

**POLITY AND GOVERNANCE**

**Context: Political contribution disclosure is essential for fostering democratic openness and thwarting electoral fraud.**

**In News, why?**

The end of the Supreme Court hearings on the challenge to electoral bonds encourages a critical evaluation of the potential impact the resolution of this case may have on democracy and the rule of law in India, given the current political climate and concerns over donations.

**Political Funding: What Is It?**

**About:**

- Financial contributions given to political parties or candidates in order to assist their campaigns, activities, and general operations are referred to as political funding.
- Political parties require political finance in order to run campaigns for elections, take part in democratic processes, and carry out other political operations.

**Indian Statutory Provisions:**

- The Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RPA Act) sets forth the guidelines for elections in India, including clauses pertaining to contributions, election expenditure disclosure, and account management.
- Income Tax Act, 1961: This law sets forth how political parties and their donors are treated tax-wise.
- Tax laws must be followed by political parties, and in some circumstances, people or organizations that donate to politics may be eligible for tax breaks.
- Companies Act, 2013: The Companies Act requires the disclosure of political contributions in financial accounts and sets a maximum amount that corporations may donate to political parties.

**Strategies for Obtaining Political Capital:**

- **Individuals:** Section 29B of the RPA permits taxpayers to claim a 100% deduction while permitting political parties to accept donations from individuals.
- **State/Public Funding:** In this case, parties receive funding from the government for electoral-related activities. There are two kinds of state funding:
- **Direct Funding:** Political parties receive direct funding from the government. Direct fundraising isn't allowed in India, though.
- **Indirect Funding:** Other than direct sponsorship, indirect funding includes things like free media access, free access to public spaces for protests, and free or heavily discounted transportation. In India, it is legalized with certain restrictions.

**Corporate Funding:** Section 182 of the Companies Act, 2013 governs donations made by corporate entities in India.

**Electoral Bonds Scheme**

- A Finance bill from 2017 established the electoral bonds system, which went into effect in 2018.
- They provide a way for people and organizations to donate to officially recognized political parties while keeping donor anonymity.

**Electoral trust scheme**

- The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) notified the public about the 2013 Electoral Trusts Scheme.
- An electoral trust is a trust established by businesses with the specific purpose of allocating to the political parties the contributions it has received from other businesses and individuals.

**Why Is Political Funding Disclosure Required?**

- Global Standards on Political Funding Disclosure: Complete anonymity for political donors has been established by the modifications made to India's Representation of the People Act 1951 to allow for electoral bonds.

- This is a sharp contrast to international standards, where complete disclosure of political contributions is the norm.
- Regulations requiring political donations to be transparent have been in place all throughout the world, including the United States, since 1910.
- In 2014, the European Union implemented restrictions pertaining to the financing of political parties in Europe. These regulations included donation caps, disclosure requirements, and the need for rapid reporting of substantial contributions.

**Essential Conditions for Political Funding Laws:**

- Globally, the majority of legal restrictions essentially center around two requirements for financing political parties: full disclosure of all donors beyond certain thresholds and donation caps or limitations.
- These steps are intended to preserve public trust in democracy and the political system while promoting openness and preventing corruption.

**Maintaining Public Trust:**

- Given that political parties are the cornerstone of representative democracy; it is essential that public disclosure of political finance take place.
- Maintaining public confidence in political parties and elected officials, defending the rule of law, and thwarting corruption in electoral and political processes are all made possible by transparent financial statements.
- Because accountability is ensured by this transparency, the democratic ideals of justice and openness are strengthened.

**Avoiding Inappropriate Influence:**

- Without transparency, money can be used by some as a means of exerting undue influence on the political system. Transparency aids in preventing corporate interests from appropriating politics and mass vote buying.

**Sustaining Equitable Conditions:**

- When one party is able to obtain excessive amounts of campaign funding, the fairness of the political process is undermined. Equal chances are guaranteed for all parties through disclosure.

**Exemption from Disclosure Regarding the Election Bonds Program**

- The Union government has removed the requirement for political parties to reveal donations made through electoral bonds by amending the Finance Act of 2017.
- As a result, voters will be unaware of the identity and level of funding provided to each party by any particular person, business, or organization.
- On the other hand, voters choose the representatives of their community in Parliament under a representational democracy.

**Statements from the Supreme Court**

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) has been directed by the Supreme Court to furnish the latest information regarding the funds obtained by political parties via electoral bonds.
- The Indian Supreme Court has maintained for a long time that the right to freedom of expression includes the "right to know," particularly when it comes to elections comes under (Article 19) of the Indian Constitution.

**What Reforms in Political Funding Are Needed?**

- Electoral Justice: Ensuring that all facets of the electoral process comply with the law and protect the exercise of electoral rights is essential to maintaining the fundamental principles of democracy.
- This system plays a crucial role in preserving and enabling free, fair, and authentic elections, which are necessary for a robust democracy.

**Taking Care of the Election Bond Issues:**

- Election integrity and democratic transparency are threatened by electoral bonds, which permit the disclosure of donor information without restriction.
- Addressing this issue calls for a comprehensive strategy that goes beyond legality and concentrates on maintaining the democratic core of transparency in the electoral process, in addition to making them constitutionally sound.

**Conclusion:**

For a healthy democracy. It is absolute necessary that we have a law that ensures full publication of all donations made to the political parties also we need a separate legislation that mandates public disclosure of the identity of donor to political parties candidates or political foundations which are above a certain normal limit

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS****Context: Ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

Approximately half of all homes in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed, according to the UN, and 1.3 million of the 2.3 million people who live in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip have been forced to from their homes.

**Introduction**

- Every war comes to an end. And the fight between Israel and Hamas will cease. The specifics of when and how are still unknown. However, action must be taken quickly. When both sides win something important to them, that is one result of the war. That is probably how the Israeli-Hamas conflict will conclude.
- Without a doubt, Israel will prevail militarily. However, Hamas is likely to succeed in gaining a sizable rise in support from Arab populations globally, particularly in the occupied West Bank.

**Palestinian power in decline**

- After thirty years in power, the Palestine Authority has grown incredibly unpopular and corrupt. The most centrist Palestinian leader Israel could have ever dreamed for, President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestine Authority, has failed miserably to advance the goal of creating a state for the Palestinians in the West Bank.

**The advent of Hamas**

- The terrorist arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Hamas, was founded in 1987 with the intention of utilizing violent jihad to achieve its objectives.
- Hamas is regarded by the US government as a terrorist group. In 2006, Hamas won the legislative elections held by the Palestinian Authority. When it forced Fatah out of Gaza in 2007, it geographically divided the Palestinian struggle.
- 1987: Tensions in the occupied regions of Gaza and the West Bank reached a breaking point, sparking the start of the First Intifada, also known as the Palestinian Uprising. It turned into a small-scale battle between Israeli army forces and Palestinian terrorists.

**The rights under the U.N. Charter**

- Israel has the inalienable right to self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter. The same article stipulates that the state in question must notify the UN Security Council (UNSC) of its action after defending itself. It doesn't appear that this was completed.
- In any event, using excessive or random force against civilians is not permitted under the right to self-defence. Almost 15,000 people died in Gaza during Israel's assault, the most of them were women and children, according to reports. This century's death toll has not been this high. This extends far beyond the accepted custom of self-defence.

**Possibility of a two-state arrangement**

- In the meantime, the long-ignored idea of a two-state solution has gained traction. It appears that everyone is reiterating the two-state slogan. However, how realistic is the two-state idea today?
- The Oslo Accord of 1993 envisioned Palestine's capital as being in the West Bank.

- At 4,50,000 as of the most recent count, the West Bank is largely populated by Israeli settlements. There is no Israeli administration that can convince the settlers to come home. There would have to be force. The terrain resembles Swiss cheese, with countless towns and settler roads, and there are plans for even more. No matter how little, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will never accept a Palestinian state.

#### **Relevance of the Abrahamic Accords**

- The new state ought to be demilitarized in order to satisfy Israel's justifiable worries about the security of its citizens. It is possible to consider other actions to guarantee the security of the Israelis. All of the Arab nations that border Israel ought to be involved in this process. The Abraham Accords offer a starting point.
- This is the only option if Israel wants to coexist peacefully with its Arab neighbours in the region. When that occurs, Hezbollah will also lose its primary justification for posing a threat to Israel, and Iran will lose its declared rationale for its tirades against Israel.

#### **Conclusion**

- Israeli-Palestinian relations have been mired in a never-ending cycle of suffering, murder, and destruction for decades. The most recent example is the conflict in Gaza. It ought to be the final one. Finally, stable peace and stability could be enjoyed by the Middle East.

### **PRELIM FACTS**

#### **1. 9th National Level Pollution Response Exercise (NATPOLREX-IX)**

- The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) recently carried out the 9th National Level Pollution Response Exercise (NATPOLREX-IX) off the coast of Vadinar, Gujarat.
- The National Oil leak Disaster Contingency Plan (NOSDCP) provisions were invoked in order to respond to a marine oil leak, and the NATPOLREX-IX successfully tested the degree of coordination and readiness amongst different resource agencies to do so.
- In addition to using air and surface platforms, the ICG also used indigenous Advanced Light Helicopter Mk-IIIs, Dornier aircraft designed for responding to maritime pollution, and Pollution Response Vessels (PRVs) and Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs).
- The occasion also demonstrated India's industrial might in terms of the "Make in India" and "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" initiatives.
- The Coast Guard has created four Pollution Response Centers in Mumbai, Chennai, Port Blair, and other locations in addition to creating the NOSDCP.

#### **2. Fruit, Oilseeds, and Pulses Will Not Meet Demand until 2030–2031**

- According to a paper released by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), there will likely be a supply and demand mismatch in the upcoming years for commodities including fruits, pulses, and oilseeds.
- As a result, given the growing trend in the demand for oilseeds, pulses, and fruits in the future, there is a need to boost their level of production and productivity.
- The consumption basket of people tends to diversify away from basics like rice and grains and toward nutrient-dense, high-value commodities like fruits, vegetables, and dairy products as per capita income rises.
- Production of oil seeds is predicted to increase to 35–40 million tones (MT) by 2030–31; by 2025–2026, the difference between supply and demand is projected to widen to 3 MT.
- The study restated the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices' (CACP) 2012 report's proposal to increase import duties in order to safeguard Indian producers if the import price of crude palm oil drops below USD 800 per tonne.

#### **3. Airlines Are Warned by DGCA about False Navigational Signals**

- Following occurrences in the Iranian airspace and a U.S. advisory, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) issued an advisory to Indian airlines outlining mitigating steps to be taken in the case of spoofing of (false) navigational signals.
- "The surreptitious replacement of a true satellite signal that can cause a GPS receiver to output an erroneous position and time" is known as "GPS spoofing."
- Developing "contingency procedures in coordination with equipment manufacturers, and assessing operational risk by conducting a safety risk assessment" are just two of the many mitigation strategies that the DGCA has offered in its circular.
- Air navigation service providers now have a way to set up a "threat monitoring and analysis network" for both proactive and reactive threat monitoring and report analysis thanks to the DGCA.

#### 4. Pampore (Saffron Production in India)

**Context:** Productivity in Pampore, the nation's epicenter for saffron (also known as "red gold") farming, has decreased.

##### About Saffron:

The spice saffron is made from the flower of the *Crocus sativus* plant, also referred to as the "saffron crocus." The vibrant red stigma and styles, known as threads, are gathered and dehydrated, mostly to be used as food coloring and spice.

The following are the primary problems affecting Pampore's saffron output:

- Changes in climate
- Erratic patterns of rainfall
- Increased warmth
- Urbanization spreading upon saffron farms

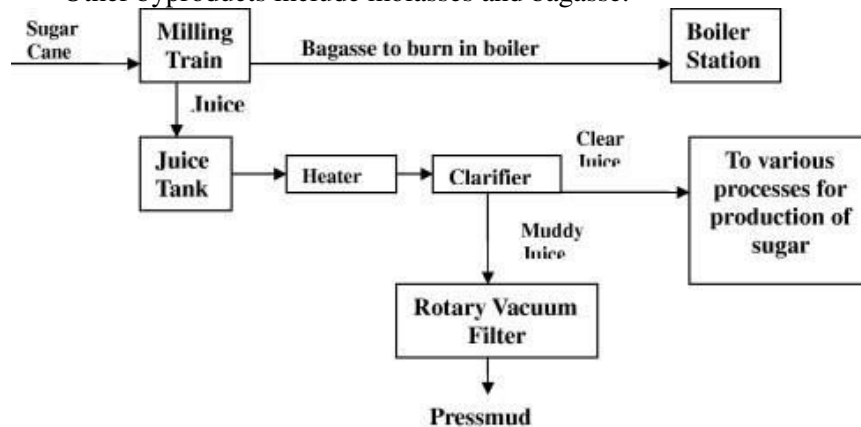
Saffron farming has difficulties due in part to inadequate funding for farmer education and irrigation. The main producers of saffron are Iran, India, Spain, and Greece, with Iran holding the largest share of the global market at over 88%. Though, India occupies the 2nd largest area but produces approximately 7 per cent of the total world production.

#### 5. Pressmud

**Context:** Pressmud, a byproduct of the sugar industry in India, can be a valuable resource for the manufacture of compressed biogas, or CBG.

##### What exactly is Pressmud, and how is it made?

- Pressmud is a leftover byproduct of the sugar industry, sometimes referred to as filter cake or press cake.
- It is created when sugarcane is extracted for its sugar. Pressmud is the solid residue that is left over after the sugarcane is crushed to extract juice.
- Other byproducts include molasses and bagasse.



**Applications:**

- By anaerobic digestion and subsequent purification, it can be used to produce compressed biogas (CBG).
- Pressmud has the capacity to produce 460,000 tonnes of CBG, valued at Rs 2,484 crore. It presents benefits like as cost-effectiveness, concentrated sourcing, and a streamlined supply chain.
- On the other hand, difficulties include growing pressmud costs, rivalry for substitute applications, and storage problems.
- Interventions like simplified bioenergy regulations, pricing control systems, and storage technology development are crucial to fully utilize this resource.

**ANSWER WRITING**
**Q. Analyse the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) program's importance in India, emphasizing its effects on social justice and poverty eradication.**

The Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) program in India has transformed the way government subsidies and social welfare programs are delivered, and it has gained international attention as a "logistical marvel." DBT minimizes leakages and bypasses middlemen by directly transferring benefits to beneficiaries' bank accounts through the use of digital public infrastructure. India's efforts to promote social justice and reduce poverty have been greatly impacted by this revolutionary strategy.

**Relevance of DBT:**

- **Enhanced Coverage and Reach:** DBT has made government programs more accessible to millions of underprivileged households, guaranteeing that benefits are distributed equally to the intended recipients. DBT has been widely adopted, as evidenced by reports that 310 government schemes from 53 ministries have used it.
- **Reducing Corruption and Leaks:** Traditional subsidy delivery systems were beset by corruption and leaks, which DBT has successfully reduced. DBT guarantees that benefits are directly transmitted to beneficiaries by doing away with middlemen, which lowers the possibility of misuse and diversion.
- **Encouraging Financial Inclusion:** By forcing banks to link Aadhar cards to bank accounts, more over 45 crore bank accounts have been opened under PMJDY, giving beneficiaries access to financial services and economic empowerment.
- **Maintaining Dignity and Empowerment:** DBT has enabled recipients to obtain their legitimate benefits without sacrificing their dignity by doing away with the need for middlemen and onerous processes.
- **Efficiency and Cost Savings:** By streamlining the distribution of subsidies, DBT has cut down on overhead and inefficient operations. DBT's economic efficiency is demonstrated by the approximate 1.14% GDP savings it has produced.
- **Delivery that is specifically targeted:** DBT has made it possible for the government to precisely allocate benefits to the intended recipients, guaranteeing that the most deserving people receive them. This has contributed to a decrease in fraud and misappropriation incidents.

**DBT, social justice, and reducing poverty:**

DBT was created with a rights-based approach to poverty in mind, starting with the Rawlsian idea of justice behind a curtain of ignorance:

- **Reducing Inequalities:** DBT has helped reduce social disparities by making sure that the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups receive its advantages. By bridging the wealth and poverty gaps, its focused strategy has contributed to the advancement of a more just society.
- **Encouraging Inclusive Development:** By giving underprivileged populations the tools they need to take an active role in the economy and in their own empowerment, DBT has helped to promote inclusive development. By giving underprivileged people immediate access to benefits, DBT has enhanced their quality of life and promoted social justice.

- **Improving Access to Essential Services:** DBT has made it easier for underprivileged populations, in particular, to get access to necessities like food, healthcare, and education. Their standard of living has increased, and social inclusion has been encouraged.

**Nonetheless, a few of the major obstacles to DBT adoption in India are as follows:**

- **Exclusion Errors and Beneficiary Identification:** One of the biggest problems nowadays is accurately identifying beneficiaries. A major worry is exclusion errors, which result in the exclusion of eligible recipients (more than 80 million in the PDS plan).
- **Financial Inclusion and Access to Banking Services:** In India, 23% of women and 20% of adults do not have a bank account, according to the World Bank's Global Financial Inclusion Database.
- **Challenges with Digital Literacy and Technology:** According to Oxfam's The India Inequality Report 2022: Digital Divide, only 38% of households in the nation possess digital literacy. Furthermore, only 31% of people in rural areas utilize the internet, compared to 67% of people in metropolitan areas.
- **Grievance Redressal and Complaint Resolution:** Beneficiaries are becoming frustrated and dissatisfied as a result of an inefficient grievance redressal system.

**Way Forward:**

- **Increasing the Scope of DBT:** In order to guarantee that all qualified recipients receive their benefits directly, DBT should be extended to include a larger variety of government programs.
- **Enhancing Technology Infrastructure:** To guarantee the efficient and safe distribution of benefits, the underlying technology infrastructure needs to be continuously enhanced.
- **Filling up the Digital Literacy Gaps:** To close the digital divide and enable recipients to make the most use of DBT services, digital literacy programs should be implemented.
- **Taking Care of the Core Causes of Poverty:** Although DBT offers short-term respite, long-term poverty reduction necessitates taking care of the core causes of poverty through work, education, and skill development.

**Conclusion**

DBT stands for "Dignity," but its capacity to use technology to effectively provide products and services to the underprivileged is what makes it so successful. This is a model that can be used to other sectors of the economy, like the legal system, to guarantee that all citizens receive justice. The DBT program has shown how technology may be used to address complicated social concerns and advance a more just and equal society, even though there are still obstacles to overcome.

**MCQs**

1. Consider the following statements with respect to 'Press mud'
  - 1: It is an industrial by product produced by the Bayer process, which turns bauxite into alumina.
  - 2: Due to its abundance in different micronutrients, it is highly beneficial for horticulture and crops.
 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**
2. Consider the following statements with respect to 'Loss and damage fund'
  1. It is a worldwide financial package designed to guarantee the recovery and restoration of nations confronting the cumulative impacts of climate change.
  2. First revealed in Glasgow, Scotland during COP27
  3. The World Bank will be in charge of the fund.

**How many of the above-mentioned statement(s) are correct?**

- a) Only one                      **b) Only two**  
c) All three                      d) None
3. Regarding "Kalbeliya dance," take into consideration the following claims.  
1. The tribe of the same name performs this Madhya Pradesh folk dance.  
2. The representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, as compiled by UNESCO, includes this dance.  
Choose the appropriate statement (s).  
a) 1 only                      **b) 2 only**  
c) Both 1 and 2              d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. The recently reported Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary is located in  
a) Uttarakhand              b) Chhattisgarh  
**c) Delhi**                      d) Gujarat
5. With regard to "Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN)," take into consideration the following claims.  
1. Its goal is to enhance the general welfare of every tribal household by concentrating on necessities like shelter, water, and sanitary facilities.  
2. Within the next three years, the Mission would be implemented with funding of 15,000 crore from the Development Action Plan for the Scheduled Tribes (DAPST).  
Select the Incorrect statement(s) from the following  
a) 1 only                      b) Both 1 and 2  
**c) 2 only**                      d) Neither 1 nor 2
6. Consider the following pairs:  
**Tribal community      Origin state**  
1. Soliga                      Karnataka  
2. Betta Kurumba      Andhra Pradesh  
3. Paniyan                      Madhya Pradesh  
How many of the pairs given above are correct?  
**a) Only one**                      b) Only two  
c) All three                      d) None
7. Considering the following claims in relation to India's 14th National Electricity Plan (NEP14):  
1. The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) is the one who produced the plan.  
2. By 2050, the plan wants to treble India's capacity for renewable energy.  
Which of the above statements is/are not correct?  
**a) 2 only**                      b) 1 only  
c) Both 1 and 2              d) Neither 1 nor 2
8. In light of the Golden Gate Declaration, consider the following statements:  
1. The Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leadership forum issued the statement.  
2. The goal of the declaration is to develop a sustainable and resilient AI for All.  
3. The proclamation includes Putrajaya Vision 2040, which aspires to create an Asia-Pacific community by 2040 that is open, dynamic, resilient, and peaceful.  
How many of the statements given above are correct?  
a) Only one                      **b) Only two**  
c) All three                      d) None
9. Consider the following statements regarding Hammer Candlesticks in Trading:  
1. It occurs when a securities opens substantially higher than it trades at and then quickly climbs to close close to the opening price.  
2. It could be used as a pre-emptive intraday signal to point to a change in a bullish or bearish trend.  
Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?  
**a) 1 only**                      b) 2 only  
c) Both 1 and 2              d) Neither 1 nor 2
10. Santjordia Pagesi" made headlines recently. It is a type of  
a) Snail                      b) Butterfly  
**c) Jellyfish**                      d) Salamander