hindu Undivided Family.
 - b) These are rights related to armed forces to form union.
 - c) These are economic rights of shareholders while the firm faces insolvency.
 - d) These are rights created by marriage, i.e. right of the husband or the wife to the society of the other spouse.**
7. To evaluate the implementation of National Food Security Act (NFSA) and TPDS operations in the country, State Ranking Index released recently, with reference to this consider the following statements
1. Ministry of consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution released this Index
 2. Odisha has got the first rank in the State Ranking Index with the score of 0.836.
- Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?
 a) 1 only b) 2 only **c) Both 1 and 2** d) Neither 1 nor 2
8. Which of the following initiative/s is/are related to women and children?
1. Saksham Anganwadi
 2. Poshan 2.0
 3. Mission Shakti
 4. Mission Vatsalya.
- Choose the correct answer using the codes given below
 a) 1 and 2 only b) 2 and 3 only c) 2 and 4 only **d) 1,2,3 and 4**
9. With reference to National Food Security Act (NFSA), consider the following statements
1. Foodgrains under NFSA are made available to beneficiaries free of cost.
 2. NFSA caters to the food demands of the families under Below Poverty Line (BPL) only.
- Select the correct statement.
 a) 1 only b) 2 only c) Both 1 and 2 **d) Neither 1 nor 2**
10. Global Wage Report was in news recently, it is released by
- a) World Economic Forum
 - b) International labor Organisation**
 - c) World Bank
 - d) United Nations Conference on Trade and Development