

Elections Reforms

❖ Context

➤ The Election Commission of India has sent six key proposals to the Law Ministry.

❖ Linking of Aadhar to Voter IDs

- EC has requested the government to notify the rules for linkage of Aadhaar to voter IDs.
- In this regard, in December 2021, Parliament had passed the Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

❖ Deregistration of Political Parties

- Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 empowers the commission to register associations and bodies as political parties.
- However, there is no constitutional or statutory provision that gives power to the EC to deregister parties.
- Many political parties get registered, but never contest elections. Such parties exist only on paper and are only formed to take income tax benefits.
- The EC had recently announced a clean-up drive initiating "graded action" against more than 2,100 RUPPs for flouting rules.

❖ Number of seats for Contest

- The EC has sought an amendment to the section 33(7) of RPA 1951 to restrict the number of seats a candidate can contest from.

- The act currently allows a person to contest a general election or a group of by-elections or biennial elections from up to two constituencies.

❖ Exit and Opinion Polls

- The EC has sought a ban on them.
- According to EC, there should be some restriction on conducting and disseminating the results of opinion polls right from the day of the first notification of an election till the completion of the election in all its phases.

❖ Disclosure of Donations

- The EC has sought the modification of Form 24A to mandate the disclosure of all donations above Rs 2,000 instead of Rs 20,000.

❖ Registration of Voters

- The EC has requested to allow four qualifying dates - 1 January, 1 April, 1 July, 1 October - for eligible people to register as voters.
- As of now, for an election to be held in a particular year, only an individual who has attained the age of 18 years as on January 1 of that year or before is eligible to be enrolled in the voters' list.

1st Human Space & Ocean Missions in 2023

❖ Context

➤ Recently the Govt said India will achieve the **unique distinction of simultaneously launching** the first human space mission "**Gaganyaan**" as well as the **first manned human ocean mission in 2023**.

❖ Key Highlights

- **Trials** for both the space and ocean manned missions have **reached an advanced stage**.
- The unique feat **will be achieved**, most likely, in the **second half of 2023**.

❖ Samudrayan Project

- It is **undertaken by the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT)**.
- It will be a **part of the ₹6,000 crore Deep Ocean Mission**.
- The **Matsya 6000**, the deep-sea vehicle under the Samudrayan initiative, is **designed to carry three people in a titanium alloy personnel sphere**.
- **Endurance** - 12 hours (additional 96 hours in case of an emergency situation).
- It can work at a **depth between 1000 and 5500 meters**.
- **Sea trials of a 500-meter rated shallow water version** of the manned submersible are **expected to take place in early part of 2023**.
- The **MATSYA 6000**, the deep-water manned submersible that **will be ready for trials by the second quarter of 2024**.



HUMAN OCEAN MISSION

❖ Gaganyaan

- Gaganyaan is a **crewed orbital spacecraft** that is **expected to take three astronauts** to space for a **period of seven days**.
- The Gaganyaan schedule is as follows:
 - **3 flights** will be launched into orbit.
 - **2 unmanned flights** and **1 human spaceflight**.
- The **second uncrewed Gaganyaan mission** will be launched at the end of 2022, carrying '**Vyom Mitra**,' an ISRO-developed spacefaring human-robot.



- ISRO's **Geo-Synchronous Launch Vehicle (GSLV)** will be used for the manned space mission.
- The spacecraft will be **placed in a low earth orbit of 300-400 km**.
- **Cost-** Rs.10,000 crore
- If India successfully sends four astronauts to space, it will be only the **fourth nation to do so after the US, China and Russia**.

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Web 5.0

❖ Context

- Recently, former Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey announced his vision for a **new decentralized web platform** that is being called **Web 5.0** and is being built with an aim to return **“ownership of data and identity to individuals”**.

❖ About Web 1.0

- It was **developed in 1989**.
- **Mostly static web pages** where users would go to a website and then **read and interact with the static information**.
- Users **could not post reviews, comments and likes etc.**

❖ About Web 2.0

- Fully developed in 2004, and **It is still the age of Web 2.0 now**.
- **Users can create content, interact and contribute in the form of comments, registering likes, sharing and uploading their photos or videos** and perform other such activities.

❖ About Web 3.0

- In Web3, users will have **ownership stakes in platforms and applications** unlike now where tech giants control the platforms.

- Web3 enables **peer to peer (seller to buyer) transactions** by eliminating the role of the intermediary (Amazon, eBay).
- The spirit of Web3 is **Decentralized Autonomous Organization (DAO)**
 - It means all the **business rules and governing rules** in any transaction are **transparently available** for anyone to see and software will be written conforming to these rules.

❖ About Web 5.0

- Web 5.0 is aimed at building an **extra decentralized web**.
- Web 5.0 is **Web 2.0 plus Web 3.0** that will allow users to **‘own their identity’ on the Internet and ‘control their data’**.
- Both Web 3.0 and Web 5.0 envision an **Internet without threat of censorship** – from governments or big tech, and without fear of significant outages.

News in Between the Lines

BrahMos



❖ Context

- On **June 12, 2001**, the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was **first tested from a land-based launcher in Chandipur**.
- In the **21 years** since, BrahMos has been **upgraded several times**, with versions tested on land, air and sea platforms.

❖ About BrahMos

- The name BrahMos is a portmanteau formed from the **names of two rivers**, the **Brahmaputra of India and the Moskva of Russia** (A joint collaboration between India and Russia).
- It is capable of being **launched from land, sea, sub-sea and air against surface- and sea-based targets**.
- The missile flies at a **speed of 2.8 Mach** or almost **3-times** the speed of sound.
- It can **carry both conventional and nuclear warheads** of 300 kilograms.
- The range of the missile was originally capped at **290 km** as per obligations of the **Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)**.
- Following India’s entry into the club in June 2016, the range would be extended to **450 km and to 600 km at a later stage**.
- Last December the air version of BrahMos was test fired from the **Indian Air Force’s Sukhoi 30 MK-I aircraft**.
- On January 11, 2022 an **advanced sea-to-sea variant of BrahMos** was tested from the newly commissioned **INS Visakhapatnam**.
- Several Asian countries have shown a keen interest in BrahMos.

Chelonoidis phantasticus

❖ Context

- **Chelonoidis phantasticus** is a giant tortoise species **believed to be extinct for more than a century**. Recently, a surviving member has been identified.

❖ Key Highlights

- It belongs to **Chelonoidis phantasticus**.
- **Chelonoidis phantasticus** means **“fantastic giant tortoise”**.
 - Commonly called the **Fernandina Island Galápagos giant tortoise**.

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- The species was so far known only from a **single individual, collected in 1906**. It has now been recently discovered again in 2019.
 - **Habitat:** Its habitat is **largely dry brush land at lower elevations**, but much of that habitat has been destroyed by extensive lava flows.
 - The small area of remaining higher-quality habitat is mesic and at higher elevations.
 - **Protection Status: IUCN Red List- Critically Endangered & Possibly Extinct.**
- ❖ **About Fernandina Island**
- Fernandina Island is the **third largest, and youngest, island of the Galápagos Islands**.
 - **Fernandina Island is an active volcano** that stands alone on western periphery of the Galapagos Archipelago and is reputed to be the **largest pristine island on Earth**.

Rajya Sabha Election



- ❖ **Context**
- Elections for 57 Rajya Sabha seats across 15 states were held recently.
- ❖ **Key Highlights**
- Members of a state's Legislative Assembly vote in the Rajya Sabha elections through proportional representation with single transferable vote (STV) system as per **Article 80** of the Indian constitution.
 - The Conduct of Election Rules 1961 governs the election.
 - Each MLA marks his or her choice of candidates by ranking them in a ballot paper.
 - **Open ballot voting applies in elections to Rajya Sabha only.**
 - In the open ballot, every political party can appoint an **authorised agent** to verify whom its members have voted for.
 - The rules don't restrict an MLA or minister to be an authorised person.
 - The same person cannot be appointed as the authorised agent of more than one party.
 - **Each MLAs vote is counted only once.** The vote of an MLA is considered invalid if:
 - He shows the vote to an unauthorised person.
 - He shows the vote to an authorised person of another party.
 - If an MLA refuses to show his vote to the authorised person.
 - If the ballot paper is not marked with the special pen provided by the EC.
 - If the ballot paper is incomplete.
 - If an independent MLA shows his marked ballot paper to the authorised agent of any party.

Kapilvastu Relics



- ❖ **Context**
- **Four holy relics** of Lord Buddha have been taken, by a 25 member delegation from India led by Union Minister of Law & Justice, to **Mongolia** for an **11-day exposition** at **Gandan Monastery** to coincide with Mongolian Buddha Purnima celebrations.
 - **They have been accorded the status of 'state guests'.**
- ❖ **Key Highlights**
- The four relics come from **among 22 Buddha relics**, currently housed at Delhi's National Museum.
 - Together they are known as the 'Kapilvastu Relics' since they are from a site in Bihar, known as **Piprahwa**, believed to be the **ancient city of Kapilvastu**.
 - The site was discovered in **1898**.
 - Buddha attained **salvation** in UP's **Kushinagar** district at the age of **80**.
 - The **Mallas of Kushinagar** cremated his body with ceremonies befitting a universal king.
 - His relics from the funeral pyre were collected and divided into eight shares to be distributed among the :

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- Ajathsatrus of Magadha.
 - Licchavis of Vaishali.
 - Sakyas of Kapilvastu.
 - Mallas of Kushinagar.
 - Bullies of Allakappa.
 - Mallas of Pava.
 - Koliyas of Ramagrama.
 - A Brahmana of Vethadipa.
- The purpose was **erecting stupas** over the sacred relics. Two more stupas came up - one over the **urn** in which the relics had been collected and the other over the **embers**.

Omnibus Law



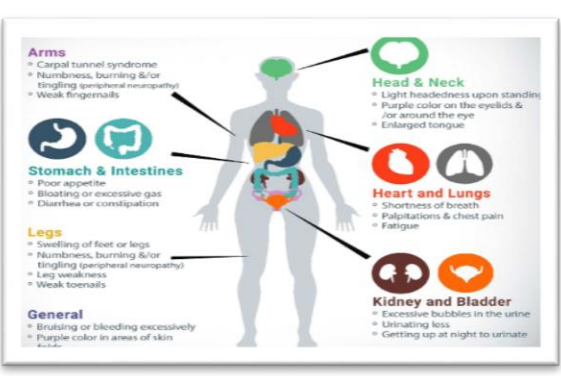
- ❖ **Context**
 - Indonesia's parliament is set to revisit the law to comply with a court order.
- ❖ **Key Highlights**
 - It was a **job creation law** enacted by revising over 70 existing laws, with the aim of removing red tape and improving the investment climate.
 - The reforms included a cut in mandatory severance benefits, new minimum wage limits and removal of some mandatory paid leave.
 - The law ran into **controversy** after labour organisations, student groups and environmentalists complained that the **law was too pro-business** and **weakened protection for workers and the environment**.

Regional English Language Office (RELO)



- ❖ **Context**
 - The Punjab education department organised a one-day training workshop for english teachers from govt schools in association with experts from RELO.
- ❖ **Key Highlights**
 - **RELO** is a wing of the **US Embassy** in India that was established in **2005** as part of its Public Diplomacy Section. It is headquartered in New Delhi.
 - Its mission is to support the **effective teaching and learning of English in Afghanistan, Bhutan and India**.
 - The project aims to strengthen India-US ties by supporting English learning.
 - It collaborates with state government and educational institutions to support them in teacher training, curriculum development and other training projects.

Amyloidosis



- ❖ **Context**
 - A rare disease was in the news recently as it affected Pakistan's former President General.
- ❖ **Key Highlights**
 - It is a **rare disease** that occurs when an abnormal protein, called **amyloid**, builds up in one's organs, affecting their shape and functioning.
 - It can build up in the **heart, brain, kidneys, spleen and other parts** of the body, leading to life threatening situations like organ failure.
 - The protein is not normally found in the body but formed from several different types of proteins.
 - The disease may be primary or secondary to a different health condition.

NH 53



- ❖ **Context**
 - Recently, the Highways Minister announced that the **75 km stretch of the Amravati-Akola highway** in Maharashtra was **laid in 105 hours and 33 minutes**, setting a **Guinness World Record**.
- ❖ **Key Highlights**
 - The project was **implemented by 720 workers** including a team of independent consultants who worked day and night. The **total length of the 75 km** of single lane continuous bituminous concrete road is **equivalent to 37.5 km of 2-lane paved shoulder road**. The Amravati to Akola section is part of NH 53 and this is an important east-east corridor which connects major cities like **Kolkata, Raipur, Nagpur and Surat**. **Previous Guinness World Record** for the longest continuously laid bituminous was for building **25.275 kilometers of road**.
 - It was **achieved in Doha, Qatar in February 2019**.
 - That task was completed in 10 days.

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