



Pelican and Painted Stork

[Source: TH](#)

Pelicans and **Painted storks** were sighted at the **Indira Gandhi Zoological Park** in Visakhapatnam.

- **About Pelicans:** Pelicans (genus Pelecanus) are **large water birds** known for their **long beaks** and **large throat pouches** used for catching fish.
 - Pelicans are **highly social birds**, living in colonies of hundreds.
 - They are **carnivores**, primarily eating fish but also consuming **amphibians, crustaceans, insects, birds, and small mammals**.
 - They inhabit **all continents except Antarctica**, preferring **warm coastal and inland waters** like lakes and rivers.
- **About Painted Stork (Mycteria Leucocephala):** It is a large bird inhabiting **South and Southeast Asian wetlands**, featuring **bright pink flight feathers**, a white body, and black markings.
 - They are predominantly **non-migratory** and most make only local movements and are **social in nature**.
 - **IUCN Status:** Near threatened.

Read More: [Siberian Cranes, Flamingos and Great White Pelicans](#)

International Women's Day 2025

For Prelims: [International Women's Day](#), [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action \(BPfA\)](#), [UN Women](#), [Maternal Mortality](#), [Vigyan Jyoti](#), [Beti Bachao Beti Padhao](#), [PMGDISHA](#), [Women's Reservation Act, 2023](#), [Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions \(GATI\)](#).

For Mains: Status of women rights, Challenges associated with women empowerment and way forward.

[Source: PIB](#)

Why in News?

International Women's Day is celebrated globally on **8th March** to recognize women's achievements across **cultural, economic, and political spheres**.

- Additionally, the year 2025 is significant as it marks the **30th anniversary** of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action \(BPfA\)](#), a landmark commitment to women's rights.

What is International Women's Day?

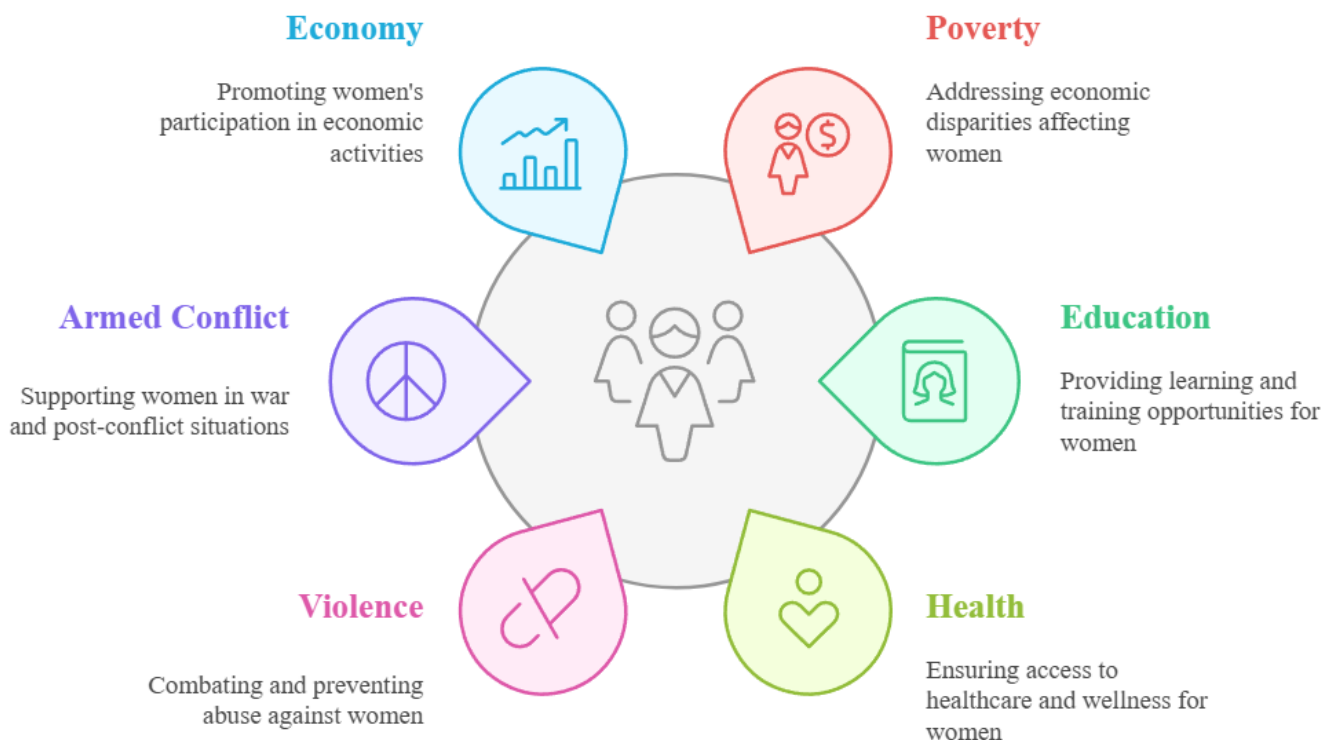
- **About:** It is a special day dedicated to honoring **women's achievements** and highlights **gender disparities** and advocates for women's rights in politics, society, and the economy.
 - The theme for 2025 is **"For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment"**.
- **History:** German activist **Clara Zetkin** proposed the idea, leading to the first celebrations in **1911 in the USA and Europe**.
 - In **1975**, the United Nations officially recognized **8th March** as International Women's Day.
- **Purpose:** It serves as a platform to discuss crucial issues such as **workplace equality, reproductive rights, and leadership representation**.
 - Governments and organizations use the day to promote policies for women's empowerment and **ending discrimination**.

What is the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action?

- **About:** The **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)** was adopted at the **4th World Conference on Women**, held in **Beijing, China, in 1995**.
 - It is a key blueprint for **women's and girls' rights**, promoting legal protection, service access, youth engagement, and social change.
 - **India** is a **signatory** to **BPfA**.
- **Areas for Action:** It identified **12 key areas** for urgent action on gender equality and provided strategies for ensuring equal opportunities for all. **Prominent areas are:**

//

Key Areas for Women's Advancement



- **Beijing+30 Action Agenda:** It marks the **30th anniversary** (1995-2025) of the BPfA to **review and appraise** its implementation.
 - **It focuses on six key areas:**

Empowering Women for a Better Future



What is the Current Status of Women in India?

- **Maternal Health:** Institutional deliveries have risen to **95%**, contributing to a decline in maternal mortality from **130 to 97 per 100,000 births (2014-2020)**.
 - Modern **contraceptive** use among married women stands at **56.5%**, enhancing reproductive health choices.
- **Education & Skills:** Schemes such as **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao** have contributed to improving the sex ratio (**1020 females per 1000 males** as per **NFHS - 5**) and female higher school enrollment (**28% since 2014-15**).
 - Similarly, **Vigyan Jyoti (2020)** aims to **encourage girls' participation in STEM education**, particularly in underrepresented regions.
- **Financial Inclusion:** **100 million women** have gained **financial access** through **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)**, while **PMGDISHA** has trained **35 million rural women** in digital literacy.
 - **Gender-responsive budgeting** stands at **8.8% (2025-26)**, allocating **USD 55.2 billion** to gender-specific programs.
- **Addressing Gender-Based Violence:** **770 One Stop Centres** provide medical, legal, and psychological support to **women victims**. e.g., **Odisha's blockchain system** enables swift, confidential survivor support to women victims.
- **Political Representation:** The **Women's Reservation Act, 2023** secures 33% legislative representation for women, and India leads globally with **1.4 million women in local governance**.
- **Women in Science & Technology:** **Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATI)** supports women in STEM, while the **G20 TechEquity platform** trains thousands of young women in emerging technologies.

WOMEN Reservation Act, 2023

(106th Constitutional Amendment Act)

OBJECTIVE

- Reserve 1/3rd of total seats in LS and state Legislative Assemblies (LAs) for women

BACKGROUND

- Bill previously introduced in: 1996, 1998, 2009, 2010, 2014
- Related Committees:
 - Committee on the Status of Women in India (1971)
 - Committee under Margaret Alva (1987)
 - Geeta Mukherjee Committee (1996)
 - Committee on the Status of Women (2013)

Key Features

Articles Inserted:

- Article 330A - Reservation for Women in LS
- Article 332A - Reservation for Women in State LAs
- Article 239AA - Reservation for Women in NCT of Delhi
- Article 334A - Reservations to become effective after delimitation is undertaken and Census is conducted

Time Period:

- Reservation to be provided for 15 years (can be extended)

Rotation of Seats Reserved:

- After each delimitation

NEED

- Political Underrepresentation:
 - Only 82 Women MPs in LS (15.2%) and 31 in RS (13%)
 - On avg, women constitute only 9% of the total members in State LAs



ARGUMENTS

- In Favour:
 - Vital step towards gender equality
 - Broader range of perspectives to the decision-making process
 - Helps eliminate discrimination against women in political/public life
- Against:
 - Delimitation based on 2021 census (yet to be conducted) is mandatory
 - No women's reservation in RS and State Legislative Councils

STEPS AHEAD

- Reservation for women within political parties
- Independent political decision-making by women; overcoming Sarpanch-patism



Drishti IAS

What are the Challenges to Women Empowerment?

- Political Underrepresentation:** Women hold only 27% of parliamentary seats, 36% of local government positions, and 28% of management roles that hinders inclusive policy-making.
- Gender-Based Violence:** Despite 88% of countries having laws against violence against women, conflict-related to sexual violence has risen by 50% since 2022, with 95% of victims being women and girls.
- Workplace Discrimination:** 61% of prime working-age women work, compared to 91% of men, earning just 51% of men's income, deepening inequality.
- Unpaid Care Work:** Women spend 2.3 times more daily on unpaid care work than men. By

2050, they will still spend 9.5% more time, limiting education and job opportunities.

- **Barriers in Education & Food: 110 million girls and young women** may remain **out of school** by 2030.
 - By 2030, **24% of women and girls** may face **food insecurity**, while **only 44%** of nations are improving their **education and training**.
- **Legal Barriers:** In 28 countries, women **lack equal rights in marriage and divorce**, while 67 nations have no legal protections against gender-based discrimination (**UN Women Report**).

Way Forward

- **Gender-Responsive Budgeting:** Increase funding for women's **education, health, finance, and social security**. Strengthen monitoring to ensure accountability and impact.
- **Strengthening Legal Protection:** Eliminate discriminatory laws on **marriage, divorce, property, and labor** while strengthening enforcement of gender violence laws and One Stop Centres for survivor support.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Ensure women farmers have **equal access to land, credit, and resources** for food security.
 - Support **SHGs and women entrepreneurs** with financial literacy, loans, and market access.
- **Bridging Workplace Inequality:** Encourage **flexible work arrangements, parental leave, and workplace childcare** to boost women's labor force participation.

Drishti Mains Question:

Identify the major hurdles in achieving gender equality in India and suggest policy measures to bridge these gaps.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Which of the following gives 'Global Gender Gap Index' ranking to the countries of the world? (2017)

- (a) World Economic Forum
- (b) UN Human Rights Council
- (c) UN Women
- (d) World Health Organization

Ans: (a)

Mains

Q.1 "Empowering women is the key to control population growth". Discuss. (2019)

Q.2 Discuss the positive and negative effects of globalization on women in India? (2015)

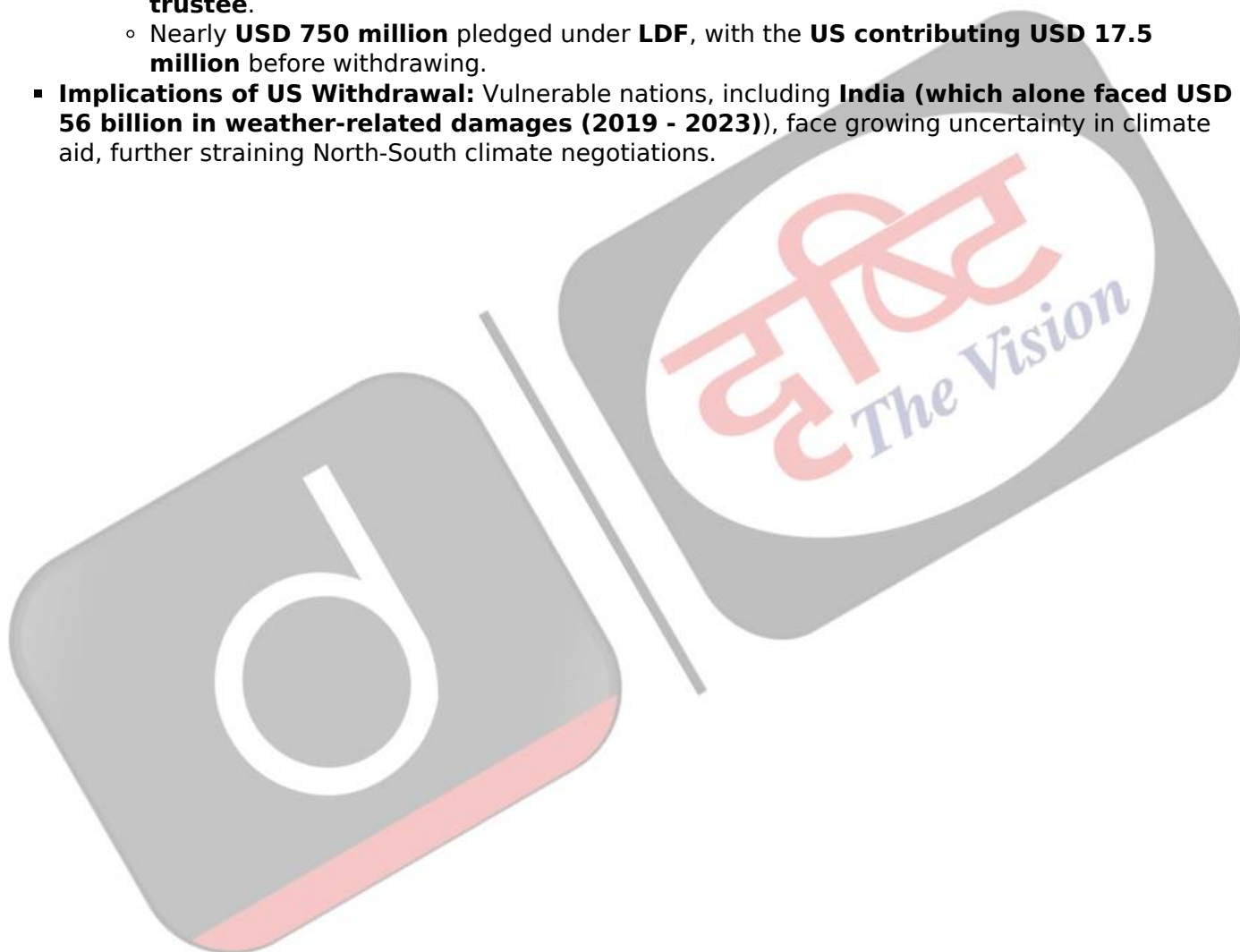
Q.3 Male membership needs to be encouraged in order to make women's organizations free from gender bias. Comment. (2013)

US Withdrawal from Loss and Damage Fund

[Source: IE](#)

The US has withdrawn from the [Loss and Damage Fund \(LDF\)](#), furthering its disengagement from global climate commitments like the [Paris Agreement](#) and [Green Climate Fund](#).

- **LDF:** Created at [UN Climate Change Conference COP 27 in Egypt](#), the **LDF** supports **developing and small island nations** facing climate-induced losses like **rising sea levels, heatwaves, and extreme weather**, with contributions from **developed nations**.
 - The **LDF** is managed by a **Governing Board**, with the [World Bank](#) as its **interim trustee**.
 - Nearly **USD 750 million** pledged under **LDF**, with the **US contributing USD 17.5 million** before withdrawing.
- **Implications of US Withdrawal:** Vulnerable nations, including **India (which alone faced USD 56 billion in weather-related damages (2019 - 2023))**, face growing uncertainty in climate aid, further straining North-South climate negotiations.



CLIMATE FINANCE

Climate finance refers to local, national or transnational financing—drawn from public/ private/alternative sources of financing—to support mitigation and adaptation actions against climate change.

PRINCIPLES OF CLIMATE FINANCE

- ↳ Polluter Pays
- ↳ Common but Differentiated Responsibility and Respective Capability (CBDR-RC)

Multilateral Climate Funds Coordinated by UNFCCC

- ↳ **Global Environment Facility (GEF):** Operating entity of financial mechanism (1994)
- ↳ **Kyoto Protocol (2001):**
 - ↳ **Adaptation Fund (AF):** Gives developing countries full ownership of adaptation projects
 - ↳ **Clean Development Mechanism (CDM):** To carry out emission-reduction projects in developing nations
- ↳ **Green Climate Fund (GCF):** estd. - 2010 (COP 16)
 - ↳ Funds under it - **Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF)** and **Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF)**
- ↳ **Long-Term Climate Finance:**
 - ↳ **Cancun Agreements (2010):** Mobilize and provide scaled-up funds in short and long term
 - ↳ **Paris Agreement (2015):** Developed nations agreed to establish new collective goal of at least \$100 billion/year by 2025
- ↳ **Loss and Damage Fund (2023) (COP27 & COP28):** Financial assistance to nations most vulnerable and impacted by effects of climate change

Climate Investment Funds (CIFs) under World Bank

- ↳ Clean Technology Fund
- ↳ Strategic Climate Fund

INDIA'S INITIATIVES REGARDING CLIMATE FINANCE

Fund	Objective
<ul style="list-style-type: none">↳ National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC) (2015)↳ National Clean Energy Fund (2010-11)↳ National Adaptation Fund (2014)↳ Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) (2015)↳ Climate Change Finance Unit (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">↳ For vulnerable Indian states↳ Advancing clean energy (started with initial carbon tax on industrial coal use)↳ Bridging gap between required and available funds↳ Nationally binding targets adopted under UNFCCC↳ Leads on global climate finance issues

Challenges to Climate Finance

- ↳ Gap between national needs and climate finance under NDCs
- ↳ Least Developed Countries receive much less approved funding in per-capita terms from the multilateral climate funds
- ↳ Slow rate of approvals
- ↳ Failure in securing viability-gap funding



Read more: [Loss and Damage Fund](#)

One Candidate Multiple Constituencies

For Prelims: [Article 101](#), [Parliament](#), [Bye-elections](#), [Model Code of Conduct](#), [Article 19](#)

For Mains: Electoral Reforms in India, Impact of OCMC on democracy and governance

Source:IE

Why in News?

The debate on electoral reforms in India has gained momentum with the introduction of the [One Nation, One Election \(ONOE\) Bills](#). This has also highlighted the issue of [One Candidate, Multiple Constituencies \(OCMC\)](#), where a candidate contests elections from more than one constituency.

- This trend, while legally permitted, raises concerns about governance efficiency, public trust, and the financial burden of frequent elections.

What are the Provisions Regarding OCMC?

- **Representation of Peoples Act (RPA), 1951:**
 - **Before 1996:** No restriction on the number of seats a candidate could contest. Winners could vacate all but one.
 - **Post 1996: Section 33(7) of the RP Act restricts candidates to contesting from a maximum of two constituencies at the same time** in an election.
 - If a person is elected to multiple seats in Parliament or a State Legislature, they must resign all **but one within the prescribed time**. Otherwise, **all their seats will be vacated under Section 70 of the RP Act**.
 - **Bye-elections** held to fill vacated seats within six months (Section 151A).
- **Constitutional Provisions: Article 101** deals with the vacation of seats, disqualifications, and dual membership in Parliament.
 - **Article 101(1)** states that no person can be a member of **both Houses of Parliament**, and a law shall provide for vacating one seat if elected to both.
 - **Article 101(2):** No person can be a member of **both Parliament and a State Legislature**. If elected to both, they must resign from the State Legislature within the period specified by the President, or their **Parliament seat is vacated**.
- **Prohibition of Simultaneous Membership Rules, 1950:** A person cannot hold membership of both Parliament and a state legislature at the same time.

What are the Key Challenges Associated with OCMC?

- **Favors the Ruling Party:** Ruling parties, with control over state resources, gain an advantage in bye-elections, making it harder for opposition parties.
- **Financial Strain:** Frequent by-elections due to multiple-seat wins increase costs and burden **taxpayers**.
 - The 2024 Lok Sabha election cost Rs 6,931 crore, with by-elections adding Rs 130 crore.
 - However, the larger concern is political party spending, estimated at Rs 1.35 lakh crore, raising questions about financial transparency and the possible influence of unaccounted funds (**black money**), ultimately impacting the public.
 - Additionally, defeated candidates must **recontest within months**, straining party resources and **hindering fair competition**.
- **Parachute Candidacy Issues:** A parachute candidate refers to a **candidate contesting elections in a constituency where they have little connection** or local presence.
 - In OCMC, parachute candidates often lack local engagement and accountability, sidelining grassroots leaders and causing party dissatisfaction.
- **Administrative Disruptions:** Frequent elections lead to the repeated enforcement of the [Model Code of Conduct \(MCC\)](#), delaying government policies and straining resources.
- **Breach of Voter Trust:** Elections should serve the people, but **OCMC prioritizes political interests**. It reduces accountability and favors politicians over the electorate, leading to **leader-centric politics** and undermining democratic processes.
- **Potential Violation of Fundamental Rights:** Could undermine [Article 19\(1\)\(a\)](#) (freedom of speech and expression) by depriving voters of their chosen representative.

Global Practices of OCMC

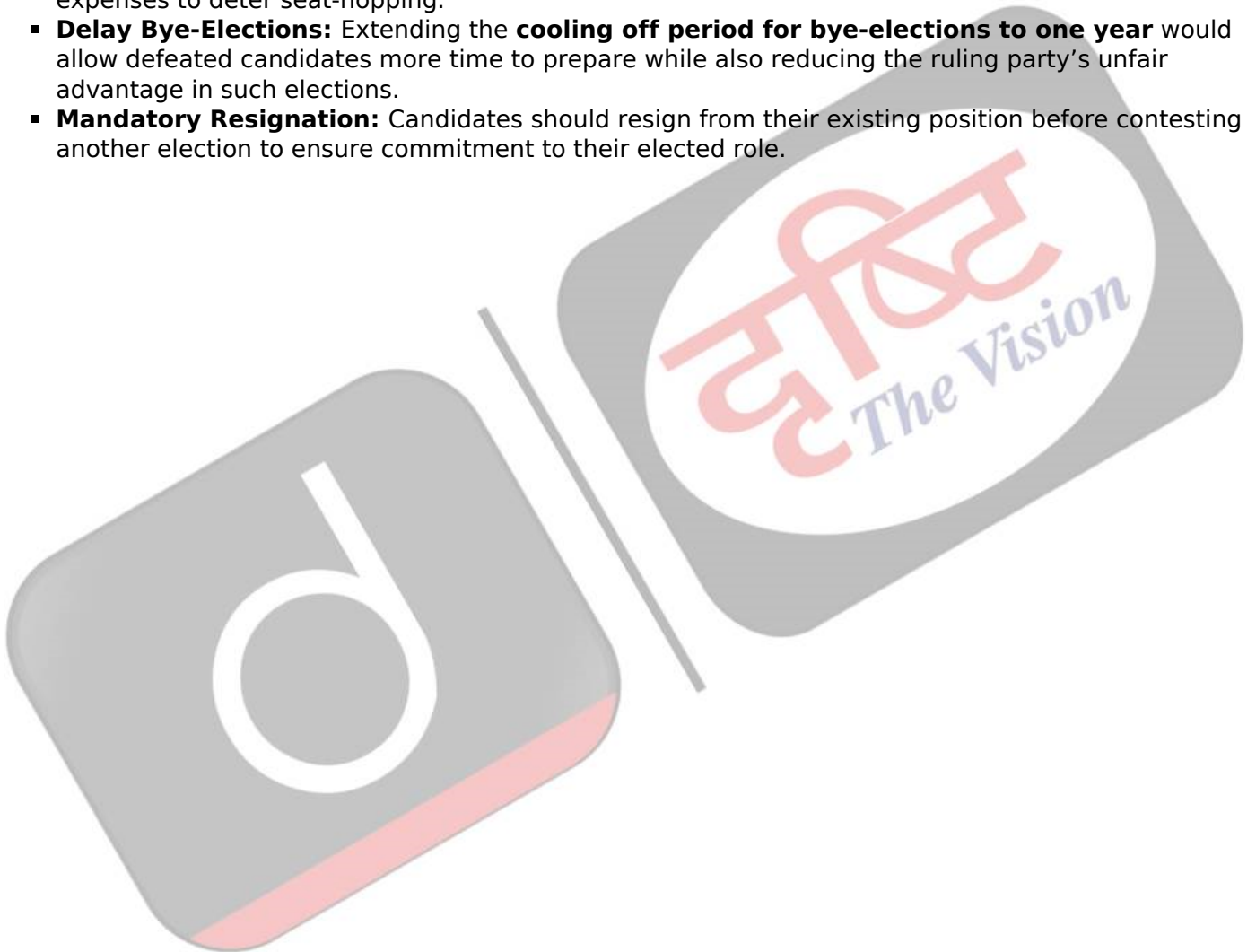
- **Australia:** A sitting legislator must resign before contesting for another parliamentary house.
- **European democracies:** The United Kingdom has banned OCMC since 1983, and most European

democracies have phased it out to ensure clear representation and accountability.

- **Italy:** One cannot contest simultaneously for the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies.
- **Pakistan & Bangladesh:** Allow candidates to contest **multiple constituencies** but require them to vacate all but one.

What Reforms Can be Introduced to Regulate OCMC?

- **Banning OCMC:** The [Election Commission of India \(ECI\)](#) and the **255th Law Commission Report (2015)** recommended **banning multiple seat contests**.
 - This would **enforce “One Election, One Candidate, One Constituency (OCOC)”** strengthening democratic fairness.
- **Recover Bye-Election Costs:** Candidates who vacate a seat should bear the bye-election expenses to deter seat-hopping.
- **Delay Bye-Elections:** Extending the **cooling off period for bye-elections to one year** would allow defeated candidates more time to prepare while also reducing the ruling party’s unfair advantage in such elections.
- **Mandatory Resignation:** Candidates should resign from their existing position before contesting another election to ensure commitment to their elected role.



ELECTORAL REFORMS IN INDIA



ELECTORAL REFORMS ARE CHANGES MADE TO IMPROVE THE ELECTION PROCESS AND ENSURE FAIRNESS.

Electoral Reforms Before 1996

- ➔ **Model Code of Conduct (1969):** Guidelines to regulate political parties and candidates prior to elections
- ➔ **61st Constitutional Amendment Act (1988):** Lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18 years
- ➔ **Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) (1989):** Switched from individual colored ballot boxes to ballot papers, and later to EVMs
- ➔ **Booth Capturing (1989):** Provision for adjournment of poll or countermanding of elections in such cases
- ➔ **Elector's Photo Identity card (EPIC) (1993):** Electoral roll is the basis to issue EPIC to registered electors
- ➔ **ECI- A Multi-member Body (1993):** Election commissioners were appointed in addition to CEC

Electoral Reforms of 1996

- ➔ **Time-limit for By-elections:** Elections must occur within 6 months of any vacancy in a legislative house
- ➔ **Listing of Names of Candidates:** Contesting candidates categorized into 3 groups for listing
 - ➔ Recognised & registered-unrecognised political parties
 - ➔ Other (independent)
- ➔ **Disqualification for Insulting the National Honour Act, 1971:** Leads to election disqualification for 6 years upon:
 - ➔ Insulting the National Flag, Constitution of India or preventing the singing of National Anthem

Electoral Reforms After 1996

- ➔ **Vote Through Proxy (2003):** Service voters in Armed Forces & forces under Army Act can vote by proxy
- ➔ **Allocation of Time on Electronic Media (2003):** Equitable sharing of time on electronic media during elections to address the public
- ➔ **Introduction of Braille Signage Features in EVMs (2004):** To facilitate the visually impaired voters to cast their votes without an attendant

Electoral Reforms Since 2010

- ➔ **Voting Rights to Indian Citizens Living Abroad (2010)**
- ➔ **Online Enrollment in Electoral Roll (2013)**
- ➔ **Introduction of NOTA option (2014)**
- ➔ **VVPAT Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (2013):** Introduction of VVPAT with EVMs to conduct free and fair elections
- ➔ **Photos of Candidates on EVMs and Ballot Papers (2015):** To prevent confusion in constituencies with namesake candidates
- ➔ **Introduction of Electoral bonds (2017 Budget):** An alternative to cash donations for political parties
 - ➔ Declared as unconstitutional by SC (2024)
- ➔ **Launch of Electronic EPIC (2021)**
- ➔ **Home Voting for People with Disabilities & Those Above 85 years of Age (2024)**

IMPORTANT COMMITTEES/ COMMISSION

Committees/ Commission	Year	Purpose
■ Tarkunde Committee	1974	■ By Jaya Prakash Narayan (JP) during the "Total Revolution" movement.
■ Dinesh Goswami Committee	1990	■ Electoral Reforms
■ Vohra Committee	1993	■ On the Nexus between Crime and Politics
■ Indrajit Gupta Committee	1998	■ State Funding of Elections
■ Second Administrative Reforms Commission of India	2007	■ Report on Ethics in Governance (Headed by Veerappa Moily)
■ Tankha Committee (Core Committee)	2010	■ To look into the whole gamut of the election laws & electoral reforms.



Drishti IAS

Conclusion

Elections in India demand vast financial and administrative resources. Frequent by-elections due to OCMC

waste time and funds that could be used for development. Unlike *One Nation, One Election*, OCOC lacks strong political backing. If *One Person, One Vote* is a core democratic principle, enforcing *One Candidate, One Constituency* is essential for fairness.

Drishti Mains Question:

The practice of One Candidate, Multiple Constituencies has significant implications. Discuss the challenges it poses and suggest viable electoral reforms to address them.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following statements: (2017)

1. The Election Commission of India is a five-member body.
2. The 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)

Mains

Q. Discuss the role of the Election Commission of India in the light of the evolution of the Model Code of Conduct. (2022)