

Electoral roll purges raise constitutional questions

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

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

1. Context

- The Election Commission of India introduced the term **“logical discrepancy”** to delete voters during recent elections in **Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Puducherry.**

“Logical discrepancy” is a non-statutory category introduced by the Election Commission of India to flag perceived inconsistencies or mismatches in voter data, leading to deletion of names from electoral rolls despite having no basis in election law.

- Large-scale deletions were reported, including **91 lakh voters in West Bengal** and **64 lakh in Bihar.**
- Many genuine citizens were unable to vote, especially in West Bengal.
- Intervention by the Supreme Court of India and tribunal mechanisms failed to restore voters.
- The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise is widely criticised as **flawed, chaotic, and exclusionary.**

2. Citizenship and Documentation Issues

- Under **Article 326**, only **Indian citizens aged 18+** (not disqualified) are eligible to be voters.
- Citizenship determination falls under the **Union Home Ministry**, which has not issued a clear list of acceptable documents.
- The ECI independently prescribed documents for SIR, excluding commonly used proofs like:

- ➔ Aadhaar card
- ➔ Ration card
- ➔ Even voter ID issued by ECI

- This caused hardship, especially for rural and unlettered populations, leading to **mass exclusions.**

3. Legal and Procedural Violations

- Section 21 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950** allows revision of electoral rolls **before elections**, but only in a **summary manner.**
- Rule 25 of the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960** distinguishes:
 - ➔ **Summary revision** (before elections)
 - ➔ **Intensive revision** (when no elections are due)
- The ECI conducted **intensive revision (SIR) just before elections**, violating legal norms and past practice.
- The category **“logical discrepancy” has no basis in election law.**
- Rule 8** requires citizens to provide information to the best of their ability, but ECI demanded documents difficult to obtain.
- Booth Level Officers were supposed to conduct house-to-house enumeration, but implementation was inadequate.

4. Democratic and Constitutional Concerns

- Many deletions occurred **without giving voters a hearing**, violating **natural justice.**
- Under **Article 324**, the ECI conducts elections but **cannot decide citizenship proof norms**, which is the domain of the Home Ministry.
- The ECI’s actions amount to **jurisdictional overreach.**
- The Supreme Court of India did not clearly resolve the issue, only suggesting consideration of Aadhaar.

- Mass deletions (**64 lakh in Bihar, 91 lakh in West Bengal**) undermine **free and fair elections**.
- Overall, the SIR reflects **systemic violations of legal provisions, procedural safeguards, and democratic principles**; way forward lies in issuing a clear document framework by the Union government, ensuring due process with hearings, limiting revisions to summary procedures before elections, and strengthening judicial oversight to protect voter rights.

A tightening of the fist in India's digital public square

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3
Role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security

1.Context

- On March 30, 2026, **the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology proposed Information Technology (IT) Rule amendments**.
- They **allow platforms to remove or limit content without court orders**.
- This raises concerns about opaque censorship and reduced online speech.

2.Executive Power & Free Speech Risks

- Draft Rule 3(4) **makes platforms follow even informal government instructions** (advisories, directions and standard operating procedures) to **stay legally protected**, increasing executive control without proper checks.
- It conflicts with the **Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015) ruling**, which says platforms must remove unlawful content only when directed by a court order or a legally valid government notification.
- Platforms **may over-censor content to avoid liability** amid unclear directives.
- **Rule 8 brings ordinary users posting news under government oversight** via the **Inter-Departmental Committee**.
- Similar provisions were earlier questioned by the Bombay High Court and Madras High Court over free speech concerns.

3.Concerns with Expanded Executive Control

- The **Inter-Departmental Committee has undefined powers**, creating scope for arbitrary action.
- **Lack of clear rules** and user hearing **weakens fairness**.
- Data retention may store personal data for long periods.
- It **increases surveillance risks and promotes self-censorship**.

4.Balancing Regulation and Free Speech in the Digital Space

- Governments **need tools to regulate harmful content**, but such powers must **operate within constitutional limits**.
- A short consultation period means less public discussion and scrutiny.
- It may reduce free speech and limit public participation.
- A **balanced approach should ensure clear legal limits, wider consultation, and strong safeguards** to protect free speech while regulating content.

Legal limits on U.S. war involvement

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2
Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

1. Background of the Conflict

- The Donald Trump administration launched a military **offensive against Iran** (Feb 28).
- Iran retaliated with **missile and drone attacks** on **Israel** and **Gulf countries** (UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia).
- Iran also attempted a **blockade of the Strait of Hormuz** (critical oil route).
- The U.S. responded with **counter-blockade and naval control** measures.
- A **fragile ceasefire** exists, but conflict continues.

2. War Powers Resolution (1973) - Key Provisions

- Also called **War Powers Resolution (WPA)**; enacted after Richard Nixon's actions in Cambodia during the Vietnam war.
- Objective: Ensure **shared war powers** between the President **and Congress**.

Core Rules:

- **Prior consultation** with Congress before troop deployment (where possible).
- The President must **inform Congress within 48 hours** of deploying U.S. forces, unless **Congress has already declared war or approved the action by law**.
- **Regular reporting** (at least every 6 months).
- If **60 days pass after the President's first report to Congress**, the **use of U.S. military forces must stop automatically**, unless **Congress has declared war or formally approved the action**.
- The President can **extend the 60-day period by another 30 days** by **formally informing Congress in writing** that continued military action is necessary.

3. Current Legal & Political Ambiguities

- There is **confusion about the 60-day deadline**—whether it falls on **April 29** (when fighting began) or **May 1** (when Congress was informed).
- Debate on whether the ceasefire **period counts** toward the deadline.
- **Congressional reluctance to approve war:**
 - ⊖ Congress **has not formally authorised the use of military force since 2002**, when the **U.S. was involved in hostilities in Iraq**.

4. Options Before the Trump Administration

- **Seek Congressional approval** (comply with WPA).
- **End or reduce military operations.**
- Use a 30-day **extension** to **withdraw forces strategically**.

Possible Strategy:

- Trump may **bypass WPA**, citing precedents:
 - ⊖ Past Presidents (e.g., Barack Obama) continued military actions without approval.

⊖ Trump himself ignored the WPA in the 2019 **Yemen conflict**.

- A few **lawmakers like Lisa Murkowski are working on a formal authorization** for the war, but have not yet presented it in the Senate.
- **Most Republicans, however, do not seem willing to slow down the President's war efforts.**

The evolving China-Pakistan space cooperation

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3

Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

1. Growth of China's Space Programme

- China has **made major advancements since launching its first satellite in 1970**.
- Achievements include **satellite launches, a navigation system (BeiDou), spacewalks, and its own space station (Tiangong)**.
- **Uses space cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** to expand global influence.
- **Promotes soft power by launching satellites for other countries** using Long March rockets (China's primary orbital launch vehicles)

2. China-Pakistan Space Cooperation

- Collaboration began in 1990 with the **launch of Badr-I satellite**.
- China continues to build and launch satellites for Pakistan.
- In 2026, **China plans to send a Pakistani astronaut to Tiangong space station**.

3. Satellite and Lunar Missions

- **ICUBE-Q (2024):** A lunar CubeSat developed jointly by Pakistan and China; successfully transmitted images from the Moon.
- China has launched multiple Pakistani satellites for earth observations:

- ➔ EO-3 (2026) , an electro-optical satellite
- ➔ Pakistan Remote Sensing Satellite-2
- ➔ PRSS-1 Pakistan Remote Sensing Satellite 1
- ➔ PRSC-EO1 (Pakistan Remote Sensing Satellite Centre – Electro-Optical Satellite-1)
- These launches strengthened Pakistan's communication and reconnaissance capabilities.

4. Navigation Cooperation

- China's **BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BDS)** is an alternative to GPS.
- **It offers high precision and is used in disaster management, urban planning,** and environmental monitoring.
- **Pakistan became the first foreign user** of it (2014).
- China is helping build a BeiDou-enabled Continuously Operating Radar Station (CORS) network in Pakistan.
- The Pakistani military is integrated with BeiDou under defence cooperation.

5. Strategic Significance

- Space cooperation **strengthens the China–Pakistan strategic partnership.**
- Provides Pakistan with advantages in:
 - ➔ Navigation
 - ➔ Communication
 - ➔ Disaster management
 - ➔ Military and reconnaissance capabilities
- **China–Pakistan space cooperation strengthens ties** and expands technological and geopolitical influence.

KEYWORDS

Shreya Singhal v. Union of India case

- Following the arrests of two girls in Mumbai for a Facebook post criticizing a political bandh in 2012, law student Shreya Singhal **filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) challenging the legality of Section 66A.**
- **Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, of 2000 made it a punishable offence** for any person to send offensive information using a computer or any other electronic device.
- The **Supreme Court in 2015 struck down Section 66A for violating the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a)** of the Constitution.
- It held that **the provision was vague, overbroad, and arbitrary, as terms like “annoyance” and “inconvenience” lacked clear definition** and could lead to misuse.
- The **judgment is considered a landmark in protecting online free speech and limiting arbitrary state interference.**

India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement

- India and New Zealand **signed a landmark Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on April 27, 2026 aiming to boost bilateral trade to \$5 billion within five years.**
- The deal, negotiated in just nine months, **provides 100% duty-free access for Indian products and includes \$20 billion in investment.**
- It grants 100% duty-free access for Indian exports, benefiting sectors like textiles, leather, apparel, and engineering goods.
- India **maintained exemptions for sensitive items, including all dairy products, specific agricultural items (e.g., apples),** and select raw materials to protect local producers.
- The deal **increases labour mobility through 5,000 “Temporary Employment Entry Visas” for skilled Indian professionals,** alongside easier work rights for Indian students.

Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy

- **Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy** is a form of **immunotherapy** used to treat certain **blood cancers**.
- It works by modifying a patient's **T lymphocytes (T cells)** to become more effective at **detecting and destroying cancer cells**.
- In this process, doctors insert a **new gene** into the T cells, enabling them to better recognize and attack **cancerous cells**.
- This therapy has **significantly improved outcomes** in cancers like **leukaemia** and **lymphoma**, and in some cases can even **cure the disease** or **extend survival**.
- However, the same approach has been **less effective against solid tumours**, such as **kidney cancer** and **ovarian cancer**, where results have been limited.

T cells

- **T cells**, also known as **T lymphocytes**, are a type of **white blood cell** that play a vital role in the **immune system**.
- The immune system defends the body against **pathogens** such as **viruses, bacteria, fungi, and parasites**, as well as **harmful cells like cancer cells**.
- There are two main types of lymphocytes: **T cells** and **B cells**, both essential for the body's **defence mechanism**.
- **B cells** produce **antibodies** that target and neutralise pathogens.

Places In News

Chad

- **Chad** is a **landlocked country** in **north-central Africa**.
- **Natural irrigation is limited** to the **Chari and Logone rivers** and their tributaries, which flow from the **southeast into Lake Chad**.
- The capital city is **N'Djamena** (formerly **Fort-Lamy**).
- Chad shares borders with **Libya (north)**, **Sudan (east)**, **Central African Republic (south)**, and **Cameroon, Nigeria, and Niger (west)**.

