

POLITY AND CONSTITUTION

Context: Election Commission of India and its functions, Independence, appointment procedure

In News, why?

- A bill outlining the processes for selecting Election Commissioners (EC) and Chief Election Commissioners (CEC) was recently approved by the Rajya Sabha. It is titled Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023.
- The goal of the Act is to increase appointment process transparency in response to a Supreme Court of India direction.

Which are the Bill's Principal Provisions?

- The Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act of 1991 is being replaced by the Bill.
- It deals with the CEC and ECs' appointment, compensation, and removal.
- Procedure for Appointment: The President shall appoint the CEC and ECs based on the Selection Committee's proposal.
- The Prime Minister, a Union Cabinet Minister, and the Leader of the Opposition or the head of the biggest opposition party in the Lok Sabha shall make up the Selection Committee.
- Even in the event that this Committee has a vacancy, the recommendations made by the Selection Committee will remain in effect.
- A list of names will be recommended to the Selection Committee by the Search Committee, which is led by the Cabinet Secretary.
- Possessing (or having held) a position comparable to that of Secretary to the central government makes one eligible for the positions.

Modifications to Salary and Terms:

- The CEC and ECs will have the same pay and working conditions as the Cabinet Secretary.
- It was the same as a Supreme Court judge's remuneration under the 1991 Act.

Method of Removal:

- Article 324(5) of the Constitution, which permits the removal of the CEC on the same grounds as a Supreme Court judge but restricts the removal of ECs to the CEC's recommendation, is preserved in the Bill.

Safety for ECs and CECs:

- The bill shields CECs and ECs from lawsuits pertaining to actions they took while serving, as long as those actions were performed in the course of performing their official duties.
- The purpose of the amendment was to protect these officials from lawsuits or other legal actions pertaining to their official duties.

Currently, how are the ECs and CECs appointed?

- Constitutional Provisions: Part XV of the Constitution, which deals with elections, consists of just five articles (324–329).
- The Constitution does not specify a legislative procedure for the CEC and EC appointments.
- According to Article 324 of the Constitution, an Election Commission made up of "the Chief Election Commissioner and such number of other Election Commissioners, if any, as the President may from time to time fix" is given "superintendence, direction and control of elections."
- On the recommendation of the Prime Minister-led Union Council of Ministers, the President appoints the new member.
- The Prime Minister is presented with a list of qualified applicants to choose from by the Law Minister. The President makes the appointment on the advice of the PM.

Elimination:

- They are free to leave at any moment, or they can be fired before their term is up.
- Only Parliament can remove the CEC from office through a procedure akin to that of a SC judge.
- Removal of any other EC requires the CEC's recommendation.

What are the Concerns Regarding the Bill?

- Transparency and Independence: The diversity and independence of the Selection Committee may be compromised if its recommendations were to remain in effect even in the event of a vacancy. This could lead to a monopoly of ruling party members in specific situations.
- Transition from Judicial Model to Executive Authority:
- Comparing the pay of the Cabinet Secretary, whose compensation is set by the executive branch, to that of the CECs and ECs raises questions about possible government influence.
- In contrast to the remuneration of a Supreme Court judge, which is determined by an Act of Parliament, this change could jeopardize the EC's financial stability.

Restricting Qualifications to Civil Servants:

- Limiting eligibility to those who have held a government position equivalent to that of Secretary may disqualify otherwise eligible applicants, thereby reducing the variety of experiences and specializations within the ECI.

Concerns Regarding Parity Deficit:

- The constitutional clause that permits the CEC to be dismissed similarly to a Supreme Court judge and restricts the removal of ECs to the CEC's recommendation is preserved in the Bill.
- The unfairness of the removal procedures may be questioned in light of this disparity.

Conclusion:

The Election Commission of India has supervisory and directing responsibility for the whole process of election to the legislatures of each and every state with India's President and Vice President and it also helps to conduct election of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha

CLIMATE CHANGE**Context: The nature of the future****Introduction**

December 13, a day later than scheduled, marked the end of the 28th Conference of Parties (COP28) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The war against climate change was lost, but the struggle over words and phrases was won.

The hazard posed by rising global temperatures to life on Earth

- According to the most recent assessment reports of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which were part of the stocktake, the states parties' current nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to the UNFCCC, if fully implemented, will only reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by a pitiful 2% by 2030 compared to 2019.
- On the other hand, in order to have a 50% chance of keeping the increase in global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2050, global emissions must peak by 2025, which is just two years from now, and then reduce by 43% by 2030 and 60% by 2035.
- There is a huge disparity, and it would be unrealistic to think that these low goals will be met.
- The average world temperature has already increased by 1.1 degrees Celsius from the pre-industrial era.

The difficulties in realizing the committed NDC

- A number of developing countries' NDCs cannot be achieved unless they can obtain the necessary funding and technological assistance from affluent nations.
- Thus far, the record is awful. Developed nations committed to giving developing nations \$100 billion annually to help them take climate action in 2009.
- This number has never before been reached. Even the tiny amounts stated include dubious funding sources such private capital flows, charity transfers, and occasionally even current overseas development assistance (ODA).
- It was appropriate for the Indian Minister of Environment and Climate Change to bring up the need for a consensus definition of climate finance during the meeting.
- Concerns regarding the \$89.6 billion that the OECD is claiming for 2021 have been raised.
- Less than \$25 billion comes from a more thorough examination by OXFAM, which is also more in line with the estimates provided by our own Finance Ministry.

- Despite this, the \$89.6 billion amount is mentioned in the declaration along with the uninspiring claim that there are many meanings of climate funding.

It seems unlikely that sufficient funding will be raised (IPCC report).

- First, it projects that developing nations will require between \$5.8 and \$5.9 trillion, or about \$800 billion annually, over the course of the next seven years in order to implement their NDCs between now and 2030.
- Two, between \$215 to \$387 billion annually would be needed for adaptation alone throughout that time. Just \$188 million more has been promised to the Adaptation Fund as of yet.
- Three, there is a loss and damage fund at COP28, which is a big and good step forward, but so far there have only been commitments of \$770.6 million. What constitutes irreversible loss and damage resulting from man-made climate impacts is unclear, as is the category of developing nations that could stand to gain from such consequences. It is unlikely that India would be in that list.
- As inflationary pressures and poor growth plague the majority of industrialized nations, it is naive to believe that financial flows will spike in the next years.

A few advantages of COP28

- First off, this is the first COP to recognize that we need to address the source of emissions as well as the emissions themselves—the fossil fuel-based energy system that drives all economic activity.
- Secondly, there are more realistic goals like tripling the global installed capacity of renewable energy to 11,000 GW by 2030 and tripling the yearly rate of energy efficiency advances from 2% to 4% by 2030. India is the leader in both categories.
- Three, green and blue hydrogen as well as nuclear energy have been introduced as clean energy sources for the first time. These are the sectors on which India is presently concentrating.
- At recent COPs, there has been a trend of interested nations coming together to enact policies, pledge resources, and establish goals for climate action across several industries.
- Among them is a US-led program to cut methane emissions that was approved at COP26.
- We now have a Nuclear Power Group of 28 countries at COP28, with the goal of tripling nuclear power capacity by 2030, as well as the Powering Past Coal Alliance.
- India has typically avoided these alliances, opting instead to follow the UNFCCC's agreed targets.
- India is relieved that the declaration merely asks for a "phase-down" of coal power, not a complete phase-out.

Conclusion

We are finally getting close to realizing that the globe is facing a greater ecological crisis than only climate change and that actions taken in one area have repercussions in other areas. Approaching the resolution of such intricately linked problems through a cross-disciplinary and cross-domain perspective is the only viable option. If nothing else, COP28 has given us a direction to go.

PRELIM FACTS**1. Naya Savera Program.**

Context: Under the Naya Savera Scheme, 1,19,223 minority students and candidates have received training.

Ministry: The program was started in 2007 by the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

Criteria: Candidates must be members of one of the six minority groups that have been notified: Sikh, Jain, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, or Parsi.

Goal: To support candidates and students by providing specialized tutoring for qualifying exams required for admission to technical/professional programs and competitive exams needed for hiring into Group "A," "B," and "C" services as well as other comparable positions under the Central and State governments, which includes public sector organizations, banks, and railroads.

2. The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace

Context: The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development for 2023 has been jointly awarded to Daniel Barenboim and Ali Abu Award for Israel-Palestine conflict resolution efforts.

- In 1986, a trust in the former prime minister's honor established the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament, and Development.

- The prize is granted to people or groups that strive to establish a new global economic order guarantee scientific advancements are applied to expand freedom and improve mankind, and promote global peace and development.
- It includes a citation and a financial reward of 25 lakh rupees.
- Categories: Three categories are used to deliver the award:
- Peace: Acknowledges initiatives aimed at advancing and preserving world peace and security.
- Disarmament: Recognizes efforts to lessen and eventually eradicate weapons of mass devastation.
- Development: Honors efforts to advance social and economic development.

3. New Delhi Declaration

Context: The New Delhi declaration, which emphasizes the necessity of mitigating dangers emerging from the development and deployment of artificial intelligence (AI) systems, was unanimously endorsed by the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), an alliance of 29 nations.

Important information:

- The statement is strikingly different from the deal struck a month earlier at the United Kingdom AI Safety Summit at Bletchley Park, Buckinghamshire, where nations pledged to address the dangers posed by AI systems first.
- Achieving a balance between innovation and the risks connected with AI systems has been the goal of the New Delhi declaration.
- Although it is generally positive about the financial advantages that artificial intelligence (AI) can provide, it also raises concerns about justice, privacy, and intellectual property rights that will have to be taken into consideration.

The announcement of GPAI New Delhi:

- According to the declaration, a global framework for the application of AI should be based on
 1. Democratic values and human rights;
 2. Protecting people's dignity and well-being;
 3. Guaranteeing the protection of personal data
 4. Preserving applicable intellectual property rights
 5. Promoting innovation
 6. Encouraging the use of AI in a trustworthy, responsible, sustainable, and human-centered manner.
- Supporting AI innovation in the agriculture industry as a new thematic goal was also agreed upon in the declaration.
- The declaration also agreed to support AI innovation in the agriculture sector as a new thematic priority.

4.PACE Mission

NASA is preparing for the launch of the Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, Ocean Ecosystem (PACE) mission in early 2024, which will deepen our understanding of Earth's atmosphere.

Concerning PACE Mission:

- In order to gain a better understanding of how light, aerosols, and clouds interact with one another and affect air quality and climate, the mission will make use of sophisticated polarimeters.
- In addition to analyzing aerosols, the PACE mission will investigate ocean color.
- The Ocean Colour Instrument (OCI), the main scientific tool for PACE, measures the color of the ocean in a range of wavelengths, from ultraviolet to shortwave infrared.
- It will have two polarimeters: the Hyper Angular Research Polarimeter (HARP2) and the Spectropolarimeter for Planetary Exploration (SPeXone).
- When combined, these two will provide complementing spatial coverage, polarimetric accuracy, and spectral and angular sampling.
- Beyond what the OCI alone could accomplish, this combination seeks to deliver enhanced atmospheric correction and a wide spectrum of aerosol and cloud science data.
- Research on aerosols, clouds, and oceans is about to advance significantly because to the combined efforts of OCI, SPeXone, and HARP2.

5. Indian Tent turtle

Context: 436 newborn Indian Tent turtles were recently taken from a person who was unlawfully transferring them across state lines by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Zonal Unit, Lucknow.

About Indian Tent Turtle:

- One species of turtle in the Geoemydidae family is the Indian tent turtle (*Pangshura tentoria*).
- It is mostly a herbivorous species and an energetic swimmer.
- Its habitats include slow-moving water close to the riverbanks and still-water pools beside rivers.
- Distribution: Bangladesh, Nepal, and India are the natural habitats of the species.
- Status of conservation: Schedule 1 of the Wild Life (Protection) Act of 1972
- IUCN Status of Least Concern.
- CITES: Second Appendix.
- Principal Dangers: The species is illegally marketed in the pet market because of its appealing appearance.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. The Indian Constitution is a dynamic document that is always evolving. The constitution was designed with a progressive society in mind. Explain highlighting the growing scope of the right to life and individual freedom.

Introduction

The Constitution is a living document since it allows for periodic upgrades and amendments in response to changing social circumstances. One prominent example of this is the "right to life and personal liberty" as stated in Article 21, which continues to expand upon new insights throughout time.

The Indian Constitution's Dynamism

- Abolition of Privy Purse: In an effort to promote equality, the 26th Amendment to the Constitution removed the privileges of previous rulers in a socially progressive move.
- Raising the Number of Lok Sabha Seats: In order to guarantee adequate representation, the number of seats must rise in proportion to the population.
- Basic Structure theory: The emergence of the "basic structure doctrine" following the famous Keshvananda Bharti case demonstrates the dynamic nature of the Constitution.

Fresh perspectives under Article 21

- Right to Privacy: The Supreme Court ruled in the 2017 case of Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) v. Union of India that this right is inalienable under Article 21.
- Right to Shelter: In *Rajesh Yadav v. State of UP*, the court recognized this right and declared that it is the state's responsibility to provide housing for the occupants.
- Rights of Transgender People: Reiterated in the 2014 *NALSA v. Union of India* decision, it upheld their rights to liberty, dignity, and non-discrimination.
- Right to Die with Dignity: The Supreme Court ruled in *Common Cause v. Union of India* that physician-assisted suicide (PAS), also referred to as passive euthanasia, is protected by Article 21.

Conclusion

Through a number of enacted amendments, the Constitution has changed throughout time. The Indian Constitution is progressive, as evidenced by the expanding scope of the "right to life and personal liberty" granted by Article 21.

MCQs

1. Often seen in news, the 'Duqm port' is located in which of the following region?
a) Iran
b) Iraq
c) **Oman**
d) Saudi Arabia
2. Regarding the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), consider the following statements:
 1. It is a military alliance established by the Washington Treaty.
 2. Its protection does extend to members' civil wars or internal coups.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
3. Regarding the Consumer Price Index (CPI), consider the following statements:
1. The National Statistical Office (NSO) releases it.
 2. It determines the price differential between goods and services that Indian consumers purchase for their own use, including food, healthcare, education, and gadgets.
- 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
4. In the context of 'Indian Tent Turtle', consider the following statements
1. One species of turtle in the Geoemydidae family is the Indian tent turtle (*Pangshura tentoria*).
 2. Its natural habitat consists of mangroves, estuaries, and the shallow seabed.
 3. It is listed as an endangered species in the IUCN Redbook
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- a) Only one**
 - b) Only two
 - c) All three
 - d) None
5. Recently, NASA's PACE mission was in the news. It will study which one of the following?
- a) Ocean Ecosystem**
 - b) Solar Storms
 - c) Space junk
 - d) Jupiter's moons
6. Recently, 'Mosasaur' was in the news. It is a/an
- a) Extinct marine reptile from late Cretaceous period**
 - b) Extinct sharks from late Cretaceous period
 - c) Extinct One-horned ceratopsians late Cretaceous period
 - d) Extinct amphibian species from late Cretaceous period
7. Recently, the 'New Delhi Declaration' was in the news. It is related to which one of the following fields?
- a) Security of the Indian Ocean
 - b) Artificial Intelligence**
 - c) Russia-Ukraine conflict
 - d) Conservation of Tigers
8. Recently, 'Barracuda' was in the news. It is a/an
- a) Portable anti-tank missile
 - b) Solar-electric boat**
 - c) Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
 - d) Anti-drone system
9. Consider the following statements about Indira Gandhi Peace Prize
1. It is an annual award established by the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust in India since 1986.
 2. The award is given to individuals or organisations that work towards ensuring international peace and development.
 3. It consists of a monetary award of 25 lakh rupees along with a citation.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- a) Only one
 - b) Only two
 - c) All three**
 - d) None of the above
10. Consider the following statements about Naya Savera Scheme
1. It is a programme of the Ministry of Skill Development with loan assistance from the World Bank.
 2. It aims to improve short-term skill training qualitatively and quantitatively through strengthening institutions for marginalized sections of society.
- Choose the incorrect statements:
- a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) Both 1 and 2**
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2