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FINDER
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THE HINDU

Concerns over the collegium system

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?

- **Justice Sanjay Kaul** raised concerns about former CJI **D.Y. Chandrachud** discussing judicial appointments with the Centre before collegium meetings.
- This has sparked a debate on the **transparency and accountability** of the **collegium system** for judicial appointments in India.

Key Highlights:

- **Article 124 provides that Supreme Court judges** are appointed by the **President** after consulting the **Chief Justice of India**
- **Article 217 provides that High Court judges** are appointed by the **President** after consulting the **CJI, the Chief Justice of the High Court and the Governor**.
- **Until the 1980s**, judges were appointed by the **government after consulting the judiciary**.
- In **the First Judges Case (1981)**, the Supreme Court upheld the **primacy of the executive in judicial appointments**, as it is accountable to the people.
- Later, to **protect judicial independence from political favouritism**, the Court created the **collegium system in the Second Judges Case (1993)**.
- This was **reaffirmed by the Supreme Court's opinion** in Third Judges case (1998)

Third Judges Case (1998): The Supreme Court held that the Chief Justice of India's recommendation must reflect the collective opinion of a collegium, which it expanded to the CJI and four senior-most judges for the Supreme Court, and the CJI and two senior-most judges for High Courts.

- The current collegium has the **Chief Justice of India and four senior-most judges for Supreme Court appointments**, and the **CJI and two senior-most judges for High Court** appointments.
- Under the **Memorandum of Procedure 1998**, the collegium **recommends names to the Centre, which may return a name with objections** but must appoint if the collegium reiterates it.
- Later, the **Parliament set up the National Judicial Appointments Commission through the 99th Constitutional Amendment 2014**, to recommend judges to the executive.
- It was to have the **Chief Justice of India, two senior judges, the Union Law Minister** and two eminent persons.

- The Supreme Court **struck it down in 2015 for violating the basic structure of judicial independence**, so the collegium system continues.
- After the NJAC verdict, the government and the judiciary agreed to **revise the Memorandum of Procedure for more transparency**, but it is still unfinalised.
- The **Indian collegium has no parallel** in other democracies: the US uses Presidential nomination with Senate confirmation, the **UK has a Judicial Appointments Commission** and **South Africa** has a Judicial Service Commission.

Implications:

- **Informal discussions with the government** before collegium meetings undermine the autonomy.
- **The lack of transparency** in the collegium system reduces **public trust.**
- **Allegations of nepotism** in higher judicial appointments raise **concerns about merit and diversity**.

Way Forward:

- **Finalise the revised MoP as an immediate reform,** establishing **clear selection criteria** and a structured consultative process.
- **Consider a broader judicial appointments commission,** including representatives from the legislature, legal profession and academia
- **Protect judicial independence** by preserving judicial primacy.
- **Strengthen transparency and accountability** by publishing selection criteria and reasons for appointments.
- **Promote merit and diversity** through objective selection criteria and a permanent secretariat

Mains Question:

"The collegium system has protected judicial independence but faces criticism on transparency and accountability. Discuss and suggest reforms for judicial appointments in India." (15 marks, 250 words)

The examination overload, its enormous cost

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.

Why in Focus?

- An opinion article argues that **India's layered entrance and recruitment exams are harmful** and should give way to stronger school and university exams.
- The debate has grown after **repeated paper leaks and National Testing Agency failures**.

Key Highlights:

- Students must clear **separate examinations** for undergraduate and postgraduate admissions and employment, **increasing the burden of repeated testing**.
- **Reliance on multiple competitive examinations** has encouraged students to prioritise **coaching centres over classroom learning**.
- **Coaching fees, application charges and repeated attempts** disproportionately affect economically weaker students, widening inequalities in access.
- **Paper leaks, cheating, cancellations and recruitment delays** have undermined public trust in the examination system.
- Reliance on a single competitive examination may prioritise **speed and test-taking techniques** over knowledge acquired through years of learning.
- The emphasis on entrance examination scores often reduces the importance of **Class XII marks and university CGPA**.
- In contrast, many countries give significant weight to **school-level academic performance** in university admissions.
- The **National Testing Agency's** recurring failures in conducting exams led to a review by **Radhakrishnan Committee, headed by Dr K. Radhakrishnan**, former ISRO chairman.

National Testing Agency: It is an autonomous

body under the Ministry of Education, set up in 2017 to conduct entrance exams such as JEE Main, NEET-UG, CUET and UGC-NET.

- Since **problems persisted, a High-Powered Task Force led by Nandan Nilekani** was set up in July 2026, and a **stronger law against unfair practices** in public examinations has been proposed.

Implications:

- **Leaks and cancellations waste public money**, delay admissions and reduce faith in the fairness of the system.
- Stacked exams **raise anxiety, stress and trauma**
- Coaching centres **replace classroom teaching**, and board exams become a formality.
- **Entrance tests ignore** years of cumulative performance.

Way Forward:

- **Strengthen boards and universities through normalisation**, common moderation frameworks and external audits
- **Enforce the law** against unfair practices strictly.
- Make the **NTA more accountable and transparent**, with independent audits.
- **Base scholarships and fellowships** on academic performance and track records.
- **Provide free quality coaching and counselling in schools**, and ensure language and regional access.

Mains Question:

"Layered entrance and recruitment examinations have affected learning and equity in India. Discuss the issues and suggest reforms." (15 marks, 250 words).

A security deal, but not the end of the Arctic contest

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2

Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Why in Focus?

- The **US, Denmark and Greenland signed a UN agreement on September 22, 2026**, allowing **greater US military presence** while respecting **Danish sovereignty and Greenland's self-determination**.
- It **eases tensions over Trump's bid to control Greenland** but takes effect only after parliamentary approval in Denmark and Greenland.

Key Highlights:

- **Greenland is an autonomous part of the Kingdom of Denmark**: under **the Self-Government Act, 2009** it controls its domestic affairs, while **foreign, defence and security policy remain with Denmark**.
- **The Trump administration's interest in gaining control of Greenland** turned a **territorial controversy into a wider debate on sovereignty and the Arctic's future**.
- **The deal is about security, not territory**: the US has dropped its demand to acquire Greenland, but **its military presence there will grow**.
- It **expands US military access**: **Pituffik Space Base** will be enlarged, and new facilities are allowed at **Narsarsuaq and Mestersvig** and US aircraft and ships also get wider access to territory and waters.
- The agreement also includes **cooperation on the proposed Golden Dome defence system.**

Golden Dome: It is a proposed layered US missile defence shield, announced in 2025, to protect the American homeland against ballistic, hypersonic and cruise missiles using ground- and space-based sensors and interceptors.

- **Security concerns also extend to the economy**, as **investments from countries** outside North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union are **restricted** in certain sensitive sectors.
- These arrangements are **long-term by design, since the agreement has no expiry date** and some provisions would continue even if Greenland becomes independent in the

future.

Implications:

- US military **access and investment restrictions may constrain** Greenland's practical autonomy.
- Security-based restrictions may **limit investment diversification and economic development**.
- Russian military presence and Chinese economic and scientific interests intensify **competition over Arctic resources, shipping and security**.
- The agreement **highlights potential disputes between NATO allies over territorial sovereignty** and security.

Way Forward:

- **Ensure transparent parliamentary procedures** and meaningful Greenlandic consent.
- Ensure **mutually agreed military access and Greenlandic participation in decisions** affecting its territory.
- **Protect traditional livelihoods and ensure communities benefit from jobs**, infrastructure and investment.
- **Restrict investment screening to sensitive sectors** without undermining economic and climate-sensitive development.

Mains Question:

"The US–Denmark–Greenland agreement of 2026 shows the growing strategic importance of the Arctic. Discuss its implications for Greenland's sovereignty and Arctic geopolitics." (15 marks, 250 words)

Can new fortified potato variety help with India's hidden hunger problem?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2

Health and related issues, including the impact of nutrition on health and development.

Why in Focus?

- The Central government is promoting **Kufri Jamunia**, a new fortified **purple skinned potato variety**, to address India's **hidden hunger** problem.
- Developed by the **ICAR-Central Potato Research Institute (CPRI)**, Kufri Jamunia contains higher levels of **anthocyanins**, **vitamin C**, and certain micronutrients.

Anthocyanins are organic compounds found in certain fruits and vegetables, known for their antioxidant properties.

Hidden hunger refers to a condition where people consume enough calories but do not receive the necessary nutrients.

Key Highlights:

- Kufri Jamunia was **biofortified by crossing two potato varieties**: **MS/8-1148 and CP4242** in 2015, so that the new potato carries the useful traits of both parents.

Biofortification: It is the process of increasing the nutrient content of food crops, such as iron, zinc or antioxidants through plant breeding or genetic engineering, so that the nutrients are built into the crop itself.

- It contains approximately **42.75 mg of vitamin C**, **42.05 mg of anthocyanins**, **2.28 mg of zinc**, **3.22 mg of iron**, and **161 micrograms of carotenoids** per 100 g.
- The variety was approved by the **Sub-Committee on Crop Standards, Notification and Release of Varieties for Horticultural Crops** in mid-2024 and notified by the government in **November 2024**.
- Kufri Jamunia produces **10-12 medium to large tubers per plant**, so a farmer gets more marketable produce from the same seed.
- It **matures in around 90 days compared with about 100-120 days** for regular potato varieties
- Hence, **farmers get quick income, lower risk from weather and pests**, and land free sooner for the next crop.

Implications:

- Market acceptance **remains uncertain due to consumer preferences and limited**

awareness.

- Nutrient retention during cooking **requires further study**.
- Irregular potato consumption **may limit its impact on hidden hunger**.

Way Forward:

- Conduct **consumer studies to assess market acceptance**.
- **Promote awareness** of its nutritional benefits.
- **Research cooking methods** that preserve nutrients.
- Support farmers in **disease management and cost reduction**.
- Assess its **impact on nutritional security through pilot projects**.

Mains Question:

Examine the potential of the new fortified potato variety, Kufri Jamunia, in addressing India's hidden hunger problem. Discuss the challenges associated with its cultivation, consumer acceptance, and nutritional efficacy. Suggest measures to enhance its role in improving nutritional security in India. (15 words, 250 Words).

KEYWORDS

State Legislative Council (Vidhan Parishad)

- The **State Legislative Council** is the **upper house** of the state legislature in six Indian states: **Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh**.
- Under **Article 169**, Parliament can **create or abolish a State Legislative Council by law** if the State Legislative Assembly passes a resolution with a special majority.
- The Council is a **permanent house** with a **six-year tenure** for members, and **one-third retire every two years**.
- Under **Article 171**, **one-third** of members are elected by local authorities, **one-third** by MLAs, **one-twelfth each** by graduates and teachers, and **one-sixth** are nominated by the Governor.
- **Elected members** are chosen through the system of **proportional representation by means of the Single Transferable Vote**
- Under **Article 173**, a candidate must be an **Indian citizen** and at least **30 years old**; other qualifications are prescribed by law.

Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs)

- **Registered Unrecognised Political Parties** are political parties registered with the Election Commission of India under **Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951**, but which have **not met the electoral performance criteria for recognition as a State or National Party**.
- A party is **recognised as a National party** if it **secures at least 6% of valid votes in four or more states in a Lok Sabha/Assembly election and wins at least 4 Lok Sabha seats**, or **wins 2% of Lok Sabha seats from at least three States**, or is **recognised as a State party in at least four States**.
- A party is **recognised as a State party** if it secures **6% of valid votes with 2 Assembly seats**, or **6% of votes in a Lok Sabha election with 1 Lok Sabha seat**, or **wins 3% of Assembly seats or 3 seats** (whichever is more) , or **wins 1 Lok Sabha seat for every 25 allotted to the State**, or **secures 8% of total valid votes** in a Lok Sabha or Assembly election with no seat requirement.
- As of July 2026, there are **more than 2,800 Registered Unrecognised Political Parties** in India
- They enjoy **tax exemption under Section 13A of the Income Tax Act, 1961**, and may receive **common poll symbols** subject to conditions and can nominate up to **20 star campaigners** for election campaigning.
- They must **contest elections periodically** and file **annual audited accounts and contribution reports**.

- They must **disclose donations** exceeding **₹20,000** and cannot accept donations above **₹2,000 in cash**.

Digital Arrest

- **Digital arrest** is a cyber fraud in which **criminals psychologically trap victims by falsely claiming they are under arrest** and coercing them into transferring money.
- Fraudsters **impersonate officials from agencies** such as the **CBI, Narcotics Department or RBI**, accusing victims of involvement in drug trafficking or money laundering.
- **Caller ID spoofing, fake arrest warrants and fabricated police setups** are used to establish credibility and intimidate victims.
- Victims are forced to remain on **video calls under constant surveillance** through threats of imprisonment or property seizure.
- Fraudsters **demand money through difficult-to-trace channels**, potentially leading to financial loss and identity theft.

ASEAN–India Maritime Exercise (AIME-2026)

- **AIME-2026** is the **second edition** of the multilateral maritime exercise between **India and ASEAN member states**, following the inaugural edition held in **Singapore in May 2023**.
- The exercise was hosted at **Subic Bay, Philippines**, under the theme **Anchored in Trust, United at Sea**
- It comprises two phases: the **Harbour Phase**, involving professional exchanges and coordination, and the **Sea Phase**, involving practical maritime exercises.
- AIME-2026 advances India's **Act East Policy** and **MAHASAGAR** (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) vision, supporting the **ASEAN–India Year of Maritime Cooperation 2026**.

Places in News

Buxa Tiger Reserve (BTR)

- Recently, a **three-year-old female tiger which had been relocated to the Buxa Tiger Reserve** in West Bengal from Bihar has crossed into the Raimona National Park in Assam
- **Buxa Tiger Reserve** is located in **Alipurduar district, West Bengal**, in the eastern Himalayan foothills.
- Buxa Tiger Reserve lies within the **Indo-Malayan biodiversity region**, known for high species richness and ecological sensitivity.
- It was notified under **Project Tiger in 1983** as India's **15th tiger reserve**.
- It shares its northern boundary with **Bhutan** and connects with **Assam through forest corridors**, making it strategically important for transboundary wildlife movement.



Greenland

- Greenland has gained attention amid renewed **geopolitical interest in its strategic location** in the **Arctic region**.
- Greenland is the **world's largest island (non-continent)**, located between **North America and Europe** in the North Atlantic Ocean.
- Geographically, it is part of **North America**, despite its political association with Denmark.
- It was formerly a **Danish colony** and is now an **autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark**.
- Greenland is bounded by the **Arctic Ocean** to the north, **Greenland Sea** to the east, **North Atlantic Ocean** to the

southeast, **Davis Strait** to the southwest and **Baffin Bay** to the west.

- **Nuuk** is the capital of Greenland.





Species In News

Royal Bengal Tiger (Panthera tigris tigris)

- The **Royal Bengal Tiger**, India's national animal belongs to the **Felidae family** and is one of the largest tiger subspecies.
- It is primarily found in **India**, with populations also present in **Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan** and inhabiting mangrove ecosystems such as the **Sundarbans**.
- Its **orange or reddish-yellow coat with black stripes** provides camouflage, and each tiger has a unique stripe pattern for identification.
- **Pseudo-melanistic tigers** are found in **Similipal Tiger Reserve, Odisha**, and are caused by a **genetic mutation**.
- It is protected under **Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**, and listed in **Appendix I of CITES**; its **IUCN conservation status is Endangered**
- **Project Tiger (1973)** was launched to protect tigers through dedicated tiger reserves, while the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** oversees tiger conservation and reserve management.
- The latest official tiger census, **All India Tiger Estimation 2022, estimated India's wild tiger population at 3,682**, which is about **75% of the global wild tiger population**.
- **Madhya Pradesh** has the highest tiger population, **followed by Karnataka and Uttarakhand**.