

GOVERNANCE

❖ **Remote voting for migrant workers**

➤ **CONTEXT:** Recently, the Election Commission (EC) announced that it is ready to pilot remote voting for domestic migrants.

➤ **About:**

- EC has developed a prototype for a Multi-Constituency Remote Electronic Voting Machine (RVM) that can handle multiple constituencies from a single remote polling booth.
- It is based on the currently used EVM system.
- The VVPAT system is expected to work along the same lines with the new technology.
- The RVM is developed with the assistance of Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and the Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL).

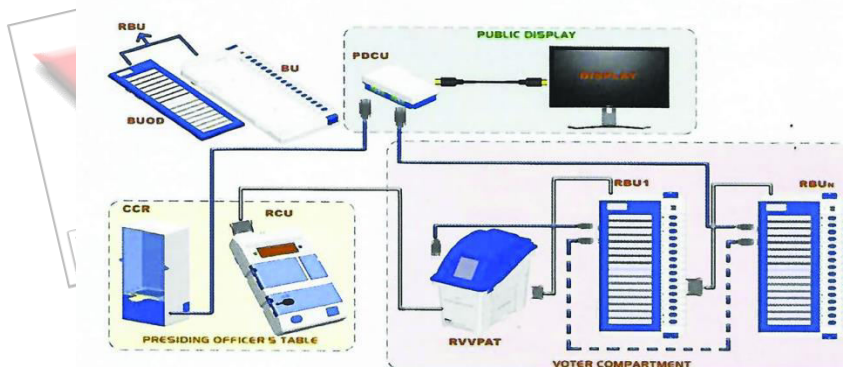
➤ **functioning:**

- The RVMs are stand alone, non-networked systems, which will effectively be providing the voter the same experience as currently used EVMs.
- They will be set up in remote locations outside the state under similar conditions as current polling booths.
- The unique feature of RVMs is that a single Remote Ballot Unit (RBU) will be able to cater to multiple constituencies (as many as 72) by using a “dynamic ballot display board” instead of the usual printed paper ballot sheet on EVMs.
- The Ballot Unit Overlay Display (BUOD) will show the requisite candidates based on the constituency number read on the voter’s Constituency card.
- A barcode scanning system will be used to read these cards.

➤ **The voting process:**

- After verifying a voter’s identity, their constituency card will be read with a public display showing the constituency details and candidates.
- This will also be displayed privately, on the BUOD in the RVM’s RBU.
- The voter will then vote and each vote will be stored constituency-wise in the control unit of the voting machine.

Block diagram of RVM:



➤ **Significance:**

- Pilot remote voting for domestic migrants, so they don't have to travel back to their home states to vote.
- This comes on the back of EC's acknowledgement of migration-based disenfranchisement.
- EC hopes that through this move, it will be able to boost voter turnout and strengthen India's democratic process.

➤ **The issue of deprivation from right to vote and Election commission's "No voter left behind" goal.**

- As per the 2011 census (the numbers will have risen since then), there are nearly 45.36 crore migrants in India (both intra and inter state) – amounting to approximately 37 per cent of the country's population.
- So Voters who are absent from their home locations on the day of polling, even if they wish to vote, are unable to travel to vote due to various reasons. This means that there is a large chunk of the population that is denied its franchise due to exigencies of work or lack of resources to travel. This goes directly against the EC's "No voter left behind" goal.

➤ **Election Commission's Committee:**

- EC had formed a "Committee of Officers on Domestic Migrants".
- The committee submitted a report in late 2016 after considering various possible solutions such as internet voting, proxy voting, early voting and postal ballots for migrant workers. However, all of these ideas were rejected due to reasons such as lack of secrecy of the vote, lack of sanctity of one person one vote principle, issues of accessibility for unlettered voters, etc.

- Thus, a technological solution was proposed (RVM) which relies on the creation of a robust electoral roll and identification mechanisms (to stop duplicate voting), and allow voters to vote remotely, in a safe and controlled environment.
- The constitutional provision or Article 326 provides elections to the House of the People and to the Legislative Assembly of every State shall be on the basis of adult suffrage. Every citizen of India not less than eighteen years of age on such date as may be fixed in that behalf by law and is not otherwise disqualified and shall be entitled to be registered as a voter at any such election. So the Remote Voting can help move closer toward success of this provision.

➤ **Challenges**

- Migrants are not a uniform and defined class, with fluid identities, locations and situations.
- In the context of the transience of migration in India, the problem for the EC is to create an inclusive definition of migrants which at the same time does not open the system up to misuse.
- EC has yet neither decided upon the eligibility of migrant voters nor the duration that a migrant has to stay outside the home to qualify.
- In the context of increasing questions being asked about technology-based voting, how do RVMs enter the conversation?
- As various countries reject EVMs for paper-based ballots, this move has the potential to raise further questions on the sanctity of the electoral process itself.
- While the EC claims that RVMs are as secure as currently used EVMs, more technological components are bound to raise further questions.
- Remote voting may theoretically provide an added edge to bigger parties and richer candidates who can campaign across the constituency and beyond.

❖ **A Failed Attempt At Decriminalization**

➤ **CONTEXT: Recently, the Union Government tabled the Jan Vishwas Bill, 2022, (Bill) in Parliament to "decriminalize" 183 offenses across 42 legislations across 19 ministries and enhance the ease of living and business in India.**

- The introduced Bill has been referred to a 31-member joint committee of Parliament for scrutiny.

➤ **What is Jan Vishwas Bill?**

- The Jan Vishwas Bill either omits penal provisions or replaces them with fines in legislations such as the Air Act, Environment Protection Act, Forest Act, Drugs and Cosmetics Acts, Cinematograph Act, Patents Act, Trade Marks Act and Information Technology Act amongst several others.
- Most of these offenses are of a regulatory character.
- The bill seeks to decriminalize minor offenses to promote ease of business.
- The bill also proposed that the fines and penalties provided under various provisions should be increased by 10 per cent of the minimum amount of fine or penalty after the expiry of every three years after the bill turns into a law.

➤ **Scope of the bill**

- According to the government, the Bill has been introduced to do rid of the burden of outdated rules that have a negative impact on the trajectory of development as well as to make life and conducting business easier.
- The bill implements a process that is called "quasi-decriminalization."
- A fine carries a sense of stigma and disgrace.
- Our legislative frameworks regularly apply these aspects of stigma and censure to regulatory realms, diluting this functional distinction.
- A total of 843 economic laws, rules, and regulations that aim to control enterprises and economic activity in India contain more than 26,134 jail clauses, according to the Jailed for Doing Business report by the Observer Research Foundation.

➤ **Consequences of overcriminalization**

- Criminal law's unrestrained expansion has long been a source of worry for legal scholars.
- **Political tool:** Such expansion is demonstrated by the fact that criminal law is regularly utilized as a political instrument; criminalization frequently serves as a means for governments to project a powerful image rather than penalize wrongdoing. Scholars have referred to this issue as "overcriminalization."
- **A large number of pending cases:** The effects are almost immediately felt. According to the National Judicial Data Grid, nearly 3.2 crores of the 4.3 crore cases that are still waiting are connected to criminal procedures.
- It is cliché to claim that there are more criminal laws and more criminal cases pending as a direct result.
- **Prison population:** In a similar vein, the growing prison population is evidence of overcriminalization.
- According to the National Crime Records Bureau's 2021 Prison Statistics, 5.54 lakh inmates were housed in jails, compared to a 4.25 lakh capacity.

➤ **Steps to be taken**

- The number of offenses deregulated by the Bill appears to be a tiny fraction of India's regulatory landscape.
- It is important to prioritize the regulatory offenses that should be "decriminalized" not just from the standpoint of business convenience but also from the standpoint of the problems that our criminal justice system faces.
- Finally, the Bill complies with the government's belief that decriminalization should only apply to regulatory areas. However, the opportunity has come to also pay attention to current criminal offenses.
- There is continuing discussion over the decriminalization of a number of criminal offenses, including sedition, offenses under the NDPS Act and UAPA Acts, triple talaq, and prohibitions against conversion, among others.
- A principle-based evaluation of these offenses is urgently required.

➤ **Way Forward**

- Examining Bill's provisions generally demonstrates the emphasis has been on replacing jail terms with penalties. It is difficult to consider this "decriminalization."
- The activities intended for decriminalization must meet many requirements to succeed.
- It is important that a more thorough investigation be conducted and that the government gives the needs and demands of the criminal justice system top priority if these flaws are to be fixed.
- It is a positive step and can be seen as an effort to buck the overcriminalization trend. However, there is still much to be done in order to institutionalize decriminalization efforts.

PRELIMS

1. Study shows butterflies bedazzle predators and escape

➤ **CONTEXT:** In a five-year study, scientists of the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) in Bengaluru have discovered secrets of a long evolutionary game through which butterflies come to warn, fool, and escape their predators using traits such as wing colour patterns and even flight behaviour.

- The study conducted by Ph.D. students has investigated the butterfly mimetic communities of the Western Ghats.
- According to the study, which was conducted between 2017 and 2022, mimicry is an adaptive phenomenon, and in mimicry, a palatable organism resembles an unpalatable organism to deceive predators.
- The unpalatable one is called models (Müllerian co-models) and the palatable one is called mimics (Batesian mimics).
- Interestingly, mimicry in butterflies is not limited to the resemblance in wing colour patterns alone, as some mimics have also evolved to imitate the flight behaviours of model species.
- In nature, multiple model and mimic butterflies could be found in the same habitat at the same time.
- These similar-looking co-occurring butterflies together form a mimetic community. They added that these mimetic communities are generally common in tropical and sub-tropical biodiversity hotspots.
- The research team in order to find out how these two mimetic traits (wing colour patterns and flight morphology) evolve over time, investigated the butterfly mimetic communities of the Western Ghats.
- The study shed light on how the rate of trait evolution helps butterflies to escape their predators.
- The findings can be carried forward to investigate whether the rate of trait evolution is similar in young communities, such as in the Western Ghats versus large, old communities in Northeast India, Southeast Asia and the neotropics.
- Researchers suspect that the evolutionary dynamics of functional traits depend heavily on the age, size and complexity of the biological communities.
- In this study, for the first time, evolution of multiple traits was examined in a biological community, especially in a biodiversity hotspot of the Indian subcontinent.

2. Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)

➤ **CONTEXT:** Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel Cabinet approved that it would give government employees the option to choose between the old pension scheme (OPS) and the New Pension Scheme (NPS). Mr. Baghel has in the past written to the PM Narendra Modi, asking him to issue a directive to the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) to this effect.

➤ **Background**

- Based on the OASIS (Old Age Social and Income Security) report, the government decided to switch from a defined benefit to a defined contribution pension system for all new Central/State Government employees except those in the armed forces.
- Accordingly, IPRDA – Interim pension fund regulatory and development Authority bill was passed by the Union parliament in February 2003, which established IPRDA to promote, develop, and regulate pension system in India.
- IPRDA was passed in order to have a system in place till the final and fool-proof system is prepared, re-approved, and implemented with the acceptance of all political parties including the opposition parties.

- And the final system, the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), was constituted with the President's approval on September 19, 2013, and became a permanent Act.
- PFRDA was guarded by the President until Financial Year (FY) 2014-15, after which it became totally autonomous and operated autonomously.

➤ **PFRDA And Its Functions**

- The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) is a legislative body created by Parliament to regulate, promote, and maintain the orderly expansion of the National Pension System (NPS) and pension schemes covered by this Act.
- It is a central autonomous body that functions as a quasi-government organisation with executive, legislative, and judicial powers similar to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA), and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI).
- PFRDA administers and regulates the National Pension System (NPS) and also administers Atal Pension Yojana.
- It is responsible for appointing numerous intermediary agencies, such as Pension Fund Managers and the Central Record Keeping Agency (CRA), among others.
- Under the NPS, it develops, promotes, and supervises the pension industry, as well as administering the APY.

3. Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs)

➤ **CONTEXT: India and Saudi Arabia are in talks to sign a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) to obtain formal assistance from each other in investigations related to criminal cases.**

- Saudi Arabia is only among a dozen other countries that does not have either an MLAT or any other bilateral agreement with India to facilitate such investigations.
- India has so far signed MLATs with 45 countries, and is also in talks to finalise MLATs with Italy and Germany.
- On November 7, 2022, India held the first virtual negotiation meeting with Saudi Arabia to sign the treaty.
- In the past, Saudi Arabia has deported several terror suspects on India's request.
- The signing of the treaty would help in getting a conviction for an accused in a court of law, based on evidence gathered through the mutual agreement.

➤ **About**

- A mechanism whereby countries cooperate with one another in order to provide and obtain formal assistance in prevention, suppression, investigation and prosecution of crime to ensure that the criminals do not escape or sabotage the due process of law for want of evidence available in different countries.
- The MLATs in criminal matters are the bilateral treaties entered between the countries for providing international cooperation and assistance.
- These agreements allow for the exchange of evidence and information in criminal and related matters between the signing countries.

➤ **Benefits**

- It enhances the effectiveness of participating countries in the investigation and prosecution of crime, through cooperation and mutual legal assistance.
- It will provide a broad legal framework for tracing, restraint and confiscation of proceeds and instruments of crime as well as the funds meant to finance terrorist acts.
- It will be instrumental in gaining better inputs and insights in the modus operandi of organized criminals and terrorists.
- These in turn can be used to fine-tune policy decisions in the field of internal security.

➤ **Enforcement of MLATs in India**

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is the nodal Ministry and the Central authority for seeking and providing mutual legal assistance in criminal law matters.
- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) may be involved in this process when such requests are routed through diplomatic channels by these Ministries.
- Section 105 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) speaks of reciprocal arrangements to be made by the Centre with the Foreign Governments
- According to the Home Ministry, in countries which are not covered by any bilateral agreement or international convention, the summons, notices and judicial processes are served on the basis of an "assurance of reciprocity".

ANSWER WRITING

Q. Discuss the concept of seven sins of MK Gandhi. How are they relevant today?

MK Gandhi, an epitome of honesty, integrity and other moral virtues continues to guide our society and the whole world towards ethical conduct. His concept of seven sins is a testimony of his moral beliefs and ethical values.

Following are the seven sins of Gandhi ji;

- ✓ Wealth without work,
- ✓ Pleasure without conscience,
- ✓ Science without humanity,
- ✓ Knowledge without character,
- ✓ Politics without principle,
- ✓ Commerce without morality,
- ✓ Worship without sacrifice.

Relevance and need in present times;

Presently, individuals, societies and countries are facing multiple challenges owing to deteriorating ethical and moral fabrics. Consciousness and acknowledgement of these sins can cause moral awakening and can address all the existing evils of society and the world.

For example;

- The increasing trend of corruption, economic exploitation of labor, extreme inequality among other things can be arrested by adopting moral modes of wealth creation.
- The evils against democratic societies in the form of communalism, regionalism and criminalisation of politics can be addressed if politicians adhere to moral and ethical principles.
- Building strong moral characters along with working competence can sharpen the constructive edge of double edged swords of science, technology and education. Where it will reduce unethical and immoral use to science and technology in terrorism, naxalism and separatism.
- Unmindful utilization of natural resources has led to climate crises and issues of inter and intra-generational equity issues. Adoption of commerce with morality will certainly promote mindful production and responsible consumption patterns.

Thus, the seven sins were and presently are the guiding lights for all of us. Let's all heed to the voice of Mk Gandhi through these teachings and give up all forms of sins for common good.

MCQs

1. Due to some reasons, if there is a huge fall in the population of species of butterflies, what could be it likely consequences/consequences?
 1. Pollination of some plants could be adversely affected.
 2. There could be a drastic increase in the fungal infections of some cultivated plants.
 3. It could lead to a fall in the population of some species of wasps, spiders and birds.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) **1 and 3 only**
- d) 1, 2 and 3

2. Consider the following statements about PFRDA

1. Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) is the statutory authority established by an enactment of the Parliament.
2. It functions under the administrative control of RBI

Select the correct statement/s using the code given below

- a) **1 only**
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 and 2

3. With reference to the Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, consider the following statements:

1. It allows for the exchange of evidence and information in criminal matters between the signing countries.
2. The Ministry of External Affairs is the nodal Ministry for seeking and providing mutual legal assistance in criminal law matters.
3. Recently India has entered into a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty with UAE.

Which of the above statement/s is/are not correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) **2 and 3 only**
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

4. With reference to, Jan Vishwas Bill, consider the following statements:

1. Bill has been introduced to do rid of the burden of outdated rules that have a negative impact on the trajectory of development.
2. The bill seeks to recriminalize minor offenses to promote ease of business.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) **1 only**
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

5. Consider the following statements:

1. Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) are used in elections by the Election Commission by invoking its Constitutional powers under Article 324
2. The 'Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail' refers to an EVM accessory that records every voter id and his/her vote on a slip of paper, for the purpose of verification in the event a dispute arises

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**

6. Recently mudumalai tiger reserve is in news due to sigur corridor anomaly, Consider the following statements about Mudumalai Tiger Reserve:

1. It is located at the tri-junction of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
2. It is a part of Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.

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

7. Recently core sector output rises 5.4% in uneven recovery, with reference to this news, consider the following

1. Crude Oil
2. Electricity
3. Natural Gas
4. Refinery Products

Arrange the above core sector industries according to their decrease order of their weightage

- a) 1-2-3-4
- b) **4-2-1-3**
- c) 2-3-4-1
- d) 3-1-4-2

8. PRASHAST Mobile App, recently seen in news and has been developed to screening 21 disability conditions recognized in RPwD Act, 2016, developed by?

- a) CSIR
- b) DRDO, IIT Bhubaneswar
- c) ISRO, IIT Madras
- d) **CIET, NCERT**

9. Consider the following statements regarding Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana:

1. It is a small deposit scheme for girl child launched under "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" Scheme.
2. It is only for girls below age of 18 years.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) **1 only**
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

10. What is blue carbon?

- a) **Carbon captured by oceans and coastal ecosystems**
- b) Carbon sequestered in forest biomass and agricultural soils
- c) Carbon contained in petroleum and natural gas
- d) Carbon present in atmosphere