

**POLITY**

**Context:** Lok Sabha Ethics committee, functioning of the structure. Conduct of business, rights and privileges, and problems resulting from them.

**Why in news?**

The Lok Sabha's Ethics Committee recently opened an investigation into claims that a member of parliament (MP) accepted "Bribes" in exchange for asking questions in parliament, a move known as "Cash for Query."

The committee will hold hearings to look into the claims and collect testimony from the complainant, witness, and the MP who is being accused, among other Pertinent parties.

**What are the Potential Outcomes?**

- The Ethics Committee may offer recommendations if it determines that the complaint has merit. It's possible recommendation for punishment usually entails suspending the MP for a predetermined amount of time.
- In the end, the House—which consists of all MPs—will decide whether to follow the committee's proposal and, if so, what kind and how much of a punishment it will impose.
- The accused could appeal the decision in a court of law if she were to be expelled or faced with an unfavourable ruling.
- There are only a few legal grounds to contest such a ruling in court, but they usually centre around allegations of flagrant illegality, unconstitutionality, or denial of natural justice.

**BRIEF NOTE**

- Motions to remove Ten Lok Sabha MPs and one Rajya Sabha MP who were alleged to have agreed to ask questions in Parliament in exchange for money were approved by the two Houses in 2005.
- The Bansal Committee report (a special committee tasked by the Speaker to look into the matter) formed the basis for the Lok Sabha motion.
- The complaint was investigated by the House Ethics Committee of the Rajya Sabha.
- The ousted members of parliament sought that the report from the Bansal Committee be forwarded to the Privileges Committee so that the lawmakers could present their own defence.

**What is the Ethics Committee of the Lok Sabha?**

**About:**

The Speaker appoints the members of the Ethics Committee for a one-year term.

**History:**

- The concept of ethics panel's for the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha was first discussed at the Presiding Officers' Conference in Delhi in 1996.
- On March 4, 1997, The then Vice President and Rajya Sabha Chairman K R Narayanan established the Ethics Committee of the Upper House with the goal of monitoring members' moral and ethical behaviour and looking into misbehaviour cases that are brought before it.
- In the case of the Lok Sabha, a research group of the House Committee on Privileges suggested in 1997 that an Ethics committee be established, but the Lok Sabha was unable to adopt the recommendation.
- During the 13th Lok Sabha, the Committee of Privileges ultimately proposed the creation of an Ethics Committee.
- An ad hoc Ethics Committee was established in 2000 by the late Speaker,
- G M C Balayogi and it wasn't until 2015 that it was become a regular element of the House.

➤ **Procedure for Complaints:**

- Any individual may file a complaint against a Member, through another Lok Sabha MP providing proof of the alleged misconduct and an affidavit attesting to the fact that the complaint is not "false, frivolous, or vexatious."
- It is not necessary to have the affidavit if the Member files a complaint.
- Any complaint made against an MP may be referred to the Committee by the Speaker.
- The Committee does not consider complaints that are solely based on information from the media or on cases that are still pending. Prior to determining whether to investigate a complaint, the Committee conducts a Prima Facie investigation. It assesses the complaint before making its recommendations.
- The Speaker receives the Committee's report and requests that the House decide whether to consider it.
- There is also a provision for a half-hour discussion on the report.

**Overlap with Privileges Committee:**

- The Ethics Committee's and the Privileges Committee's respective tasks frequently intersect.

- Anybody can receive a charge of corruption against a member of parliament, although the Privileges Committee typically receives the more serious ones.
- The protection of the "freedom, authority, and dignity of Parliament" is the responsibility of the Privileges Committee.
- The House as a whole and individual Members both benefit from these privileges. A member of parliament may be investigated for violating a privilege; however, non-members may also be charged with violating a privilege for actions that undermine the power and honour of the House.
- The Ethics Committee is limited to investigating misbehaviour involving Members of Parliament.

**Conclusion:**

The Ethics Committee plays a crucial role in upholding the ethical standards and conduct of Member of Parliament and ensuring that their behaviour with the principles and values of the Indian Parliament. It is part of the broader framework of parliamentary committee in India that serve various functions in the legislative process.

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**The Pragmatism of Biden**

**Introduction:**

The ongoing Middle East conflict between Israel and Hamas has sparked worries about the United States overextending its capacity to handle many fronts.

**USA's Task Force**

- The increasing cooperation of China, Iran, and Russia to wreak havoc on the USA-led west on several fronts.
- Keeping up local demand while limiting the amount of money spent on overseas conflicts.
- The USA's ability to manage these difficulties
- The invasion of Ukraine by Russia solidified and enlarged NATO and the European powers.
- USA has made great progress in Asia.
- Japan's defence budget has been increased. Other initiatives include encouraging Tokyo and Seoul to normalise their relations, resuming defence cooperation with the Philippines, signing a strategic partnership agreement with Communist Vietnam, revealing the AUKUS partnership with Australia and the UK, fortifying the Quad, and improving bilateral relations with India.
- Above all, the US is increasing the expenses of a possible Chinese attack while also extending its military assistance for Taiwan.
- Despite these achievements, the USA still needs to contend with political pressure to stop supporting Ukraine and divert funds to Israel.

➤ **The USA's ability to manage these difficulties**

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- Above all, the US is increasing the expenses of a possible Chinese attack while also extending its military assistance for Taiwan.
- Despite these achievements, the USA still needs to contend with political pressure to stop supporting Ukraine and divert funds to Israel. This conveys the idea that the USA cannot manage multiple conflicts simultaneously
- **Underestimating the USA's strategic resiliency is a bad idea.**
- The USA has always struck a compromise between its strategic need to engage in international events and its domestic wish to remain isolated from them.
- China's ascent is also exaggerated due to the country's economic stagnation, while the United States' collapse is overestimated because it still contributed 24% of the world GDP.
- The United States spends more on defence than the following ten countries put together.
- The USA is in control on the diplomatic front as well. It has the power to mobilise worldwide opinion on any issue.
- The USA is also favoured in the structure of great power confrontations.

- The USA can distance itself from international crises while yet influencing them to serve its own interests as a distant power
- The United States leads China and Russia in the creation of alliances. Both of these nations are powerful financially and ideologically, but the United States of America has the ability to entice a country into its sphere of influence.

**Conclusion:**

Strategists in Tehran, Beijing, and Moscow might bet that Washington would become overextended if it tried to put out too many fires at once. Despite the difficult and complicated problems facing the US, Washington has the willingness, the means, and ample opportunity for global manoeuvring.

**PRELIMS FACTS**

**1. Council of Heads of Government (CHG) of SCO**

**Context: Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) hosted 22nd Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of Government (CHG)**

- CHG meets once a year to discuss multilateral cooperation strategy, establish the Organization's annual budget, and so on.
- During the discussion, India's External Affairs Minister urged participants to strictly adhere to international law norms and respect each other's sovereignty.

**About SCO Genesis:**

- The Shanghai Five countries (Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) established it in Shanghai in 2001.

**About:**

- A permanent intergovernmental organization directed by the "Shanghai spirit," which incorporates mutual trust and benefit, equality, respect for civilizational diversity, and so on.
- India, Iran, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are the nine members.
- Afghanistan, Belarus, and Mongolia are among the observer countries.
  - The process of elevating Belarus to the level of a member state has begun.
- The primary goal is to ensure and sustain regional peace, security, and stability.
- The highest decision-making body is the Heads of State Council (HSC), which meets once a year.
- Permanent Bodies: Secretariat in Beijing (China) and Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent (Uzbekistan).
- Russian and Chinese are the official languages.

**2. Interconnected Disaster Risks Report 2023**

**Context: Interconnected Disaster Risks Report 2023 is released by United Nations University – Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS)**

- According to the analysis, the globe is rapidly reaching risk tipping points on several fronts.
- A risk tipping point occurs when a socioecological system loses its ability to buffer hazards, increasing the possibility of catastrophic consequences.
  - This is different from "Climate Tipping Points," which are specific thresholds beyond which unstoppable changes occur, altering global climate.
- Six interconnected risk tipping points are:
  - Accelerating extinctions, which cause a chain reaction that leads to ecosystem collapse.
  - Groundwater depletion puts the food supply at danger.
  - Mountain glaciers are melting.
  - Multiple spacecraft have been lost due to space debris.
  - Unbearable heat makes it difficult to live in some regions.
  - Uninsurable future when rising risks make homes unaffordable.
- Drivers of Risk tipping point
  - Human-induced greenhouse gas emissions
  - Insufficient risk management and insufficient cooperation
  - Global demand pressures.
  - Inequality of development and livelihood opportunities.
- Solutions:
  - Avoid (preventing risk)
  - Adapt (dealing with risk)
  - Delay (slowing risk progression)
  - Transform (system overhaul)

**About UNU-EHS**

- It is an academic arm of the United Nations and acts as a global think tank.
- Established in 2003 Mission: carry out research on risks and adaptation related to environmental hazards and global change.
  - Promotes policies and programmes to reduce these risks, while taking into account the interplay between environmental and societal factors.

**3. Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR)**

- It is carved out of the Tamil Nadu portion of the Anamalais and is located in the Western Ghats south of the Palakkad gap.
- It is surrounded on the east by the Parambikulam Tiger Reserve, on the south by the Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary, and on the west by the Eravikulam National Park.
- The UNESCO World Heritage Site Western Ghats includes ATR's Kariyan shola, Grass hills, and Manjampatti.
- It provides assistance to six indigenous groups: Malasar, Malai Malasars, Kadars, Eravallars, Pulayars, and Muduvars.
- Flora includes balsam, orchids, and kurinchi.
- Fauna includes the Bengal Tiger, Indian Elephant, Nilgiri Tahr, Gaur, and other species.

**4. PM Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI)**

- 124 schools under PM-SHRI scheme inaugurated in Haryana.
- It is a centrally sponsored initiative (60% by the Centre and 40% by the state or UT) introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2022.
- It intends to establish approximately 14,500 schools across India by enhancing existing schools run by various levels of government.
- Objective: providing high-quality education and making children active participants as per the vision of NEP 2020.
- It is proposed to be operational from 2022-23 to 2026-27.

**5. Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana-Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (PMKSY-AIBP)**

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has authorized the inclusion of Uttarakhand's Jamrani Dam Multipurpose Project in the PMKSYAIBP.
  - It calls for the construction of a dam across the Gaula River (a tributary of the Ramganga).
- PMKSY is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare that was introduced in 2015-16.
  - Objective: To increase cultivable land under guaranteed irrigation, enhance on-farm water use efficiency, and so on.
- PMKSY Components
  - AIBP component (Ministry of Jal Shakti) provides central assistance to major/ medium irrigation projects.
  - Har Khet ko Pani (Ministry of Jal Shakti).
  - Per Drop More Crop (Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare).
  - Integrated Watershed Management Programme (Ministry of Rural Development).

**ANSWER WRITING**
**Q. What is Environment Impact Assessment (EIA)? Explain the Stages of an EIA process. Also discuss the Importance of Environmental Impact Assessment in India.**

An environment impact assessment, or EIA, is a study that forecasts how a project or activity will affect the environment. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a tool used in decision making that evaluates potential project alternatives in order to determine which one best balances environmental and economic costs and benefits. The Environment Protection Act, 1986, which includes numerous provisions on the EIA process and methodology, provides legal support for environment impact assessments in India

**The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Process Includes**

- **Screening:** To determine whether an environment clearance is required for the proposed project, the proponent must conduct a thorough and partial analysis of it at this stage.
- **Scoping:** The proponent must keep an eye on the Project's possible effects, its impact zone, and any available mitigation options during this phase.
- **Gathering baseline data:** Baseline data refers to the state of the environment in the research area.
- **Impact prediction:** This procedure makes predictions about the project's effects on the environment and its outcomes.

- **Mitigation strategies and the EIA report:** The EIA report ought to encompass the measures and protocols for averting, lessening, or mitigating the effects, or alternatively, determining the extent of reimbursement for likely environmental harm or loss.
- **Public hearing:** Neighbouring public and environmental organizations may be notified and consulted upon the completion of the EIA report.
- **Making a decision:** The Impact Assessment Authority, the experts, and the project manager confer to make the ultimate decision, keeping in mind the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) and the Environmental Impact Assessment.
- **Monitoring and carrying out the environmental management plan:** The project's different stages of execution are kept an eye on.
- **Evaluation of Alternatives, Outline of Mitigation Strategies, and Report on Environmental Impact Assessment:**
  - ✓ Environmental attributes should be compared and potential alternatives should be identified for each project.
  - ✓ Options should address process technologies as well as project location. Following the review of the alternatives, the chosen option should have a mitigation plan created for it.
  - ✓ This plan should be complemented by an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) to help the proponent make improvements to the environment.
- **Risk assessment:** EIA procedures also include inventory analysis and hazard probability and index.

#### **Environmental Impact Assessment's (EIA) significance**

- In order for the state to accomplish sustainable development, environmental impact assessments facilitate the relationship between environmental protection and development.
- An environment impact assessment provides a project's detailed plan, which guarantees that the project will have the least negative impact on the environment.
- The EIA bases its project evaluation on a few particular criteria. These factors include the cost of environmental impacts, technological risk, and so forth. An environment impact assessment ensures that each of these factors is met in accordance with the requirements.
- An essential step in the EIA process is the public hearing. The project's proponent must ensure that everyone who will be impacted by it is involved in the public hearings and such activities.
- The best way to lessen the project's environmental effects while protecting resources and the environment is provided in the Environment Impact Assessment report.
- Additionally, useful in anticipating and averting natural disasters like landslides and floods is the environment impact assessment.
- A positive working relationship between the public, developers, environmentalists, and the state (government) is further facilitated by environment impact assessments.
- Legal disputes may arise from a number of projects that have specific environmental effects. These kinds of problems can be resolved with the aid of environment impact assessments, which also lessen the load on the nation's courts.

#### **Conclusion:**

When used carefully, the EIA may be the most powerful regulatory tool available for environmental governance, helping to advance the nation's goal of sustainable development.

#### **MCQs**

1. Which one of the following cities is located on the banks of the Musi River?
  - a) Lucknow
  - b) Bengaluru
  - c) Bhopal
  - d) **Hyderabad**
2. With reference to the Pichwai Paintings, consider the following statements:
  1. It is a traditional style of painting originated in the state of Gujarat.
  2. The main theme of this painting revolves around the Lord Krishna's life.
  3. Artists use stone pigments for this style of painting.
 How many of the above statements are correct?
  - a) Only one
  - b) **Only two**
  - c) All three
  - d) None
3. Consider the following statements with respect to 'Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY)':
  1. This health scheme cannot be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.
  2. The National Health Authority (NHA) has been constituted as an autonomous entity under the Society Registration Act, 1860 for effective implementation of PM-JAY.
  3. It is an entitlement-based scheme that targets the beneficiaries as identified by latest

SocioEconomic Caste Census (SECC) data of 2011.

How many of the above statements are not correct?

- a) **Only one**
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None

4. Consider the following statements with respect to 'SAMVAD Initiative':

1. It stands for Support, Advocacy & Mental health interventions for children in Vulnerable circumstances and Distress (SAMVAD).
2. The initiative is funded by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
3. Its implementation is led by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS).

How many of the above statements are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) **Only two**
- c) All three
- d) None

5. Consider the following statements with respect to 'Doklam Plateau':

1. Doklam is a narrow plateau lying in the tri-junction of India, China and Bhutan.
2. The disputed region is very close to India's Siliguri Corridor which connects the seven north eastern states to the Indian mainland.
3. The Doklam Plateau is part of the Chumbi Valley, which is primarily in Tibet.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) **All three**
- d) None

6. Consider the following statements about Bering Sea

1. It is bordered by the US state of Alaska to the east and the Kamchatka Peninsula in the west.
2. The Aleutian island group and Karagin Island are located in Bering Sea.
3. The two rivers that drain into the sea are the Ob and Lena Rivers.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) **Only two**
- c) All three
- d) None of the above

7. Consider the following statements regarding passes in the Western Ghats.

1. Bhor Ghat: Links Mumbai to Pune.
2. Pal Ghat: Links Nasik to Mumbai.
3. Thal Ghat: Connects Kerala to Tamil Nadu

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) **Only one**
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None

8. Consider the following statements.

1. Normally, when water freezes, it crystallizes and its molecules are arranged into hexagonal solid structure called ice.
2. Ice is denser than water.
3. Amorphous ice lacks long-range order in its molecular arrangement.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) **Only two**
- c) All three
- d) None

9. Consider the following statements regarding gamma-ray bursts (GRB).

1. Gamma-ray bursts (GRB) are the energetic form of light, multiple times brighter than the sun.
2. They typically last for only seconds.
3. GRB can happen when two neutron stars merge or when a neutron star joins with the black hole.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) **All three**
- d) None

10. Which of the following are some of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

1. No poverty
2. Responsible Consumption and Production
3. Zero hunger
4. Decent work and economic growth
5. Zero inequality

Select the correct answer code:

- a) 1, 3, 4, 5
- b) **1, 2, 3, 4**
- c) 1, 3, 4
- d) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5