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Do not rush it: On the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Indian Polity and Governance - Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues

Mains: General Studies - 2
Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

1. Background

- The **Election Commission of India (ECI**) released draft electoral rolls for seven States/UTs after **Phase-1 of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR)**, triggering concerns over **large-scale voter deletions** and possible **disenfranchisement.**

2. Challenges

- **Large deletions:**
  - **Tamil Nadu:** over **97 lakh** voters deleted (15% of pre-SIR rolls).
  - **West Bengal:** over **58 lakh** deletions (7.5%), highest in urban areas, especially Kolkata.
  - **Bihar: 68 lakh** deletions despite Aadhaar being allowed; only 24 lakh additions/corrections.
- **Gender impact**: Bihar's female ratio fell from **907 to 892**, indicating exclusion risks.
- **Process flaws:** 53-day hearing window, insistence on citizenship proof including parents' birth details (post-1987 births), and high numbers of unmapped/ doubtful forms (West Bengal).
- **Vulnerable groups:** Migrants, illiterate voters and married women face higher disenfranchisement risk due to voter-driven verification.
- **Administrative strain**: Tight **Booth Level Officers (BLO)** deadlines and overlap with local elections (e.g., Kerala).
- **Data gaps**: Reliance on party agents' requests instead of cross-verification with official databases.
- **Legal uncertainty**: Constitutionality of SIR remains undecided.

3. Way Forward

- **Extend SIR timelines**, as advised by the Supreme Court (take a **"sympathetic view"**), considering ground realities.
- **Reduce voter burden** by using reliable government databases for verification.
- **Build safeguards** for vulnerable voters and address gender bias.
- **Ease BLO workload** and avoid election overlaps.
- **Ensure early judicial clarity** on SIR's constitutionality.

Kerala 2.0 — a call to reclaim the State's future

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Indian Polity and Governance - Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues

Mains: General Studies - 2
Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

1. Background

- Kerala, once a **model of human development,** is at a critical turning point marked by **fiscal stress, governance fatigue, ecological damage** and **youth outmigration.**
- Despite these challenges, the State retains the capacity for revival through decisive and sustained reforms.

2. Challenges

- **Fiscal crisis:**
  - **Unsustainable debt** due to borrowing for routine deficits (salaries, pensions); debt servicing exceeds development spending;
  - **Overdependence** on remittances, liquor taxes and lotteries;
  - **GST leakages** and weak tax collection.
- **Jobs deficit:** Record youth unemployment causing migration within India and abroad.
- **Governance failure**: Politicisation of administration, weak institutions, low transparency, partisan appointments and excessive regulation delaying decisions and deterring investment.
- **Labour distortions**: Culture of entitlement, erosion of work ethic, **nokkukooli** and **coercive hartals** undermining enterprise.
- **Narrow economic base:** Excess reliance on remittances and retail; **underuse of knowledge**, technology and sustainability strengths.
- **Social sector stress**: Exam-centric education; health system vulnerabilities exposed during COVID-19.
- **Quality-of-life crises:**
  - **Environmental degradation** from quarrying, sand mining and encroachments.
  - **Drug abuse** among youth.
  - **Stray dog menace**: 23 rabies deaths by August 2025, including after post-exposure vaccination.
- **Political stagnation**: Binary politics crowding out reform-oriented governance.

3. Way Forward

- **Fiscal discipline:** End routine **deficit financing**; improve tax efficiency; mobilise citizen and NRI investment via **Kerala development bonds**; enact an **Investor Protection Act.**
- **Governance reform:** Depoliticise bureaucracy; restore merit, accountability and transparency; empower local bodies.
- **Regulatory reset:** Remove 75% regulations; single-window **"One Kerala Permit";** digitised, time-bound approvals.
- **Job-led growth**: Promote **high-tech agro-processing**, green tech, precision manufacturing, ports, logistics hubs and marine exports.
- **Future sectors**: Support **startups in AI, quantum computing, space tech**, biogenetics, rare earths and **eco-tourism;** enable women entrepreneurs via microfinance and digital skills.
- **Human capital**: Academic-year internships; **skill- and citizenship-oriented education**; resilient, compassionate health systems.
- **Tourism & culture**: Community-based, immersive tourism; expand medical and wellness tourism; reaffirm pluralism inspired by Sree Narayana Guru.
- **Urgent missions**: **"Clean & Green Kerala Mission 2030";** multi-pronged drug control with effective de-addiction; rigorous Animal Birth Control implementation.
- **Political renewal:** Shift from **cynicism to service-oriented**, unity-driven, reform-focused politics.

The significance of a strong defence industrial base

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.

1.Context

- India's vision of becoming a **developed nation by 2047** depends significantly on the strength of its **defence industrial base**.
- Historically, **restrictive policies**, **minimal private-sector participation**, and **heavy import dependence** weakened both **economic potential** and **national security**.
- This over-reliance on foreign defence manufacturers created a **structural vulnerability** in India's strategic preparedness.

2.Recent Reforms and Progress

- A major shift has occurred through **opening defence manufacturing to the private sector**, **liberalised FDI norms**, and **corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board**.
- Expansion of procurement under the **'Make' procedure** and promotion of **innovation** have boosted outcomes.
- **Defence production has increased**, and **exports have expanded rapidly**, reaching **over 80 countries**, indicating a **maturing defence ecosystem** capable of meeting domestic and global demands.

3.Strategic and Geopolitical Significance

- Ongoing **global conflicts** and **supply-chain disruptions** have underscored the importance of **self-reliance in defence**.
- India's **border and maritime security challenges** make indigenous defence capability **indispensable**.
- Opportunities are emerging due to **increased European defence spending**, **saturation of traditional suppliers**, and demand for **cost-effective, reliable platforms**.
- India's **strategic geography in the Indian Ocean Region** and expanding **diplomatic profile** strengthen its potential as a **credible defence exporter**.

4.Challenges and Way Forward

- **Regulatory complexity** continues to discourage private players, especially **MSMEs and startups**.
- There is a need to simplify **export licensing**, **technology transfer**, and **joint venture approvals**, along with providing **long-term demand visibility**.
- DRDO should **focus on advanced research,** while **production and commercial use should be handled by industry.**
- Key priorities include **export financing mechanisms**, **modern testing and certification systems**, and a **dedicated export facilitation agency**.
- Strengthening the defence industrial base will reduce **import dependence**, generate **high-skilled employment**, and enhance **geopolitical leverage**, positioning India as a **confident global power**.

KEYWORDS

Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS)

- BCAS was established in January 1978 as a cell under t**he Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)** on the recommendation of the **Pande Committee**.
- It was reorganised as an independent department under the **Ministry of Civil Aviation** on 1 April 1987.
- BCAS is the **nodal authority for civil aviation security** in India, responsible for safeguarding international and domestic civil flights.
- It lays down **Aviation Security (AVSEC) standards** in accordance with Annex 17 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation (**Chicago Convention**) of the **International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)**.
- BCAS monitors the implementation of security rules and conducts surveys to assess security requirements.
- The headquarters is in **New Delhi**, with regional offices at **Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai** international airports

Bureau of Port Security (BoPS)

- BoPS is **proposed as a dedicated statutory body** to oversee the security of vessels and port facilities in India, modelled on the **Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS)**.
- It will be constituted under the **Merchant Shipping Act, 2025** and function under the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways**.
- BoPS will perform **regulatory and oversight functions** and ensure timely collection, analysis and sharing of security-related information, with a strong focus on **cybersecurity,** including protection of **port IT infrastructure.**
- The Bureau will be **headed by an IPS officer** (Pay Level-15), with the **Director General of Shipping (DGS/DGMA)** acting as Director General during the one-year transition period.
- Earlier, the **Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)** functioned as the **Recognised Security Organisation (RSO)** for seaports.

Section 163 in Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023

- Section 163 empowers an **Executive Magistrate** (District Magistrate, Sub-Divisional Magistrate or a specially authorised Magistrate) to act in cases of **urgent nuisance or apprehended danger.**
- The Magistrate may issue a **written order** stating material facts when **immediate prevention or speedy remedy** is necessary.
- The order can direct a person to **abstain from a particular act** or to take **preventive measures** regarding property under their control.
- Such directions aim to prevent **obstruction, injury, danger to life, health or safety**, disturbance of public tranquillity, **riot** or **affray.**
- In emergencies, the order may be passed **ex parte without prior notice**.
- The order may **apply to an individual**, persons in a specific area, or the **public at large** frequenting a place.
- An order under this section **remains in force for up to two months**, extendable by the State Government **up to six months.**
- The order may be **rescinded or altered**, and any aggrieved person must be given an **opportunity of hearing** with reasons recorded.
- This provision, equivalent to the former **Section 144 of CrPC**

IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC)

- The **IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC)** is a **science-based global network** of more than **10,500 volunteer experts** from almost **every country in the world**.
- Working closely with the **IUCN Secretariat**, the SSC provides **authoritative information on biodiversity conservation**.
- It highlights the **inherent value of species**, their role in **ecosystem health and functioning**, the provision of **ecosystem services**, and their importance for **human livelihoods**.
- This scientific input directly contributes to the **IUCN Red List of Threatened Species**, which assesses the **global conservation status of species**.

Places In News

Jantar Mantar, Delhi

- **Jantar Mantar** was constructed in **1724**, with the term *Jantar Mantar* derived from **Yantra (instruments)** and **Mantra (formulae)**.
- It was built by **Maharaja Jai Singh II**, who later established similar **astronomical observatories** at **Jaipur, Ujjain, Varanasi, and Mathura**
- Jai Singh found the **existing astronomical instruments** of his time to be **too small and inaccurate** for precise measurements.
- To overcome this limitation, he designed and constructed **larger, more precise instruments** based on scientific principles.
- Although the instruments at Jantar Mantar remain remarkable for their **scientific ingenuity and architectural precision**, **accurate astronomical observations** are no longer possible today due to the presence of **surrounding tall buildings**, which obstruct measurements.