Prelim Bits 27-03-2024 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Postal Ballot Voting

The Election Commission of India (ECI) announced that media persons covering polling day activities are now eligible to vote in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections 2024 and state Assembly polls through postal ballots.

- The ECI has provisions for allowing its citizens to cast vote during an election in three different ways: In person, by post, and through a proxy.
- While in-person voting obviously involves the voter to be physically present at the polling booth, the other two allows certain voters to exercise their Right to Adult Franchise from a distance.
- **Postal ballots –** They are also known as mail-in ballots, allow registered voters to cast their votes by mail instead of physically going to a polling station.
- The system is an alternative for individuals unable to vote in person due to reasons, such as being away from their constituency, disability, or performing essential services on Election Day.

Postal ballot voting process has allowed more inclusivity and accessibility in the electoral process.

- **Eligibility –** Eligible electors who can opt to vote through postal ballots include:
    1. **Service voters –** Members of the armed forces, paramilitary forces, and government employees deployed on election duty far from their home constituencies.
    2. **Absentee voters –** Individuals unable to vote in person due to reasons like work commitments, illness, or disability.
    3. **Electors on election duty –** Government officials and polling staff assigned duties at polling stations other than their own.
    4. **Electors under preventive detention –** Individuals detained under preventive custody orders during the election period.
    5. **Essential services covering polling day activities –** Media persons with authorization letters from the EC and those involved in essential services such as metros, railways, and healthcare have the option to vote using postal ballots in Lok Sabha and four state Assembly polls.

In October 2019, the Ministry of Law and Justice amended the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, lowered the age from 85 to 80 and allowed Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) to cast votes through postal ballots in the 2020 Delhi Assembly polls.

- **Applying for postal ballot –** To apply for a postal ballot, eligible voters must apply, Form 12 D, to the returning officer (RO) of their respective constituency.
    1. **Service voters –** For service voters, the RO sends the postal ballot paper through the record office, directly or through the Ministry of External Affairs for service voters serving outside India.
    2. **Seniors citizens –** For senior citizens, a team of two polling officials, a videographer, and security personnel will visit the residence of the elector to facilitate this process.
- **Process –** The process of casting the postal vote is as follows:
    1. Receiving the postal ballot
    2. Marking the ballot
    3. Completing the declaration form
    4. Sealing the envelope
    5. Returning the postal
- **Counting –** Postal ballots are counted separately from votes cast at polling stations.
- On the designated counting day, postal ballots are collected by postal authorities and brought to the counting centre.
- Counting of postal ballot paper starts half an hour before counting of votes on EVMs.
- The RO and election officials scrutinise postal ballots for validity and integrity, adding valid ballots to the respective candidate's vote count.

Quick Facts
Proxy Voting
• Proxy voting allows a registered elector to delegate his voting rights to a representative he nominates. • This was introduced in 2003 for very few countries to have such a provision. • Notably, only classified service voter serving in the armed forces or paramilitary forces is allowed to avail of these benefits; the proxy, too, must be a registered voter of the same constituency.

References

1. Business Standard – Postal Ballot Voting
2. India Today – What is a postal ballot?

District Election Management Plan (DEMP)

A cornerstone of election planning process is the District Election Management Plan (DEMP), a comprehensive document that uses statistics and analysis to ensure the smooth conduct of elections.

- **DEMP –** As per the Election Commission of India, the DEMP is to be prepared at least six months before the tentative poll day.
- However, it becomes necessary to revise/update the plan occasionally.
- Executing the DEMP requires a collaborative effort involving election officials, administrative authorities, law enforcement agencies etc.
- Regular interactions with political parties and media are also planned to brief them on electoral rules.
- **Elements –** The plan starts with a district profile that serves as the foundation of the

electoral strategy.
- This includes a political map outlining constituencies, key demographic and infrastructure statistics, a brief on the district's administrative setup and socio-economic features.
- The plan encompasses detailed strategies for improving the availability and accessibility of polling stations, ensuring that all stations have essential facilities.
- Another critical component of the DEMP is the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) plan, which focuses on increasing electoral participation.
- Activities under the SVEEP plan include the use of social media, engagement with various community and youth organisations, and organising events leading up to the poll day to increase awareness and participation.
- The plan also includes training district-level teams to enforce the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and providing a training program for all election personnel to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge.
- **Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) –** Material management is a crucial component of the DEMP involving procuring 61 essential items, including indelible ink, seals, stamps, stationary and statutory forms.
- These items are categorised based on the level at which they are to be procured (State/U.T. or district level), with timelines ranging from two-to-three weeks to four months before the election.
- EVMs management is crucial with plans necessary for secure storage and availability of EVMs and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs), including plans for their transportation and maintenance.

References

1. The Hindu – What is the district election management plan?
2. CEO Madhya Pradesh – District Election Management Plan (DEMP)
3. CEO Rajasthan – District Election Management Plan (DEMP)

Ramakrishna Mission

Ramakrishna Mission president Swami Smaranananda passed away due to old age ailments at the age of 95.

- It is a Hindu religious and spiritual organization that is at the heart of the Ramakrishna Movement, also known as the Vedanta Movement.
- The mission was created on May 1, 1897, by Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's principal follower Swami Vivekananda.
- It is named after and inspired by the Indian spiritual Guru Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.
- **Ideals –** The organization primarily promotes Advaita Vedanta, a Hindu philosophy, as well as four yogic ideals: Jnana, Bhakti, Karma, and Raja yoga.
- **Math –** At Baranagar, the first Math was founded and another math was established in Belur in 1899, and it became the central math.
- It is responsible for the organizing and operation of all maths' located across India and even beyond the country.

- It is also the educational center for the Ramakrishna Mission's saints.
- **Goals –** The mission's goals included assisting the impoverished, improving women's situation, combating untouchability and superstition, and overhauling the educational system.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886)
• He was born in a Brahmana family in Bengal on 18th February 1836. • His birth name is Gadadhar Chattopadhyaya and later came to be known as Ramakrishna Paramahansa. • His father was Khudiram Chatterjee and mother was Chandramani Devi. • Ramakrishna dedicated his life to God and was a devotee of Goddess Kali. • Ramakrishna was a priest in the Dakshineswar Kali Temple and attracted several monastic and householder disciples. • Ramakrishna Paramahamsa highlighted the essential unity of religions and the need to lead a spiritual life. • He believed that the different religions of the world are only different ways to reach the same god.
Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902)
• Swami Vivekananda was born in 1863 as Narendranath in a Bengali family. • He was monk, a chief disciple of the Indian mystic Ramakrishna and the founder of Ramakrishna Mutt. • In 1888, Narendra left the monastery and travelled extensively in India for five years. • In 1893 Vivekananda represented India and Hinduism in The Parliament of the World's Religion in Chicago. • In 1894, he founded the Vedanta Society in New York to study, practice and propagate the principles of Vedanta. • He was a key figure in the introduction of the Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga to the Western world. • He raised interfaith awareness, as his two favorite books being Bhagavad Gita and The Imitation of Christ and contributed to the concept of nationalism in colonial India. • In 1902, he died at the age 0f 39, with the rupture of a blood vessel in his brain being the possible cause of death

References

1. The Hindu – Ramakrishna Mission president passes away
2. Hindustan Times – Ramakrishna Mission president dies at 95
3. Times of India – Ramakrishna Paramahansa Jayanti 2024

Krishi Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC)

Agriculture Minister inaugurated a Krishi Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) set up at Krishi Bhavan in New Delhi, a big-screen dashboard of all digital innovations in the sector.

- The ICCC is a tech-based solution involving multiple IT applications and platforms, which is designed to help in making informed decisions.
- The centre is housed in the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, which is responsible for legislation, policy formation, and implementation of initiatives in the agriculture sector.

- ICCC uses technologies such as artificial intelligence, remote sensing, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to collect and process large amounts of granular data and present it in graphical format.
- The granular data includes data on temperatures, rainfall, wind speed, crop yields and production estimations.
- **Output –** On 8 large, 55-inch LED screens installed at the ICCC, one can see information on crop yields, production, drought situation, cropping patterns (geographic region-wise and year-wise) in map, timeline, and drill-down views.
- One can also see the relevant trends, outliers, and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and receive insights, alerts, and feedback on agriculture schemes, programmes, projects, and initiatives.
- The ICCC uses platforms including the Krishi Decision Support System (DSS) to collect micro-level data, process it, and present the macro picture.
- The ICCC has a contact centre and a helpdesk facility, with the operator's handset capable of being converted into a call centre.
- If needed, farmer beneficiaries can interact directly with officials or the Minister through video conferencing facilities.
- **Objectives –** The ICCC will enable comprehensive monitoring of the farm sector by making available at one place geospatial information received from multiple sources.
- The sources of ICCC includes:
    1. Data from remote sensing
    2. Plot-level data received through soil survey
    3. Weather data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD)
    4. Sowing data from Digital Crop Survey
    5. Farmer- and farm-related data from Krishi MApper, an application for geo-fencing and geo-tagging of land
    6. Market intelligence information from the Unified Portal for Agricultural Statistics (UPAg)
    7. Yield estimation data from the General Crop Estimation Survey (GCES)
- The integrated visualization of the data will enable quick and efficient decision-making by the ICCC ecosystem can be linked with the PM-Kisan chatbot going forward.

ICCC can create an ecosystem based on which individual farmer-level advisories can be generated through apps like Kisan e-mitra, a chatbot developed for PM-Kisan beneficiaries.

- **Applications –** The ICCC allows visualization of GIS based soil carbon mapping as well as soil health card data for a particular district together at one place.
    1. **Drought Actions –** Increase or decrease in yield from a specific region (as per GCES data) can be correlated with weather, rainfall, and other information visualized through the Drought Portal.
    2. **Crop Diversification –** An analysis of crop diversification maps, together with field variability for paddy, will enable decision-makers to identify regions with scope for diversified cropping.
    3. **Farm Data Repository –** Krishi Decision Support System (K-DSS), a platform under development, will act as an agriculture data repository.

    - Integrated spatial and non-spatial data will be superimposed as a layer on the GIS map, and various AI/ ML models would be run on the data.
    - The K-DSS will help in evidence-based, efficient, and data-driven decision-making, and assist in preparing customised advisories for farmers.
4. **Validation of Yield –** Yield as captured through Krishi MApper can be analysed with the yield generated through GCES application for a plot.

Reference

The Indian Express – Integrated farm data dashboard for customised solutions

India Employment Report 2024

The recently released India Employment Report 2024 has highlighted the issue of high unemployment amongst India's educated youth.

- Unemployment is the condition of one who is capable of working, actively seeking work, but unable to find any work.
- **Report prepared by** – Institute for Human Development (IHD) and International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Key findings

- **Unemployment** – India's youth account for almost ***83%*** of the unemployed workforce.
- The Labour Force Participation Rate, Worker Population Ratio and the Unemployment Rate showed a long-term deterioration between 2000 and 2018, but witnessed an improvement after 2019.
- The youth unemployment rate increased with the level of education, with the highest among graduates and higher among women than men.
- **Nature of work** – Most of the workers remain engaged in informal work and the share of regular work declined after 2018.
- **Skill development** – India's large young workforce don't appear to have the necessary skills with 75% of youth unable to send emails with attachments.
- **Gender gap** – Among the educated unemployed youths, women accounted for a larger share (76.7%) than men (62.2%).
- India is also facing the challenge of a substantial gender gap in the labour market, with low rates of female labour force participation.
- **Demographic dividend** – India remains ready to reap a demographic dividend for at least another decade due to the youth population remaining at 23% of the total in 2036 from 27% in 2021.

- **Areas for action** – The report highlighted 5 key policy areas for further action:
    1. Promoting job creation
    2. Improving employment quality
    3. Addressing labour market inequalities

4. Strengthening skills and active labour market policies
5. Bridging the knowledge deficits on labour market patterns and youth employment

References

1. The Hindu – Employment scenario in India grim, says ILO report
2. Business Standard – India Employment Report 2024

Other Important Topics	
Art forms in Tamil Nadu	
Folk Dances	**Features**
Poikkaal Kuthirai Aattam	• It involves a dummy horse with a gap in the middle for the dancer to fit into. • It is also known as puravi attam.
Oyillattam	• It tells stories from mythology, and is traditionally performed by **men** wearing colorful handkerchiefs tied around their fingers and ankle bells. • It is also known as the "Dance of Beauty" or the "Dance of Grace.
Karagattam	• It involves balancing pots on the head while performing intricate dance movements. • The dance is performed to praise the rain goddess Mariamman. • It is a mixture of multiple forms of Tamil dance forms like Bharatanatyam postures and mudras.
Mayilattam	• It is a traditional dance from south India that is performed by **women** in Hindu temples in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. • The dance is performed in reverence to Lord Murugan. • It is also known as the peacock dance.
Space science and Technology Awareness Training (START) 2024 programme	

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will soon conduct the START 2024 programme.

• **Aim-** To attract the youngsters to the fields of space science and technology.

• **Hosted in -** Educational institutes, universities, colleges ***within India*** who are offering UG and PG courses in physical sciences and technology.

• **Domains -** The programme will cover various domains of space science, including Astronomy & Astrophysics, Heliophysics & Sun-Earth interaction, Instrumentation, and Aeronomy.

Senegal

Senegal's Bassirou Diomaye Faye appears to have won the recent presidential election.

• Senegal is a ***West African country*** with ***Dakar*** as its capital.

• Senegal is bounded to the north and northeast by the Senegal River, which separates it from Mauritania; to the east by Mali; to the south by Guinea and Guinea-Bissau; and to the west by the Atlantic Ocean.

• Senegal is crossed by 3 westbound rivers - Senegal River, Gambia River, Casamance River.

• Senegal is known as the Gateway to Africa.

• The country lies at an ecological boundary where semiarid grassland, oceanfront, and tropical rainforest converge.

• The Cape Verde (Cap Vert) Peninsula is the westernmost point of the African continent.

Magnetofossils

Scientists have discovered a 50,000-year-old sediment, a giant and one of the youngest magnetofossil in the Bay of Bengal.

• Magnetofossils are the fossilised remains of magnetic particles created by ***magnetotactic bacteria***, also known as magnetobacteria.

• They are found preserved within the geological records.

• The geologic record is a standard time scale that partitions the Earth's history into four eons and their subdivision of eras, periods, and epochs.

Magnetotactic bacteria

• These bacterias are mostly *prokaryotic organisms* that arrange themselves along the earth's magnetic field to reach places that had optimal oxygen concentration.

• These unique creatures were 1st described in ***1963,*** by ***Salvatore Bellini***, an Italian doctor and then again in ***1975 by Richard Blakemore*** of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Massachusetts.

• These magnetotactic bacteria create tiny crystals made of the iron-rich minerals magnetite or greigite.

Spiral galaxy NGC 1512

• NGC 1512 is a barred spiral galaxy in the ***Horologium constellation***, about 30 million light-years from Earth.
• It has a circular core, two dust lanes, and a diagonal bar structure.
• The bar is blue at the top, and looks braided with many spiral arms.
• NGC 1512 is part of the Physics at High Angular resolution in Nearby GalaxieS (PHANGS) program.



National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO)

The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has expressed concern over some States not compiling living and deceased donors' data.

• It is an apex organisation situated in New Delhi.
• It works under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
• **Aim -** To provide for an efficient and ***organised system of organ procurement and distribution*** in the country, and maintain a national registry of donors and recipients of organs and tissues.
• It was established under the ***Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA), 1994.***
• NOTTO also has a *National Organ Transplant Program (NOTP)* that aims to improve access to transplantation for needy citizens by promoting *deceased organ donation*.
• **Organ and tissue transplantation –**

1. It is a surgical procedure that involves removing an organ, tissue, or group of cells from one person (the donor) and transplanting it into another person (the recipient), or
2. Moving it from one site to another site in the same person.

Tamil Isai Movement

• The Tamil Isai movement is a fight to establish ***Tamil as a musical language.***
• The movement began in **1939** to promote Tamil songs and give them a prominent role in music concerts, instead of making them the end result.
• The movement also aims to oppose the dominance of Sanskrit and Telugu compositions.
• It gained momentum with the establishment of Tamil Isai Sangam, which was established in ***1943 by Annamalai Chettiar***.

Animal Birth Control (ABC) programme

• The Animal Birth Control (ABC) program aims to ***control the population of stray dogs in India without cruelty.***
• The program involves catching dogs, sterilizing them, vaccinating them against rabies, and releasing them back to their original location.
• The rules for the ABC program announced in April 2023 will replace the 2001 rules.
• It will be implemented by local bodies, municipalities, municipal corporations, and panchayats.
India accounts for 36% of the world's rabies deaths and 65% of rabies deaths in Southeast Asia.

Francis Scott Key bridge

Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge collapsed after a container ship with all Indian crew members smashed into the bridge's tower.
• The Francis Scott Key Bridge is situated in ***Maryland, U.S.***
• The bridge spanned across the ***Patapsco River and Baltimore harbour.***
• It was opened in **1977** in honour of ***Francis Scott Key***, a 19th Century Maryland poet who wrote the words for the US national anthem, the Star Spangled Banner.
• It is described as a ***continuous truss bridge***, and it is the 3rd longest bridge of its type in the world.

T Coronae Borealis (tau Coronae Borealis)

T Coronae Borealis, or T CrB, last exploded in 1946 and astronomers believe it will do so again between February and September 2024.

• T Coronae Borealis is a binary star system comprised of a cool red giant and a hot white dwarf star 3,000 light years away in the constellation ***Corona Borealis***.

• The smaller white dwarf has been stealing matter from the red giant and appears to be getting ready to emit a burst of energy, making it visible for at least a few days.

• It is known as a recurring nova where matter, mostly hydrogen, is collected by the white dwarf until enough mass is reached, creating a fusion reaction.

• That will then emit a burst of energy, which includes visible light.

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