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MCQs

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Why UAPA demands urgent reform

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution,
Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy,

Mains: General Studies - 2

Government policies and interventions
for development in various sectors and
issues arising out of their design and
implementation.

Why in Focus?

- The **October 12 death anniversary** of former Delhi University professor **G.N. Saibaba** has renewed debate on the use of the UAPA and prolonged imprisonment without trial.
- Concerns over **vague legal provisions, strict bail conditions and delays in trials** have highlighted the need to balance national security with fundamental rights.

Key Highlights:

- G.N. Saibaba** was arrested under the UAPA in **2014**, convicted in **2017** and acquitted by the **Bombay High Court in 2024**.
- The **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967** empowers the State to act against unlawful activities and terrorist offences.
- Section 43D(5)** imposes strict restrictions on bail when the court finds reasonable grounds

to believe that the accusations against the accused are prima facie true.

Prima Facie Case: A case in which the available material appears sufficient to support an allegation at the initial stage, without establishing guilt conclusively.

- The UAPA's **broad provisions on membership of unlawful organisations and terrorism** have raised concerns about their possible misuse against dissent.
- Prolonged trial delays can result in imprisonment before guilt is established, raising concerns about the **right to a speedy trial under Article 21**.

Right to Speedy Trial: A component of the right to life and personal liberty under **Article 21** of the Constitution, requiring criminal proceedings to be conducted without unreasonable delay.

- In **2011**, the Supreme Court ruled that mere membership of an unlawful organisation was not enough for prosecution unless it involved **incitement to violence**. However, in **2023**, the Court overturned this ruling, broadening the scope of what could constitute unlawful membership.
- Cases involving activists, students and journalists linked to the **Bhima Koregaon case** and the **2020 Delhi riots** have raised concerns about bail delays and consistency in judicial decisions.

Implications:

- Personal liberty** can be undermined when individuals remain in detention for prolonged



periods without trial.

- **Vague legal provisions** may increase the risk of arbitrary enforcement.
- **Strict bail conditions** can result in lengthy pre-trial detention before guilt is established.
- **Inconsistent judicial interpretations** can create uncertainty in the application of the law.
- **Democratic debate and civil liberties** may be weakened by excessive restrictions on dissent.

Way Forward:

- **Clarify legal definitions** of terms such as membership of unlawful organisations to reduce ambiguity.
- **Ensure timely trials** by improving judicial capacity and preventing prolonged pre-trial detention.
- **Strengthen judicial scrutiny** through consistent assessment of evidence and bail applications.
- **Review bail provisions** to balance national security with personal liberty.
- **Improve accountability** by strengthening safeguards against the arbitrary use of anti-terror laws.

Mains Question:

Critically examine the challenges posed by the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) to civil liberties and the rule of law in India. Suggest reforms to balance national security with fundamental rights. (250 words, 15 marks)

Changing the guard, confronting the democratic crisis

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

Mains: General Studies - 2

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Why in Focus?

- Concerns over the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** and the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls have raised questions about electoral transparency and voter exclusion.

Special Intensive Revision (SIR): A detailed exercise conducted by the Election Commission to verify and update electoral rolls by including eligible voters and removing ineligible entries.

- The debate highlights the need to strengthen the **independence, accountability and credibility** of democratic institutions.

Key Highlights:

- The **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** reportedly resulted in the deletion of over **13 crore names** from draft electoral rolls, raising concerns about the exclusion of eligible voters.
- **Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)**, their security and auditing procedures remain important issues in discussions on electoral transparency.

Electronic Voting Machine (EVM): An electronic device used to record and count votes in elections. It consists of a Control Unit (CU) and a Ballot Unit (BU) and can be used with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) for vote verification.

- The independence of the **ECI, judiciary and media** is essential for maintaining checks and balances and ensuring free and fair elections.
- Allegations of **selective investigations against Opposition leaders** by central agencies have raised concerns about the possible misuse of government institutions.
- **Ashok Lavasa's dissent** during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections highlighted the importance of independent decision-making within the ECI.
- Former Chief Election Commissioner **T.N. Seshan** is known for strengthening the enforcement of electoral rules and the Model Code of Conduct.

Model Code of Conduct (MCC): A set of guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India to regulate the conduct of political parties and candidates during elections.

Implications:

- **Voter disenfranchisement** can occur when

eligible voters are wrongly removed from electoral rolls, undermining universal adult suffrage.

- **Political interference** can weaken public trust in the ECI.
- **Lack of transparency** in electoral procedures can raise doubts about the integrity of elections.
- **Weak institutional checks** can increase the risk of misuse of executive power.
- **Declining public trust** in democratic institutions can weaken the legitimacy of elected governments.

Way Forward:

- **Institutional independence** must be strengthened to ensure the ECI functions without political interference.
- **Transparent electoral-roll revisions** and accessible appeals must be ensured for voters whose names are excluded.
- **EVM security and auditing** should be improved through robust safeguards and transparent procedures.
- **Impartial enforcement** of the MCC and timely investigation of electoral complaints are essential.
- **Judicial independence and media freedom** must be protected to strengthen democratic accountability.

Mains Question:

Examine the role of the Election Commission of India in ensuring free and fair elections. Discuss the major challenges to its independence and suggest reforms to strengthen electoral democracy in India. (250 words, 15 marks)

Why is Norway considering a temporary smart glasses ban?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3

Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Why in Focus?

- Norway is considering temporary restrictions on smart glasses in selected public and sensitive locations due to concerns about **covert recording** and **privacy violations**.
- The growing use of **AI-powered wearable devices** has raised concerns about facial recognition, unauthorised data collection and personal privacy.

Key Highlights:

- **Smart glasses** are wearable devices equipped with cameras, microphones and AI features that enable hands-free photography, audio recording and live streaming.
- **Norway's proposal** targets schools, healthcare facilities, changing rooms, playgrounds and concert venues without banning sales or private use.
- **AI-powered facial recognition** can enable the identification of strangers, collection of personal information and doxxing.

Doxxing: The act of publishing or exposing someone's private or identifying information without their consent, often to harass or intimidate them

- **The Netherlands, Germany and the UK** have introduced or considered restrictions on camera-equipped glasses in certain settings, including cinemas and other sensitive locations.
- **Recording safeguards** used by manufacturers include LED indicators, audio alerts and automatic camera disabling when the indicator is obstructed.
- **Technological solutions** include face-blurring, location-based recording restrictions, stronger recording indicators and disabling facial recognition features.

Implications:

- **Privacy violations** can occur when people are recorded covertly without their consent.
- **Surveillance and profiling** may increase through facial recognition and the misuse of personal information.
- **Vulnerable groups** such as children and people in healthcare settings face greater



privacy risks.

- **Regulatory uncertainty** can create difficulties for consumers and technology companies.
- **Technological innovation** may be restricted by excessive regulations on wearable devices.

Way Forward:

- **Clear legal rules** should regulate recording and data collection through wearable devices.
- **Consent and transparency** must be strengthened in public and sensitive locations.
- **Recording safeguards** such as visible indicators and protections against covert recording should be made more effective.
- **Facial recognition misuse** should be restricted to protect personal data and privacy.
- **Privacy-by-design** should be promoted through independent testing and cooperation between regulators and manufacturers.

Mains Question:

Discuss the privacy and data-protection challenges posed by AI-powered wearable devices such as smart glasses. Suggest measures to balance technological innovation with individual rights. (250 words, 15 marks)

The need to preserve the shine of Indian elections

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

Mains: General Studies - 2

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Why in Focus?

- Protests and concerns over the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls have raised questions about the transparency and credibility of elections in India.
- **Money power, digital misinformation, post-election defections** and concerns over the independence of the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** have highlighted the need for

comprehensive electoral reforms.

Key Highlights:

- India's **2024 Lok Sabha elections**, covering approximately 98 crore electors, highlight the need for an efficient and transparent electoral system to manage elections on such a massive scale.
- The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** plays a central role in ensuring electoral integrity by conducting elections, maintaining electoral rolls, enforcing the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and declaring results.
- The rise of **money power, digital misinformation, deepfakes and voter intimidation**, along with errors or manipulation in electoral rolls, threatens the conduct of free and fair elections.
- **Unconditional cash transfers and electoral inducements** raise concerns about electoral fairness and fiscal sustainability.
- The **Economic Survey 2026** estimated the **financial burden of unconditional cash transfers** on States at ₹1.7 lakh crore.
- The **anti-defection law under the Tenth Schedule**, introduced by the 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1985, seeks to prevent political defections.
- The **India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM)** supports electoral capacity-building by training election officials and sharing India's election-management experience with other countries.

India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM): Established in June 2011 by the Election Commission of India (ECI), the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) serves as the ECI's dedicated training, academic, and resource arm.

Implications:

- **Declining public trust** can weaken the legitimacy of election results.
- **Money power and inducements** can undermine a level playing field for candidates.
- **Deepfakes and misinformation** can manipulate voter perceptions.



- **Post-election defections** can undermine the electoral mandate.
- **Errors in electoral rolls** can threaten universal adult suffrage.

Way Forward:

- **Institutional independence** must be strengthened through greater transparency and accountability of the ECI.
- **Accurate electoral rolls** should be ensured through transparent verification and correction mechanisms.
- **Political funding and election expenditure** require better regulation and disclosure.
- **Digital safeguards** should be developed against AI-generated misinformation and deepfakes during elections.
- **Anti-defection provisions** should be strengthened by addressing loopholes and improving safeguards against post-election defections.

Mains Question:

Examine the major challenges to electoral integrity in India and suggest institutional and legal reforms to strengthen public trust in the electoral process. (250 words, 15 marks)

KEYWORDS

International Criminal Court (ICC)

- The **International Criminal Court (ICC)** is a permanent international court established under the **Rome Statute**, adopted in 1998.
- The ICC began functioning on **1 July 2002** and is headquartered in **The Hague, Netherlands**.
- The ICC has jurisdiction over four crimes: **genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression**.
- The ICC is an **independent international organisation** and is not a part of the United Nations (UN).
- The ICC has **125 State Parties**; **India, China, Israel, Russia and the United**

States are not parties to the Rome Statute.

Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005

- The **Right to Information Act, 2005** was enacted to promote **transparency and accountability** in the functioning of public authorities.
- The Act replaced the **Freedom of Information Act, 2002** and came fully into force on **12 October 2005**.
- Under the Act, **Indian citizens** have the right to access information held by public authorities, subject to specified exemptions.
- Public Information Officers (**PIOs**) are generally required to provide information within **30 days** of receiving an RTI application; information concerning life or liberty must be provided within **48 hours**.
- The Act provides for the **Central Information Commission (CIC)** and **State Information Commissions (SICs)** to hear appeals and complaints related to the right to information.

TRISHNA Mission (Indo-French Satellite)

- **TRISHNA** stands for **Thermal InfraRed Imaging Satellite for High-resolution Natural resource Assessment**.
- It is a joint satellite mission of the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** and **France's National Centre for Space Studies (CNES)**.
- The mission will monitor **Earth's surface temperature, emissivity, vegetation health and water cycle** at high spatial and temporal resolutions.
- TRISHNA carries two main payloads: the **Thermal Infra-Red (TIR) payload**, provided by CNES, and the **Visible–Near Infra-Red–ShortWave Infra-Red (VNIR–SWIR) payload**, developed by ISRO.
- The mission aims to support **agricultural water management, drought monitoring, urban heat assessment and ecosystem studies**.



Nobel Peace Prize 2026

- The **2026 Nobel Peace Prize** was awarded to South African jurist **Navi Pillay** for her contributions to international law and justice.
- The **Nobel Peace Prize** is awarded annually by the **Norwegian Nobel Committee** to individuals or groups who have made significant contributions to peace. It was established by the will of **Alfred Nobel** in **1895**.
- Navi Pillay has served on the **International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda** and the **International Criminal Court (ICC)**, and chaired the **UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory**.
- In 1998, she co-authored a judgment in the Rwanda tribunal recognizing that **rape and sexual violence constitute acts of genocide**. Last year, the commission she led concluded that **Israel had committed acts of genocide in Gaza**.

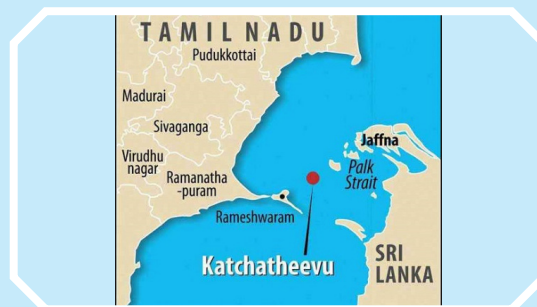
Places in News

Budhi Gandaki River

- On **11 October 2026**, flash floods along the Budhi Gandaki River in Nepal's **Gorkha district** swept away houses and bridges.
- The **Budhi Gandaki River** is located in **Nepal** and forms part of the **Gandaki river system**.
- It flows through the **Gorkha and Dhading districts** of Nepal.
- The Budhi Gandaki is a tributary of the **Trishuli River**, which forms part of the larger **Gandaki (Narayani) river system**.
- The river is associated with the proposed **Budhi Gandaki Hydropower Project**, a major storage-type hydropower project in Nepal.

Katchatheevu Island

- Sri Lankan President **Anura Kumara Dissanayake** stated that India had acknowledged Sri Lanka's claim over Katchatheevu, referring to discussions concerning the island.
- **Katchatheevu** is a small, uninhabited island located in the **Palk Strait**, between India and Sri Lanka.
- It lies approximately **33 km from Rameswaram (India)** and **24 km from Delft Island (Sri Lanka)** in the Palk Strait.
- The island remains significant in **India–Sri Lanka relations**, particularly regarding maritime boundaries and the fishing rights of Indian fishermen.
- Katchatheevu hosts the annual **St. Anthony's Church festival**, which attracts pilgrims from both India and Sri Lanka.



Species In News

Agile Frog (Rana dalmatina)

- A recent study highlighted **the impact of global warming on sex reversal in agile frogs, increasing their extinction risk**.
- The **Agile Frog (Rana dalmatina)** is a species of frog belonging to the family **Ranidae**.
- It is native to **Europe**, particularly central and southern parts of the continent.
- It inhabits **woodlands, meadows and wetlands**, often breeding in shallow, still-water bodies.
- It is known for its **long hind limbs and remarkable jumping ability**, which help it move rapidly.

- **IUCN Status:** Listed as **Least Concern (LC)**, although its population trend is decreasing.
- Genetically female frogs (**XX**) can develop male characteristics, a phenomenon known as **female-to-male sex reversal**. Research suggests that **high temperatures during larval development** can trigger this phenomenon.
- The species is associated with **temperate habitats** and may be affected by habitat loss and wetland degradation.

