



## Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana

**For Prelims:** [Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana](#), [Comptroller and Auditor-General of India \(CAG\)](#), [Socio-Economic Caste Census \(SECC\)](#), Health Insurance Scheme.

**For Mains:** Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, Issues with it and Way forward.

[Source: TH](#)

### Why in News?

Recently, The [Comptroller and Auditor-General of India's \(CAG\)](#) performance audit report flagged irregularities in the [Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana \(PMJAY\)](#).

### What are the Issues Highlighted By CAG?

- **Treatment of Dead Patients:**
  - The patients earlier shown as “dead” continued to **avail treatment under the scheme**.
  - The maximum number of such cases were in Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Jharkhand and minimum number of such cases were from Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Assam and Chandigarh.
  - 88,760 patients died during treatment **specified under the Scheme**. A total of 2,14,923 claims shown as paid in the system, related to fresh treatment in respect of these patients.
- **Unrealistic Household Sizes:**
  - There are instances where the **registered household sizes were unrealistically large, ranging from 11 to 201 members**.
  - Such discrepancies suggest a lack of **proper validation controls during the beneficiary registration process**.
- **Pensioners Availing Benefits:**
  - Pensioners in certain states were **found to possess PMJAY cards** and were availing treatment under the scheme.
  - Delayed actions to **remove ineligible beneficiaries** from the scheme led to ineligible **individuals receiving benefits** under the PMJAY.
- **Bogus Mobile Number and Aadhaar:**
  - It revealed that some **beneficiaries were registered with a single bogus mobile number**, potentially compromising the verification process.
  - Similarly, some Aadhaar numbers were linked to multiple beneficiaries, raising questions about proper verification.
- **Systemic Failures:**
  - CAG's report unearthed systemic issues, including **private hospitals performing public hospital-reserved procedures**, infrastructural inadequacies, equipment shortages, and medical malpractice cases.
  - Absence of **adequate validation controls**, invalid names, unrealistic date of birth, duplicate PMJAY IDs.
  - In several States and UTs, the available equipment in empanelled hospitals were found to be non-functional.

- **Pending Penalties:**
  - The report flagged pending penalties of Rs 12.32 crore from **100 hospitals across nine states.**
- **Issue of data collection in the Scheme:**
  - It is possible that some random ten-digit number **was entered by the field level workers in some cases.**
    - Further, necessary changes have been made in the **current IT portal used by the National Health Authority (NHA)** to capture only valid mobile numbers, in case the same is possessed by the beneficiary.

## What are the Clarifications Provided by the Government?

- **Mobile Numbers and Verification:**
  - The Ministry of Health clarified that mobile numbers were not used for beneficiary verification.
    - The scheme **primarily identifies beneficiaries through Aadhaar-based e-KYC**, and the mobile numbers were used for **communication and feedback purposes** rather than for verification.
- **Authentication Options:**
  - **NHA provided multiple options for beneficiary verification**, including fingerprint, iris scan, face authentication, and OTP.
    - Fingerprint-based authentication is **commonly used and helps ensure the accuracy of beneficiary verification.**

## What is Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY?

- **About:**
  - PM-JAY is the **world's largest health insurance** scheme fully financed by the government.
  - Launched in February 2018, it offers a sum insured of **Rs.5 lakh per family for secondary care** and tertiary care.
    - Health Benefit Packages covers surgery, medical and day care treatments, cost of medicines and diagnostics.
- **Beneficiaries:**
  - It is an entitlement-based scheme that targets the beneficiaries as identified by latest **[Socio-Economic Caste Census \(SECC\)](#)** data.
    - The National Health Authority (NHA) has provided flexibility to **States/UTs to use non- [Socio-Economic Caste Census \(SECC\)](#) beneficiary family databases** with similar socio-economic profiles for tagging against the leftover (unauthenticated) SECC families.
- **Funding:**
  - The funding for the scheme is shared – **60:40 for all states and UTs** with their own legislature, 90:10 in Northeast states and Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal and Uttarakhand and 100% Central funding for UTs without legislature.
- **Nodal Agency:**
  - The **[National Health Authority \(NHA\)](#)** has been constituted as an autonomous entity under the Society Registration Act, 1860 for effective implementation of PM-JAY in alliance with state governments.
  - The **State Health Agency (SHA)** is the apex body of the State Government responsible for the implementation of AB PM-JAY in the State.

## Way Forward

- The PMJAY's irregularities **demand corrective measures**, including stringent beneficiary verification, hospital oversight, and a robust grievance redressal mechanism to ensure the scheme's intended effectiveness.

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## Interventions under National Food Security Mission

**For Prelims:** [National Food Security Mission](#), [Green Revolution](#), [National Mission on Edible Oils - Oil Palm](#), [Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana](#), [Climate change](#), [Malnutrition](#)

**For Mains:** Major Interventions Under National Food Security Mission, Major Challenges Related to Food Security in India.

**Source:** [PIB](#)

### Why in News?

- Recently, the **Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare** provided valuable insights into the **developments under the National Food Security Mission** during a written reply in the Lok Sabha.

### What is the National Food Security Mission?

- **About:**
  - [National Food Security Mission \(NFSM\)](#) is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** launched in **2007** based on the recommendations of the agriculture sub-committee of **National Development Council (NDC)**.
    - The committee pointed out the **need for improved agricultural extension services, technology transfer and decentralized planning** as a result of which NFSM was conceptualized as a mission mode program.
- **Thrust Areas:**
  - Sustainable increase in the production of targeted crops such as **rice, wheat, pulses primarily and then extended to coarse cereals, nutri-cereals, and oilseeds** as well.
  - Restoration of soil fertility and productivity at the individual farm level.
  - Rise in farm level net income.

### What are the Major Interventions Under the National Food Security Mission?

- **Cluster Demonstrations and Improved Practices:** Assistance is extended to farmers through States/Union Territories to conduct cluster demonstrations that **showcase improved packages of agricultural practices**.
  - These demonstrations highlight techniques for optimized crop cultivation and management.
- **Seed Production and Distribution:** [High-yielding varieties](#) and **hybrids** are developed, produced, and distributed to farmers to enhance the quality and quantity of agricultural output.
- **Farm Mechanization and Resource Conservation:** The **implementation of modern and efficient farm machinery** and resource conservation tools fosters enhanced agricultural practices while optimizing resource utilization.
  - Investments in **processing and post-harvest equipment** enhance the overall value chain and reduce post-harvest losses.
- **Plant Protection and Nutrient Management:** Measures to safeguard crops against pests and

diseases, coupled with effective **nutrient management** and soil amelioration strategies, contribute to healthy plant growth.

- **Focused Approach to Oilseeds Production:** To bolster oilseed production and achieve self-sufficiency in edible oil, the **NFSM-Oilseeds initiative is designed. It involves:**
  - **Seed Subsidies and Distribution:** Financial incentives and subsidies facilitate the purchase and distribution of quality seeds, ensuring better crop yields.
  - **Demonstrations and Training:** Block demonstrations, front-line demonstrations, and cluster front-line demonstrations serve as platforms for showcasing effective oilseed cultivation practices.
  - **Infrastructure and Input Distribution:** Provision of essential resources like **water-carrying devices, plant protection equipment, soil enhancers**, micro-nutrients, and bio-agents fortifies oilseed cultivation.

#### Note:

- **National Mission on Edible Oils - Oil Palm (NMEO-OP):** To reduce edible oil imports led to the establishment of NMEO-OP in August 2021.
  - The mission emphasizes the expansion of **oil palm cultivation**, aiming to augment crude palm oil production, increase productivity, and ease the country's import burden.
- **Water Management for Sustainable Agriculture:**
  - **Per Drop More Crop (PDMC):** Launched in 2015-16, **PDMC** focuses on water use efficiency through micro-irrigation systems like drip and sprinkler irrigation.
    - It also emphasizes the **adoption of location-specific scientific techniques** and modern agronomic practices.
  - **Command Area Development & Water Management (CADWM):** Part of the **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana**, CADWM aims to enhance irrigation efficiency.
    - It includes the construction of lined field channels and underground pipelines for last-mile connectivity.
  - **Bureau of Water Use Efficiency (BWUE):** Established to regulate efficient water use in various sectors, the BWUE promotes strategies to improve water use efficiency in **irrigation, industries, and domestic settings**.
  - **National Water Mission (NWM):** **NWM** launched the '**SahiFasal**' campaign in 2019, which encourages farmers in water-stressed regions to cultivate crops that are **economically viable, water-efficient, and aligned with agro-climatic conditions**.

### What are the Major Challenges Related to Food Security in India?

- **Agricultural Challenges:** India's agricultural sector is vulnerable to various challenges such as unpredictable weather patterns due to **climate change, pest infestations, and soil degradation**.
  - These factors can lead to reduced crop yields and contribute to food scarcity.
- **Land Fragmentation: Subdivision of land due to inheritance laws** has led to small and fragmented land holdings.
  - This hampers the **adoption of modern farming techniques** and technologies that could increase productivity.
- **Lack of Diversification:** Over-reliance on a few staple crops limits dietary diversity. A diverse diet is essential for proper nutrition, and the **emphasis on a few crops like rice and wheat can contribute to malnutrition**.
- **Rising Food Prices:** Fluctuations in global and domestic food prices can make essential food items unaffordable for vulnerable populations.
  - Supply chain disruption led price volatility can lead to **sudden spikes in food insecurity**.

### Way Forward

- **Agro-Ecological Zoning:** Create detailed agro-ecological zoning maps using advanced geospatial analysis.
  - This would help **identify the most suitable crops for specific regions based on their**

**natural characteristics**, thus optimizing resource use and reducing the risk of crop failure.

- **Edible Landscaping in Urban Areas:** Encourage urban residents to convert their lawns and unused spaces into edible landscapes, growing fruits and vegetables.
  - This **decentralized approach** contributes to local food production and enhances community involvement.
- **Nutrient Recovery from Wastewater:** Implement systems to extract nutrients from wastewater and organic waste, then **convert these nutrients into fertilizers**.
  - This **reduces the need for synthetic fertilizers** and tackles water pollution simultaneously.
- **Artificial Intelligence Pest Detection:** Develop AI-powered cameras and sensors that can **detect pest and disease outbreaks early by analyzing subtle changes in plant health**, allowing for targeted interventions and reducing the need for widespread pesticide use.
- **Integrated Energy Farming:** Combine **agriculture with renewable energy production**.
  - Solar panels can be placed above crops, providing shade and reducing water evaporation, while generating clean energy to power agricultural equipment.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### **Prelims:**

**Q. With reference to the provisions made under the National Food Security Act, 2013, consider the following statements: (2018)**

1. The families coming under the category of 'below poverty line (BPL)' only are eligible to receive subsidized food grains.
2. The eldest woman in a household, of age 18 years or above, shall be the head of the household for the purpose of issuance of a ration card.
3. Pregnant women and lactating mothers are entitled to a 'take-home ration' of 1600 calories per day during pregnancy and for six months thereafter.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 3 only

**Ans: (b)**

### **Mains:**

**Q.1** In what way could replacement of price subsidy with Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) change the scenario of subsidies in India? Discuss. **(2015)**

## **CAG Report on National Social Assistance Programme**

**For Prelims:** National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), [Comptroller and Auditor General of India \(CAG\)](#)



**For Mains:** Significance of the CAG in ensuring transparency and accountability in government programs, National Social Assistance Programme, Ethical implications of Misuse of funds meant for welfare schemes.

[Source: IE](#)

## Why in News?

A recent report on the performance audit of the **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) from 2017-18 to 2020-21**" by the [Comptroller and Auditor General of India \(CAG\)](#) has revealed several irregularities and lapses in the planning, financial management, implementation and monitoring of the welfare scheme NSAP.

## What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Misuse of Pension Funds for Publicity:**
  - The [Ministry of Rural Development \(MoRD\)](#) diverted funds allocated for NSAP, which are meant for **disbursing pensions, towards publicity campaigns for other ministry schemes.**
  - The allocated funds for NSAP were **intended for pension disbursement and administrative expenses, with 3% set aside for the latter.**
  - Instances of diversion of funds were **identified both at the ministry and state/UTs levels.**
  - The MoRD initiated a **publicity campaign in 2017 through hoardings to promote various ministry programs.**
    - Rs 39.15 lakh was approved for hoardings, and Rs 2.44 crore was approved for campaigns across multiple states.
  - The funds allocated for the campaign were intended to be from the [National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme](#) but were sourced from **-NSAP schemes.**
- **Advertisement Discrepancies:**
  - The CAG found that the **advertisement work orders did not include NSAP schemes but highlighted schemes like [Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana - Gramin \(PMAY-G\)](#) and [Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana \(DDU-GKY\).](#)**
- **States Implicated in Fund Diversion:**
  - Six states - **Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jammu & Kashmir, Odisha, Goa, and Bihar** - were found to have diverted funds meant for pension schemes.
- **Implications and Beneficiary Impact:**
  - Planned **Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities** under NSAP were adversely affected due to fund diversion.
  - Funds amounting to **Rs 2.83 crore, initially earmarked for NSAP IEC, were used for promoting other ministry schemes.**

## What is the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)?

- **About:**
  - NSAP was launched on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1995 as a [Centrally Sponsored Scheme.](#)
  - NSAP represents a significant step towards the fulfilment of the [Directive Principles](#) in Articles 41 and 42 of the Constitution of India.
  - NSAP aims to provide support to **aged persons, widows, disabled persons and bereaved families** on the death of the **primary income producer, belonging to below-poverty-line households.**
- **Components:**
  - **NSAP has Five Sub-Schemes:**
    - **Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS):** Under the scheme, BPL persons aged 60 years or above are entitled to a monthly pension of Rs. 200/- up to 79 years of age and Rs.500/- thereafter.

- **Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS):** BPL widows aged 40-59 years are entitled to a monthly pension of Rs. 200/-.
  - **Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS):** BPL persons aged 18-59 years with severe and multiple disabilities are entitled to a **monthly pension of Rs. 200/-**.
  - **National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS):** Under the scheme a BPL household is entitled to a lump sum amount of money on the death of a primary breadwinner aged between 18 and 64 years. The amount of assistance is Rs. 10,000/-.
  - **Annapurna:** Under the scheme, **10 kg of food grains per month** are provided free of cost to those senior citizens who, though eligible, have remained uncovered under NOAPS.
- **Implementation:**
    - NSAP is implemented by the **Ministry of Rural Development in collaboration with the state/UT governments.**
    - NSAP uses **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode to transfer funds** to the beneficiaries bank accounts or postal accounts.
    - NSAP has a web portal that provides information on guidelines, reports, circulars, grievance redressal, etc.
  - **Impact**
    - NSAP has helped in **reducing poverty, improving living standards, and enhancing the dignity and empowerment of the beneficiaries.**
    - NSAP has also contributed to the achievement of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** related to poverty eradication, social protection and inclusion.
    - Approximately **4.65 crore beneficiaries relied on old age, widow, disability pensions, and family benefits annually between 2017-21.**

## Who is the CAG?

- CAG is an **independent authority under the Constitution of India.**
- He is the **head of the Indian audit & account department and chief Guardian of Public purse.**
- It is the **institution through which the accountability of the government and other public authorities (all those who spend public funds) to Parliament and State Legislatures and through them to the people is ensured.**
- The Comptroller and Auditor-General **shall not be eligible for further office either under the Government of India or under the Government of any State** after he has ceased to hold his office.
- **Article 148 provides for an independent office of the CAG.**
  - Other Provisions Related to CAG include: Articles 149-151 (Duties & Powers, Form of Accounts of the Union and the States and Audit Reports), Article 279 (calculation of net proceeds, etc.) and Third Schedule (Oath or Affirmation) and Sixth Schedule (Administration of Tribal Areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram).

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### Prelims

**Q1. In India, other than ensuring that public funds are used efficiently and for intended purpose, what is the importance of the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)? (2012)**

1. CAG exercises exchequer control on behalf of the Parliament when the President of India declares national emergency/financial emergency
2. CAG reports on the execution of projects or programmes by the ministries are discussed by the

Public Accounts Committee.

- Information from CAG reports can be used by investigating agencies to press charges against those who have violated the law while managing public finances.
- While dealing with the audit and accounting of government companies, CAG has certain judicial powers for prosecuting those who violate the law.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1, 3 and 4 only  
(b) 2 only  
(c) 2 and 3 only  
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

**Ans: (c)**

## **Mains**

**Q1.** “The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has a very vital role to play.” Explain how this is reflected in the method and terms of his appointment as well as the range of powers he can exercise. **(2018)**

**Q2.** Exercise of CAG’s powers in relation to the accounts of the Union and the States is derived from Article 149 of the Indian Constitution. Discuss whether audit of the Government’s policy implementation could amount to overstepping its own (CAG) jurisdiction. **(2016)**

## **The CEC and Other ECs (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023**

**For Prelims:** Proposed Bill for Selection of Chief Election Commissioner, [Chief Election Commissioner \(CEC\)](#) and Election Commissioners, [Supreme Court](#), [Public Interest Litigation](#), [Article 324](#), [Model Code of Conduct](#).

**For Mains:** Proposed Bill for Selection of Chief Election Commissioner, its Significance and Associated Concerns.

**Source:** [IE](#)

### **Why in News?**

Recently, the Government has introduced a bill in the Rajya Sabha aiming to alter the process of appointing the [Chief Election Commissioner \(CEC\)](#) and Election Commissioners (ECs).

- The Bill seeks to remove the [Chief Justice of India \(CJI\)](#) from a panel to select the CEC and ECs.
- This move has sparked discussions regarding the **composition of the selection committee and its implications** for the independence of the process.

### **What is the Background?**

- The [Supreme Court \(SC\)](#) in March 2023 ruled that CEC and ECs will be appointed by the President of India **on the advice of a Committee consisting of the Prime Minister, and**



**Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha**, and the **Chief Justice of India** until a law is enacted by Parliament on their appointments.

- This ruling emerged from a **2015 Public Interest Litigation (PIL)** challenging the appointment process.

Note: The judgement by a bench led by **Justice KM Joseph** came in a **2015 PIL**, challenging the constitutional validity of the practice of the **Centre-appointed members** of the Election Commission. **In 2018, a two-judge bench** of the SC referred the case to a larger bench since it required a **close examination of Article 324 of the Constitution**.

- **Article 324(2) Reads:** The Election Commission shall consist of the Chief Election Commissioner and such number of other Election Commissioners, if any, as the President may from time-to-time fix and the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners shall, subject to the provisions of any law made in that behalf by Parliament, be made by the President.
- Since no parliamentary law was enacted as prescribed by **Article 324 of the Constitution**, the Court stepped in to address the "constitutional vacuum."
  - The Bill now seeks to address this **vacuum and set up a legislative process** to make appointments to the EC.

### How are the CEC and ECs Currently Appointed?

- Currently, there is **no specific legislative process** defined in the Constitution for the appointment of the CEC and ECs. There are just five Articles (324-329) in Part XV (Elections) of the Constitution.
- **Article 324** of the Constitution vests the "superintendence, direction, and control of elections" in an Election Commission consisting of the CEC and other ECs as determined by the President from time to time.
- Before the Supreme Court ruling of March 2023, the CEC and ECs were appointed by the President on the recommendation of the government.

### What are the Key Features of the Bill?

- **Composition of the Selection Committee:**
  - The Selection **Committee will consist of**,
    - the Prime Minister as Chairperson,
    - **the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha** as member
      - If the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha has not been recognised, the leader of the single largest opposition party in Lok Sabha will assume the role.
    - a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister as member.
- **Search Committee:**
  - The Bill proposes the establishment of a **Search Committee** to prepare a panel of five persons for **consideration for the positions of CEC and ECs**.
  - The Search Committee will be headed by the **Cabinet Secretary and will also include two members** not below the rank of Secretary who have knowledge and experience in matters related to elections.
- **Can not be Invalidated due to Vacancy:**
  - The appointment of the CEC and other ECs will not be **invalidated due to any vacancy or defect** in the constitution of the Selection Committee.
- **Repealing of Previous Act:**
  - The proposed Bill repeals the **Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991**.
  - The business of the Election Commission will be governed by the **new Act once it is passed**.

- The 1991 Act provides that the **salary of the ECs will be equal to that of a Supreme Court judge.**
- The Bill provides that salary, allowance, and service conditions of the CEC and other ECs **will be the same as that of the Cabinet Secretary.**
- **Unanimity and Majority Decision:**
  - The Bill maintains the provision that the business of the Election Commission should be **transacted unanimously whenever possible.** In case of a difference of opinion, the majority's view will prevail.

## What are the Concerns?

- **Balance of Power:**
  - The Prime Minister and a Cabinet Minister (nominated by the Prime Minister) forming part of the three-member committee, the Leader of **Opposition is left with a minority vote even** before the process begins.
  - This raises questions about the **balance of power within the committee** and whether the selection process truly ensures independence or remains skewed in favor of the Executive.
- **Impact on Electoral Governance:**
  - The proposed changes may have **implications for the autonomy and functioning** of the ECI.
  - The independence of the Election Commission is crucial for **ensuring impartiality and integrity in the conduct** of elections. Any perceived influence of the Executive in the selection process **might raise concerns about the EC's ability to carry out** its responsibilities without bias.
- **Alignment with Framers' Intentions:**
  - The SC, in its previous ruling, emphasized that the framers of the Constitution intended for an **independent body to oversee elections.**
  - Critics of the proposed Bill raise questions about whether the new composition of the Selection Committee **aligns with the framers' objective** of creating an impartial and independent body responsible for elections.

## What is the Role of Election Commissioners in Ensuring Free and Fair Election in India?

- **Election Commission of India:**
  - To ensure free and fair elections in India, the Election Commission of India was established in 1950.
  - The Election Commission consists of a **Chief Election Commissioner who is the Chairman** of the Election Commission and other Election Commissioners.
    - The number of other Election Commission members is fixed by the President.
- **Fair and Free Election:**
  - **Conducting Elections:** Article 324 of the Constitution provides that the power of superintendence, direction and control of elections to parliament, state legislatures, the office of **president of India and the office of vice-president of India shall be vested in the election commission.**
  - **Model Code of Conduct:** The ECI ensures that all political parties and candidates have a **level playing field during elections.**
    - It does this by enforcing the **Model Code of Conduct**, which lays down guidelines for political parties and candidates to follow during elections.
  - **Role with Respect to Political Parties:** To grant recognition to political parties and allot election symbols to them.
    - To act as a court for settling disputes related to granting recognition to political parties and allotment of election symbols to them.
  - **Voter education:** The ECI conducts **voter education programs** to increase awareness among voters about their rights and responsibilities.
    - **This includes educating** them about the importance of voting and how to cast their vote.

- **Monitoring election expenditure:** The ECI monitors the **expenditure of political parties** and candidates during elections to ensure that they do not exceed the **limits set by the law**.
- **Addressing Electoral Malpractices:** The ECI takes strict action against electoral malpractices such as booth capturing, bogus voting, and intimidation of voters.

## Way Forward

- The government should review the composition of the **Selection Committee** and consider making it more balanced. This might involve **giving the opposition a stronger representation** to ensure a fair decision-making process.
- To enhance the credibility of the selection process, the government should involve independent **experts, jurists, and civil society representatives** in the Search Committee or as observers in the Selection Committee. Their presence could help **maintain the integrity of the process**.
- Before finalizing the Bill, the government should engage in thorough consultations with opposition parties, legal experts, and stakeholders to gather diverse perspectives and ensure that concerns are addressed adequately.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### Q. Consider the following statements: (2017)

1. The Election Commission of India is a five-member body.
2. Union Ministry of Home Affairs decides the election schedule for the conduct of both general elections and bye-elections.
3. Election Commission resolves the disputes relating to splits/mergers of recognised political parties.

### Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 3 only

**Ans: (d)**

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## Coastal Aquaculture Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2023

**For Prelims:** Coastal Aquaculture Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2023, Coastal Aquaculture Authority, [Seaweed](#), [Polluter Pays Principle](#), [Antibiotics](#), [Estuaries](#)

**For Mains:** Major Provisions Related to Coastal Aquaculture Authority (Amendment ) Bill, 2023

**Source:** [PIB](#)

## Why in News?

The **Coastal Aquaculture Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2023**, recently passed by Parliament. These amendments seek to **address ambiguities, streamline administrative processes, and integrate emerging aquaculture practices.**

## What is the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Act, 2005?

- **Coastal aquaculture** refers to the practice of cultivating and rearing aquatic organisms, such as fish, shellfish, and aquatic plants, in **marine or brackish water environments along the coastlines or in estuaries.**
  - The Act is about creating a special organization, called the **Coastal Aquaculture Authority**, to control and manage the activities related to raising seafood in areas near the coast.
- According to the Act, the government has the duty to take actions to make sure that **coastal aquaculture is done in a way that doesn't harm the environment.**

## What are the Major Provisions Related to Coastal Aquaculture Authority (Amendment ) Bill, 2023?

- **Expanding the Scope of Coastal Aquaculture Activities:**
  - **Broaden Definition of Coastal Aquaculture:** The amendments aims to **bring all coastal aquaculture activities under the purview of the Act**, removing **ambiguities between different aspects of coastal aquaculture.**
  - **Inclusion of Emerging Aquaculture Practices:** The amendments acknowledge the **evolution of environmentally friendly aquaculture** practices beyond shrimp farming, incorporating methods like **cage culture, seaweed culture,** marine ornamental fish culture, and more.
    - These practices align with the evolving landscape and offer substantial revenue and employment opportunities for coastal communities.
- **Facilitating Aquaculture Units within the No Development Zone (NDZ):** Establishments like **hatcheries, Broodstock multiplication centers (BMC), and Nucleus Breeding Centres (NBC)** are now permitted to operate within **200 meters from the High Tide Line (HTL).**
  - The amendment aims to address **previous uncertainties arising from the interpretation of Section 13(8) of the original CAA Act of 2005**, which had **excluded coastal aquaculture from CRZ regulations.**
- **Simplifying Regulatory Processes and Encouraging Ease of Doing Business:**
  - **Modification of Registration:** The amendments replace the **stringent provision of imprisonment with civil penalties** for unregistered coastal aquaculture activities.
    - This shift towards civil instruments aligns with modern regulatory practices.
  - **Operational Flexibility:** The amendments introduce *provisions for modifying certificates of registration* in case of changes in ownership or activity size.
    - Additionally, they empower the **Coastal Aquaculture Authority to condone delays in renewal applications with a compounded fee**, enhancing administrative flexibility.
- **Environmental Protection and Compliance:**
  - **Standards for Emission and Effluents:** The amendments empower the Coastal Aquaculture Authority to establish **standards for emission or discharge of effluents from aquaculture units**, holding owners accountable for adhering to these standards.
  - **Polluter Pays Principle:** The amendments uphold the **'Polluter Pays Principle.'** mandating **aquaculture unit owners to bear the cost of any environment-related damage** or demolition assessed by the Authority.
  - **Prohibition in Ecologically Sensitive Areas:** The amendments prohibit coastal aquaculture activities in **ecologically sensitive areas or areas with significant geomorphological features**, enhancing protection for vulnerable ecosystems.

▪ **Advancing Disease Prevention and Sustainable Practices:**

- **Antibiotic-Free Aquaculture:** By explicitly **prohibiting the use of antibiotics and pharmacologically active substances**, the amendments prioritize the health of aquatic ecosystems and promote environmentally conscious practices.

## What is the Status of Coastal Aquaculture in India?

- India has a coastline of about **7,517 km**, and a **vast potential for coastal aquaculture development**. The major coastal aquaculture species in India are **shrimp, fish, crab, oyster, mussel, seaweed, and pearl**.
  - Over the past **9 years**, shrimp production in India surged by **267%**.
- The nation's seafood exports experienced a doubling effect, **surging from Rs 30,213 crore in 2013-14 to Rs 63,969 crore in 2022-23**.
  - Notably, the major portion of these exports is attributed to shrimp.
- Key coastal states such as **Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Odisha, and Tamil Nadu** played a significant role in propelling the **expansion of coastal aquaculture shrimp production and subsequent exports**.

## Conclusion

The **Coastal Aquaculture Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2023**, enhances India's aquaculture sector by **clarifying regulations, promoting sustainable practices, and safeguarding the environment**. This aligns with **SDG 14 (Life Below Water)** and underscores India's commitment to responsible economic growth and ecological well-being.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### Prelims

**Q. Which one of the following regions of India has a combination of mangrove forest, evergreen forest and deciduous forest? (2015)**

- (a) North Coastal Andhra Pradesh
- (b) South-West Bengal
- (c) Southern Saurashtra
- (d) Andaman and Nicobar Islands

**Ans: (d)**

### Mains:

**Q. Defining blue revolution, explain the problems and strategies for pisciculture development in India. (2018)**

## India's Wind Energy Potential



## Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy unveiled noteworthy insights into **India's wind energy potential**. This revelation sheds light on **key states with the highest wind power potential** and emphasizes the nation's dedication to sustainable energy practices.

- Additionally, the Ministry outlined innovative strategies aimed at enhancing wind power utilization and ensuring eco-friendly practices in the sector.

## What is the Wind Power Potential in India?

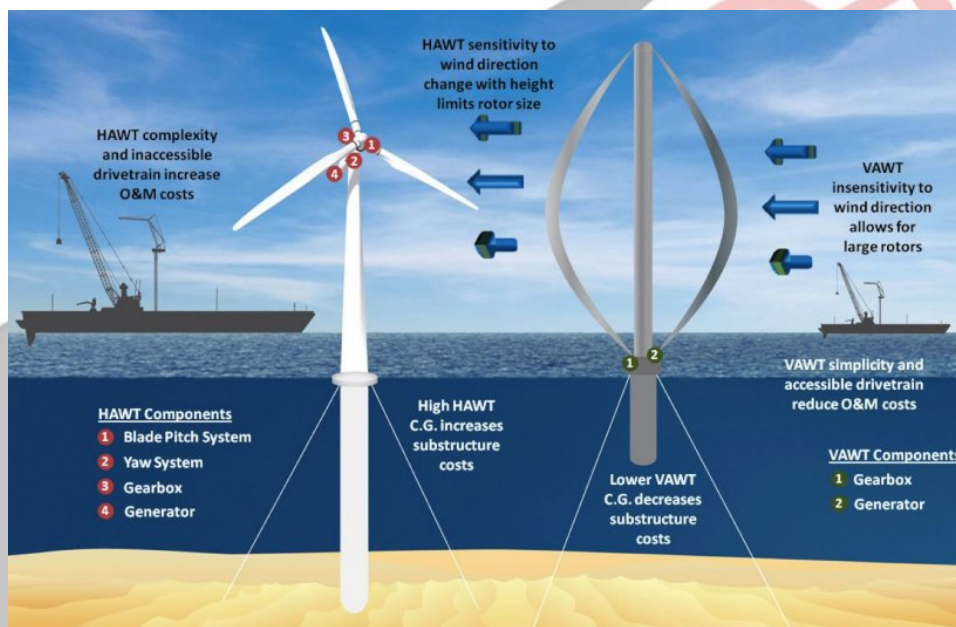
- India ranks **4<sup>th</sup> globally after China, the United States and Germany**, in terms of **installed wind energy capacity, with 42.8 GW (onshore wind) as of April 2023**.
- Wind resource assessment by the **National Institute of Wind Energy** reveals an estimated wind **power potential of approximately 695.5 GW at 120 meters** and **1,164 GW at 150 meters above ground level** across the nation.
- **Best Performing States:**
  - **Wind Power Potential (in GW) at 120 m Above Ground Level:**
    - Gujrat (142.56), Rajasthan (127.75), Karnataka (124.15), Maharashtra (98.21), and Andhra Pradesh (74.90).
  - **Wind Power Potential (in GW) at 150 m Above Ground Level:**
    - Rajasthan (284.25), Gujarat (180.79), Maharashtra (173.86), Karnataka (169.25), and Andhra Pradesh (123.33).

## What are the Government Initiatives for Wind Energy Development?

- **Policy for Repowering of the Wind Power Projects, 2016:**
  - This policy incentivizes wind power project repowering by providing an **additional interest rate rebate of 0.25% over existing rebates for new wind projects** financed by the [Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency \(IREDA\)](#).
- **Guidelines for Disposal of Fiber Reinforced Plastic (FRP):**
  - The [Central Pollution Control Board \(CPCB\)](#) issued specific guidelines for the proper disposal of FRP, including Sheet Moulding Compound (SMC), **used in wind turbine blades**. These guidelines ensure environmentally responsible waste management.
- **National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy, 2018:**
  - The main objective is to provide a **framework for promotion of large grid connected wind-solar PV hybrid systems** for optimal and efficient utilization of wind and solar resources, transmission infrastructure and land.
- **National Offshore Wind Energy Policy:**
  - Objective is to develop offshore wind energy in the Indian [Exclusive Economic Zone \(EEZ\)](#) along the Indian coastline of 7600 km.

## Different Types of Turbine Used in the Wind Power:

Aspect	Vertical-Axis Wind Turbines (VAWT)	Horizontal-Axis Wind Turbines (HAWT)
<b>Blade Orientation</b>	Blades are vertical and perpendicular to the ground.	Blades are horizontal and parallel to the ground.
<b>Blade Configuration</b>	Blades are attached to the top and bottom of a vertical rotor.	Blades are like airplane propellers, extending outward.
<b>Common Type</b>	Darrieus wind turbine is a well-known design.	Three-bladed turbines are the most common type.
<b>Performance</b>	Generally less efficient compared to HAWT.	Typically more efficient in converting wind energy.
<b>Electricity Generation</b>	Typically lower electricity generation capacity.	Higher electricity generation capacity.
<b>Application</b>	Limited use due to lower performance.	Widely used in the wind energy industry.
<b>Wind Direction Sensitivity</b>	Less sensitive to wind direction due to omnidirectional rotation.	Needs to adjust to wind direction for optimal efficiency.



## Select Committee Of Parliament

[Source: IE](#)

### Why in News?

Recently, the formation of a **Select Committee for the Delhi Services Bill**, has sparked controversy after several **Members of Parliament (MPs)** claimed that their names were included without their consent.

- However, **the Delhi Services Bill** has been passed by both the houses of Parliament.

## What is a Select Committee?

### ▪ About:

- Select Committees are a category of **ad hoc or temporary committees** established with the specific purpose of examining and scrutinizing particular Bills.
  - Its membership is limited to **MPs from one House**.
  - These committees are dissolved **once their designated task has been fulfilled**.
- Although temporary, the procedures and rules governing Select Committees are **well-defined within the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament**.

Note: Committees constituted for a specific purpose, with MPs from both Houses are called Joint Parliamentary Committees (JPC).

### ▪ Formation of Select Committees:

- The formation of a Select Committee can be initiated through a **motion proposed by the Minister in-charge of the Bill** or any member of the Parliament.
- This proposal is then presented to the House for adoption. If adopted, the **Committee is formed to consider and report** on the referred Bill.

### ▪ Selecting Members for a Select Committee:

- The members of a Select Committee are **specifically named in the motion that calls for the Bill to be referred** to the Committee.
  - These members are appointed by the House, and their **consent is a crucial aspect of the process**.
- While **Rajya Sabha** rules mandate that **no member can be appointed to a Select Committee** if they are not willing to serve on it, the **rules do not explicitly require the collection of signatures for proposed members**.

### ▪ Quorum:

- The composition of a Select Committee varies depending on its purpose. It operates with a **quorum of one-third of the total number of members**.
  - If there's a tie in votes, the chairman (or presiding person) has a casting vote.

### ▪ Function:

- The primary duty of a Select Committee is to meticulously review the Bill, examining its clauses to ensure they **accurately reflect the intended purpose and objectives of the measure**.
- The Committee can gather information through memoranda from experts, oral evidence, and government officials.
- After evaluating the evidence, the Committee formulates its conclusions, which may involve amending clauses to align them with the Bill's intent.
  - It can also form sub-committees to address specific aspects of the Bill.
- The committee's report, including any dissenting opinions, is presented to the House.
  - The reports of the Select Committee are **recommendatory in nature. The government can choose to accept or reject the committee's recommendations**.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

**Q. With reference to the Parliament of India, which of the following Parliamentary Committees scrutinizes and reports to the House whether the powers to make regulations, rules, sub-rules, by-laws, etc., conferred by the Constitution or delegated by the Parliament are being properly exercised by the Executive within the scope of such delegation? (2018)**

- (a) Committee on Government Assurances
- (b) Committee on Subordinate Legislation
- (c) Rules Committee
- (d) Business Advisory Committee

Ans: (b)

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## Rapid Fire Current Affairs

### Integrating NavIC with Aadhaar Enrolment Systems

- The **Department of Space (DoS)** is coordinating the integration of **NavIC (Navigation in Indian Constellation)**, India's indigenous satellite navigation system, with **Aadhaar enrolment devices**.
  - NavIC, comprising seven satellites, is India's equivalent of the **American GPS, providing positioning and navigation services**.
  - NavIC offers **Standard Position Service (SPS) for civilian use** and **Restricted Service (RS) for strategic applications**.
  - The NavIC **coverage area includes India** and a region up to **1,500 km beyond the Indian boundary**.
  - NavIC has found utility in **disaster management**, aiding agencies like the **National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA)** and the **Indian National Centre for Ocean Information System (INCOIS)** in alert dissemination for natural calamities.
- The move involves adapting **Aadhaar enrolment kits to work with NavIC, enhancing accuracy and functionality**.

Read more: [NavIC](#)

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### Reviving Trilateral Cooperation: India, Japan, and Sri Lanka

- **India, Japan and Sri Lanka** are working towards restarting trilateral cooperation after the **cancellation of a joint India-Japan MoU for the East Container Terminal (ECT)** project in Colombo.
  - However, with India and Japan coming to **Sri Lanka's rescue during last year's economic crisis**, and offering assistance with Sri Lanka's debt restructuring process, the three countries are exploring new avenues of cooperation.
- India and Japan share a vision of a **Free Open and Inclusive Indo-Pacific (FOIIP)**.
  - India and Japan can work together on renewable energy and grid connectivity projects, the development of **Trincomalee, Sri Lanka** as an **oil pipeline hub, connectivity and people-centric projects like tourism and education**.
- The **Joint Economic Vision Statement** between President Wickremesinghe (Sri Lanka) and the Prime Minister of India outlines catalysing projects with **private sector-led investment and execution**.

Read more: [West Container Terminal Offer to India-Japan: Sri Lanka](#)

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### Exercise 'Zayed Talwar'





- Recently, two ships of the Indian Navy - **INS Visakhapatnam**, and **INS Trikand** - visited **Port Rashid**, Dubai, UAE to conduct bilateral exercise '**Zayed Talwar**'.
  - The exercise envisages to **boost the maritime partnership between the two navies** and foster a common understanding of the security challenges in the region.
- **Other bilateral exercises** between the two countries include: **In-UAE BILAT** (bilateral naval exercise), **Desert Eagle-II** (bilateral air force exercise) and **Exercise Desert Flag-VI**.
- India and the UAE **established diplomatic relations in 1972**.
  - In the year 2022-23, UAE was **India's 3<sup>rd</sup> largest trading partner and 2nd largest export destination**.

**Read More:** [India-UAE Relations](#)

## Havana Syndrome

- Recently, the Central govt has told the Karnataka HC that it will look into the matter of the '**Havana Syndrome**' in India. This was in response to a petition by a Bengaluru resident who had approached the HC requesting a **writ of Mandamus** for an enquiry on Havana Syndrome in India.
  - **A Writ of Mandamus is issued to direct a public authority to do its duty.**
- Havana Syndrome refers to a **set of mental health symptoms** including - **hearing certain sounds without any outside noise**, nausea, vertigo and headaches, memory loss and balance issues.
- Its roots trace back to Havana (Cuba) in late 2016.
  - The causes behind Havana Syndrome were not entirely certain but **speculated to be "sonic attacks"**.
  - Some US based studies suggest the **victims may have been subjected to high-powered microwaves** that damaged/interfered with the nervous system.



- Beams of high-powered microwaves may have been sent through a special gadget - a “**microwave weapon**”, however there is **no conclusive evidence of their existence**.

**Read More:** [Havana Syndrome](#), [Directed Energy Weapons](#), [Writs](#)

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