

Government Bill/ Constitutional Bodies

**Election Commissioners' Appointment Bill**

**In context:** The Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023, was recently introduced in Rajya Sabha.

**Need for the law**

- ✓ **Appointment of election commissioners:**
  - The Supreme Court while examining a series of petitions seeking functional independence for Election Commissioners had ruled that the selection panel should comprise the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Chief Justice of India (CJI).
  - This selection panel to be continued until Parliament enacts a law on the manner of appointment.
- ✓ **Issue of incompleteness of tenure:**
  - The SC also noted that although the CEC's tenure is six years under 'The Chief Election Commissioner And Other Election Commissioners (Conditions Of Service) Act, 1991', no CEC has completed his tenure since 2004.

**The Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023:**

- ✓ **About:**
  - The bill repeals the Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991.
  - As per Article 324 of the Constitution, the Election Commission consists of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and such number of other Election Commissioners (ECs), as the President may decide. The CEC and other ECs are appointed by the President.
  - The Bill specifies the same composition of the Election Commission.
- ✓ **Selection Committee:**
  - The Bill has proposed that the selection panel for appointing the Election Commission, comprising the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and other Election Commissioners (ECs), will consist of
    - The Prime Minister as the chairperson,
    - The Leader of the Opposition as a member, and
    - A Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister as another member.
  - The bill removed the Chief Justice of India (CJI) from a previously constituted three-member panel to select the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners.
- ✓ **Search Committee:**
  - A Search Committee will prepare a panel of five persons for the consideration of the Selection Committee.
  - The Search Committee will be headed by the Cabinet Secretary.
- ✓ **Qualification of CEC and ECs:**
  - Persons who are holding or have held posts equivalent to the rank of Secretary to the central government will be eligible to be appointed as CEC and ECs.
  - Such persons must have expertise in managing and conducting elections.
- ✓ **Removal and resignation:**
  - Under Article 324 of the Constitution, the CEC can only be removed from his office in a manner similar to that of a Supreme Court judge.
  - This is done through an order of the President, based on a motion passed by both Houses of Parliament in the same session.
  - The motion for removal must be adopted with: (i) majority support of total membership of each House, and (ii) at least two-thirds support from members present and voting.
  - An EC can only be removed from office on the recommendation of the CEC.
  - Further, the 1991 Act provides that the CEC and other ECs may submit their resignation to the President.
  - The Bill retains this removal & resignation procedure.

**Challenges & Criticisms**

- ✓ **Making EC a puppet:**
  - This composition of the selection panel puts a question mark on the neutrality of the Election Commission (EC) as the selection panel would effectively have two members of the ruling party—the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Minister.
  - The Opposition has been arguing that the replacement of the CJI with a Cabinet Minister in the Bill indicates that the government is trying to make the poll body a puppet.
- ✓ **Against the spirit of fundamental rights:**

- The court judgment says that the right to vote is a fundamental right, effectuated by the Election Commission through the conduct of elections.
  - And therefore, to ensure that this right can be exercised properly, the Election Commission has to be independent of the executive.
  - So, while the Bill, as proposed, follows the letter of the judgment, it does not at all follow the spirit of the judgment.
- ✓ **Counter to a recent judgment:**
- The SC suggested that the least intrusive will be a system where there is a presence of the Chief Justice in the appointment committee.
  - The bill runs counter to this judgment of a Constitution Bench.
  - The judgment was also in line with the recommendations of the Dinesh Goswami Committee in 1990 and the Justice Tarkunde Committee in 1975.

**Way ahead:** The Election Commission of India is a constitutional body that not only conducts elections but also renders a quasi-judicial role. ECI has played a seminal role in the periodic conduct of elections, which have only seen greater participation from the electorate because of the largely free, fair and convenient nature of the process. The need for a selection process that embodies insulation from executive preponderance makes sense. A non-partisan and independent ECI is a sine qua non for the robustness of electoral democracy. The independent V-Dem Institute in Sweden, which compares democracies worldwide, has downgraded India to an “electoral autocracy”, citing the loss in autonomy of the ECI.

### International Organisation

#### **At G20, agreeing to agree:**

**Recent Context:** Recently, Indian is hoisting the G20 Summit and addressing the climate change is one of the major agendas of global leader during the summit. As, Indian proposals on LiFE, adopting a lifestyle that protects the environment, and on sharing its digital public infrastructure, should be widely acceptable.

#### **Improving financings facility is necessary for wholistic development**

- Improving financing availability is necessary for progress on most aspects.
- While **emerging and developing economies (EMDEs)** tend to emphasise development financing for reaching SDG goals, **advanced economies (AEs)** emphasise the creation of global public goods (GPGs), in particular the **mitigation of climate change risk**.
- But convergence is possible since there is large overlap between SDGs and GPGs. The poorest suffer the most from natural disasters.
- Climate finance should also be added for going on projects such as
  - ✓ Flood resistant drainage systems in cities
  - ✓ smart green infrastructure and
  - ✓ better air quality improve health and development goals
  - ✓ reduce distress migration to AEs.

#### **Channelizing the private finance for climate:**

- Governments may feel constrained but estimates of private finance run into hundreds of trillions of dollars. If even a fraction of this would come for climate finance, the required \$4 trillion becomes feasible.
- But **private finance finds EMDEs risky**. Only 20 per cent of global climate finance goes to EMDEs and is 4-8 times more expensive.
- Therefore, **public funds can play an essential role in de-risking lending to EMDEs and reducing its cost, attracting more private finance**
- This can be done through the MDB system and local development finance institutions; through blended investment programmes that combine public, philanthropic, institutional and private investors with optimal allocation of risk to each; through financial innovations such as hybrid and first loss funds.

#### **G20 need to recognise the role of non-banks in financial sector**

- The G20 was convened after the Global financial crisis (GFC) and financial stability was the major item on its agenda. By 2016 the view was that enough had been done.
- But the reforms were lop-sided, heavily focused on large AE banks and ignored the resulting arbitrage to non-banks that became the source of flows to emerging market (EMs).
- Although this impact on EMs was ignored, financial stability is back on the G20 agenda since regulatory imbalances and financial fragilities are affecting AEs.

#### **The following steps can be taken by G20 for finance availability**

- If the G20 pushes for a principle-based response that addresses weaknesses such as **arbitrage and excess volatility**, it would reduce spillovers to EMs, their country risk and borrowing costs.

- AEs under-use prudential regulation of non-banks although their academics have long pointed out that these instruments are required for financial stability.
- Their regulators need to be strengthened against political lobbies that undermine regulation.
- The current episode of monetary policy tightening is showing that other instruments must be used to moderate financial risks and spillovers and allow monetary policy to focus on inflation.
- G20 can ask the Financial Stability Board to come out with minimal regulatory standards affecting cross-border flows.
- Regulation needs to be right-sized to become light, universal and market friendly.

**Way forward:**

- Better global safety nets, such as **automatic access to multilateral and bilateral swaps**, are required then for EMDEs to safely allow entry to more foreign inflows.
- There is **need for governance reform in World Bank, IMF and WTO** so that Countries may commit to increase funding if they can choose where to put it in a contestable system that attracts funds conditional on delivery.
- Along with databases with the IMF and the World Bank should be made available for the private sector they would be better able to design low-cost portfolio hedging and insurance strategies that can compensate for missing long term hedging markets and reduce the cost of EMDE borrowing

**Conclusion**

- The effects of climate change are becoming more and more obvious. Unprecedented heat waves, fires and floods are affecting so many countries regardless of location.
- There is intense pressure from activists across countries. G20 cannot afford not to act. The war on climate change cannot be delayed because of the Ukraine war.
- The time is ripe for creating public goods that benefit all countries, and to which each contributes.

**PRELIM FACTS**

**1. SANKALP Programme**

**In context:** The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), in collaboration with Generation India Foundation (GIF) and Amazon Web Services India Private Limited (AWS India) is providing ‘cloud’ skills training to 1,500 learners and connecting them to employment opportunities, under project AMBER (co-funded by MSDE under the SANKALP programme).

**Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (“SANKALP”)**

- ✓ SANKALP is a Centrally sponsored scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) with loan assistance from the World Bank.
  - SANKALP was launched on 19th January 2018 .
- ✓ It aims to improve short term skill training qualitatively and quantitatively through strengthening institutions, bring in better market connectivity and inclusion of marginalised sections of the society.
- ✓ The outcomes in the project are measured through the Results Framework, and Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs) agreed between MSDE and World Bank.

**INTERVENTIONS UNDER SANKALP ARE CATEGORIZED AS FOLLOWS:**



**PROJECT AMBER (Accelerated Mission for Better Employment and Retention)**

- It is a joint initiative of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and Generation India Foundation (GIF) under the aegis of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).
- This project is co-funded by MSDE (under the SANKALP programme) and private philanthropy and aims to train 30,000 youth, 50% of whom will be women trainees.
  - ✓ The training will be conducted in post-COVID resilient job roles, over a period of two years.

## 2. Next-Generation Photonic Analog to Digital Converters (NG-PADC) Project

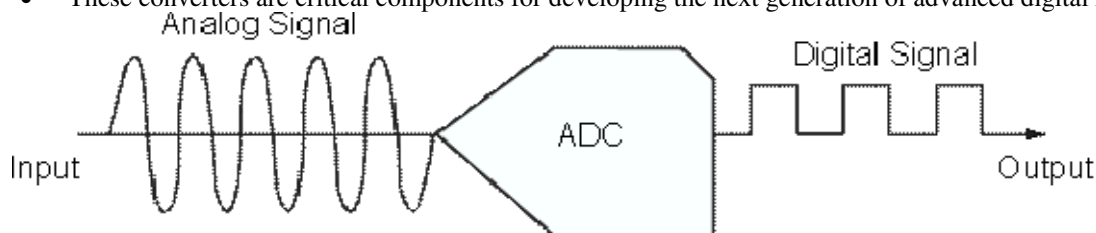
**In Context:** Recently, a new prototype in the Next-Generation Photonic Analog-to-Digital Converters (NG-PADC) project was introduced.

### About

- It carries out instant transport of Radio Frequency (RF) through optical methods to improve digital and satellite communication.
- It is developed by IIT Madras in collaboration with the IMPRINT programme of Science, Engineering, Research Board (SERB).

### Analog-to-digital converters (ADCs):

- A converter that is used to change the analog signal to digital is known as an analog to digital converter or ADC converter.
- This converter is one kind of integrated circuit that converts the signal directly from continuous form to discrete form.
- These converters are critical components for developing the next generation of advanced digital receivers.



- The digital signal is represented with a binary code, which is a combination of bits 0 and 1.
- The bandwidth of ADC is 12 times higher than Electronic Analog-to-digital converters (EADC).

### IMPacting Research, INnovation and Technology (IMPRINT) Program

- It is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Human resource Development (MHRD) and the Department of Science & Technology (DST) (steered by Science and Engineering Research Board, SERB).
  - ✓ As per the National Education Policy (NEP), 2023, the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB), created by an act of Parliament in 2008, will stand repealed and subsumed into the National Research Foundation (NRF).
  - ✓ Board was vested with the function of research and development in science and engineering.
  - ✓ It is a unique technology development initiative for translation of research knowledge into viable technology.

## 3. 69th National Film Awards

**In context:** The 69th National Film Awards has been announced for the year 2021.

### Overview

- ✓ National Film Awards are the most prestigious awards, which are announced annually to **honor the best filmmaking talent** across the country. It aims at encouraging the production of films of aesthetic and technical excellence and social relevance.
- ✓ The awards are given in **three sections** – Features, Non-Features and Best Writing on Cinema.
- ✓ The winners of the awards are decided by the Jury comprising persons distinguished in the field of cinema, other allied arts and humanities.

### History

- ✓ The awards were first presented in **1954** and were known as the ‘**State Awards**’. At the time, only best films in different regional languages were recognised and awarded.
- ✓ Separate awards for artists and technicians were **instituted in 1968** for the films of 1967. **Nargis Dutt** and **Uttam Kumar** being the first actress and actor to get the Best Actress and Best Actor ( Awards respectively.

### Key Recipient of 2023 Awards

- ✓ **Best Feature Film:** Rocketry
- ✓ **Best Hindi Film:** Sardar Udham
- ✓ **Best Non-feature film:** Ek Tha Gaon
- ✓ **Best Actor:** Allu Arjun , Pushpa
- ✓ **Best Actress:** Alia Bhatt, Gangubai Kathiawadi and Kriti Sanon, Mimi

## 4. Women’s Equality Day:

**In context:** Women's Equality Day, observed annually on August 26, marks a global recognition of the ongoing struggle for equal rights and opportunities for women.

- ✓ **Aim-** To commemorate American women getting the constitutional right to vote.
- ✓ **Theme:** “embrace equity” echoing through the strategic plan spanning from 2021 to 2026.

**The Historical Roots of Women’s Equality Day**

- ✓ **Origins and the Nineteenth Amendment:** The roots of Women’s Equality Day trace back to the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the US Constitution, granting women full suffrage. The 50th anniversary of this milestone in 1970 spurred the National Organization for Women (NOW) to lead a statewide “strike for equality.”
- ✓ **Mass Mobilization and Achievements:** With over 100,000 women participating in this strike across 90 major cities, it became a historic demonstration for gender equality. The establishment of Women’s Equality Day by Congress in 1971 not only commemorates the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment but also honors the ongoing efforts toward achieving full women’s equality.

**5. National space day:**

**IN CONTEXT:** India’s lunar space mission with the successful landing of Chandrayaan-3 on moon on 23 August. To mark the historic success of India, the day will be celebrated as ‘National Space Day’, announced by PM Modi.

- ✓ **Shivshakt point on Moon:** To commemorate the success of Chandrayaan-3 lander, PM Modi announced that the spot of landing of Vikram lander will be known as ‘Shivshakti’.
- ✓ **Tiranga point on Moon:** PM Modi announced the name of the crash landing site of Chandrayaan-2 as ‘Tiranga point’. He said that Chandrayaan-2 left its footprint on the lunar surface in 2019.

**ANSWER WRITING**

**Q. Can Inflation be called a moral issue? Examine.**

**Introduction:** Inflation is the depreciation of a currency’s purchasing power. Today, this depreciation occurs via increases in the amount of currency circulating in an economy relative to the economy’s potential output. Inflation reduces the purchasing power of people. The problem of inflation is not an economic problem alone but leads to a moral issue with respect to the government and rich sections of the economy. It is one of the socially demoralizing factors. Those who suffer the most immediate effects are those who live off accumulated savings or those on fixed incomes, such as pensioners, the elderly, and the poor.

**Ethical issues associated with Inflation**

- **Moral deterioration towards future savings:** It de-privs people from their savings. The people lose hope in their future. The lesser amount of savings demoralizes people and they start looking for other sources of income. This often may lead to corruption.
- **Un-necessary tax burden:** Inflation thrusts more and more people into higher-income tax brackets while simultaneously decreasing their money’s spending power. Inflation thus allows governments to avoid the requirement of natural justice concerning gaining the people’s consent before levying or increasing taxes. Inflation involves an element of lying, coveting, and stealing. The tax evasion tendencies increase which in turn make people flout rules and laws more.
- **Lesser Economic Liberty:** It also undermines economic liberty by impairing the ability of entrepreneurs, businesses, and consumers to make sound economic decisions. The lesser profit making impacts the small scale industries. It also decreases corporate social responsibility and makes them more negligent towards other sectors such as environment etc.
- **Increased inequality:** There is inflation’s negative impact on employment, and therefore all the moral, social, and economic benefits accrued through work. The youth gets demotivated, on the other hand, the rich become richer by getting higher prices of hoarded products.
- **Lesser trust for Government:** Higher prices reduce the government capacity to do expenditure. It reduces people’s trust and confidence in the ruling government which might destabilize the political systems. Inflation is thus more than an economic phenomenon. It strikes at the economy’s ability to assist people to achieve their full human potential. It is a moral issue that strikes the common men at their heart, jeopardizing their livelihood, savings and indirectly affecting family survival in the social and economic sphere.

**MCQs**

1. Regarding Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (“SANKALP”), consider the following statements:
  1. It is a Centrally sponsored scheme with loan assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
  2. It is a placement linked skill development scheme for rural poor youth under National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM).

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. Consider the following statements about Women’s Equality Day:
  1. At the behest of Rep. Bella Abzug the U.S. Congress designated August 26 as “Women’s Equality Day.
  2. The Theme of Women’s Equality Day 2023 is ‘Embrace Equity’.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

a) 1 only

- b) 2 only  
c) Both 1 and 2  
d) **Neither 1 nor 2**
3. Consider the following statements about the Amrit Sarovar Mission:
- As part of World Water Day celebrations, the Mission Amrit Sarovar was started in March 2023.
  - The technical partner for Mission Amrit Sarovar is Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Application and Geo-informatics (BISAG-N).
  - The Mission's goal is to change the water landscape, enhance livelihoods, and safeguard water availability for future generations.
- a) Only one  
b) **Only two**  
c) All three  
d) None
4. Consider the following statements
- The Peafowl, India's national bird, is one of the country's fastest growing species, "expanding into habitats where it has never occurred previously."
  - According to the State of India's Birds, 2023 report, some bird species, including the Indian Peafowl, Rock Pigeon, Asian Koel, and House Crow, are not in good health in terms of abundance and distribution, but are showing a "increasing trend."
- Which of the above statements are correct?
- a) 1 only  
b) 2 only  
c) **Both 1 and 2**  
d) None of the above
5. With reference to 'Insurance Surety Bonds', consider the following statements
- Statement 1** – These are instruments where insurance companies act as 'Surety' and provide the financial guarantee that the contractor will fulfill its obligation
- Statement 2** – If the principal fails to perform the act as promised, the surety is contractually liable for losses sustained.
- Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?
- a) **Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement II is the correct explanation for Statement-I**  
b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I  
c) Statement-I is correct but statement II is incorrect  
d) Statement -I is incorrect but Statement -II is correct
6. Sahyadriophis uttaraghati, recently seen in the news, is a:
- a) gecko  
b) **snake**  
c) invasive plant  
d) medicinal plant
7. With reference to the sodium ion battery, consider the following statements:
- It generates electricity through a chemical reaction.
  - Its chemical element is not susceptible to short circuits.
  - It has very high-temperature resistance.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- a) Only one  
b) **Only two**  
c) All three  
d) None
8. Consider the following statements regarding Gun Jumping:
- It is an act of carrying out transactions before the approval of the merger deal by the competent authority.
  - It can be penalized by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) in India.
- 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
9. In which of the following context, the term "IndiaStack" is mentioned in the news?
- a) Visible Light Communication Technology  
b) Cloud Services  
c) Blockchain Technology  
d) **Application Programming Interface**
10. Considered the following statement:
- The spot of landing of Vikram lander will be known as 'Shivshakti' point on Moon
  - Tiranga point on Moon: The crash landing site of Chandrayaan-2 will be known as 'Tiranga' point on Moon.
- Which of the following statement is/are correct?
- a) Only 1  
b) Only 2  
c) **Both 1 and 2**  
d) None of the above