NEXT IAS

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

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News In Short

SC HIGHLIGHTED NEED TO REGULATE ONLINE CONTENT

Context

- The Supreme Court suggested a tougher line on user-generated content, calling for a neutral, autonomous regulator for social media platforms.

SC Observations/Suggestions

- SC said that there has to be some impartial, autonomous system to regulate social media platforms which will be free from the influence.
- Freedom of speech is a valuable fundamental right, but it cannot lead to perversity, obscenity.
  - There can be some mechanism where the fundamental right to free speech can also be protected.
- It also suggested using the Aadhaar number or income tax PAN to verify the age of the user.
- SC has asked the Centre to come back with draft rules for public consultation within four weeks.

Ministry's Response

- The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said it is planning to amend the Code of Ethics published with the Information Technology Rules, 2021 to incorporate guidelines on obscenity for all digital content.
- The proposals include rating of online content for different age groups and a bar on anti-national digital content.
- This was being proposed in accordance with Article 19(1)(a) and the reasonable restrictions imposed under Article 19(2).

Digital content censorship

- Digital content censorship refers to the control of online content by governments, organizations, or other entities. This includes:
  - blocking websites and apps;
  - removal of social media content;
  - regulation of OTT (Over-The-Top) streaming platforms;
  - restrictions on digital news and journalism.

Need for the Censorship

- Curbing Misinformation and Fake News: Prevents rapid spread of rumours that can trigger mob violence, panic, and public disorder.
- Controlling Hate Speech and Communal Content: Essential to stop content that fuels communal tensions, incites violence, or threatens social harmony.
- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Groups: Restricts access to harmful, explicit, violent, or manipulative content that can exploit minors.
- Loopholes in Platform Accountability: Social media platforms delay content moderation, lack transparency, and often evade responsibility due to weak enforcement mechanisms.
- Preventing Cybercrimes: There is a need to block websites and online content linked to child sexual abuse material (CSAM), trafficking, drug markets, and illegal financial activities to prevent cybercrimes and safeguard vulnerable users.
- Addressing AI Threats and Deepfakes: Necessary to regulate AI-generated fake videos/photos that can damage reputations, distort democratic processes, and mislead citizens.

Legal Framework Governing Digital Censorship in India

- Right to Freedom of Speech (Article 19(1)(a)): Subject to reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2) concerning decency, morality, and public order.
- Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000: Section 69A grants the government power to block online content for security or public order concerns.
- Intermediary Guidelines & Digital Media Ethics Code, 2021: Regulates social media, OTT platforms, and digital news media.
- Self-Regulation by OTT Platforms: Platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime follow self-regulatory frameworks such as the Digital Publishers Content Grievances Council (DPCGC).
- The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), which was established by the Cinematographic Act, of 1952, is responsible for censoring movies in India.

Challenges in Digital Censorship in India

- Balancing Freedom of Speech & Regulation: Over-regulation can suppress creativity, while under-regulation can spread harmful content.
- Transparency & Accountability: Content moderation and censorship decisions often lack clear guidelines, raising concerns about misuse.
- Jurisdictional Issues: Many digital platforms operate from outside India, making enforcement difficult.
- Technological Advancements: The rapid evolution of digital media complicates consistent and fair regulation.

Way Forward

- Strengthening Independent Regulatory Bodies: Ensuring that courts and neutral institutions review censorship decisions.
- Enhancing Transparency in Content Moderation: Digital platforms should publish periodic transparency reports on content takedowns.
- Encouraging Digital Literacy: Educating citizens to identify fake news rather than enforcing restrictive censorship.
- Public Consultation in Policymaking: Involving journalists, legal experts, and civil society in framing digital content regulations.

Source: IE

LAW MINISTRY DEFENDS ITS SIMULTANEOUS POLLS PROPOSAL

Context

- The Union Law Ministry said that the proposed framework on simultaneous elections does not violate the Constitution's basic structure.

Background

- Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill, 2024 and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment), known as the One Nation One Election Bills were introduced by the Law Minister in 2024.
- The Bills provide for synchronising the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections by curtailing the terms of state assemblies that are elected after a particular Lok Sabha to end with the term of that Lok Sabha.
    - Once the terms of the legislatures align, the next general election will be held simultaneously.
- The bills were referred to the Joint Parliamentary Committee to ensure that the Bills do not disturb the basic structure of the Constitution.
- The JPC will be meeting representatives from the 23rd Law Commission and the Election Commission on December 4.

View of the Union Law Ministry

- Five Year Tenure: Articles 83(2) and 172(1) of the Constitution explicitly provide that the term of the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies shall be five years "unless sooner dissolved."
    - The Ministry argued this was deliberately incorporated by the framers to allow for premature dissolution under certain circumstances.
- Basic Structure Doctrine: The basic structure doctrine demands that certain fundamental features of the Constitution — such as separation of powers between the organs of the State are a part of the basic structure of the constitution and cannot be amended.
    - The Bills do not erode the principle of separation of powers or federalism.
- Impact only Duration: The Bills affect the duration or frequency of voting and not the right to vote, which does not violate the basic structure.
- Simultaneous elections do not affect the accountability of the government, as Parliamentary democracy ensures that each government remains accountable until the last day.

What are Simultaneous Elections?

- Simultaneous Elections (One Nation One Election) refer to the idea of holding Lok Sabha and State legislative assembly elections together, with the aim of reducing the frequency of elections and their associated costs.
- Simultaneous elections in India to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies were held in the years 1951-52, 1957, 1962 and 1967.
- Thereafter, the schedule could not be maintained and the elections to the Lok Sabha and the State legislative assembly have still not been realigned.

Arguments In Favour of One Nation One Election

- Reduced Expenditure: It will reduce the huge expenditure incurred for conducting separate elections every year.
- Streamlined Process: Managing one election cycle is logistically simpler than conducting multiple elections at different times. This can lead to more efficient use of administrative resources.
- Reduced Model Code of Conduct (MCC) Disruptions: Frequent elections result in prolonged enforcement of MCC, which restricts: new policy announcements, budgetary decisions, welfare schemes & administrative initiatives.
- Direct Accountability: With simultaneous elections, voters can hold parties accountable for both central and state governance at the same time, making it clearer how local and national policies impact their lives.
- Strengthens Cooperative Federalism: A harmonised electoral calendar encourages coordination between the Union and States, ensuring policy stability and reducing political friction from perpetual campaign cycles.

Arguments Against One Nation One Election

- Logistical Challenges: All states and the central government face massive logistical challenges including coordinating the schedules, resources etc.
- Local Priorities: It may help the dominant national party at the cost of regional parties and regions issues can be overshadowed by the national issues.
- Complex Reforms Needed: Implementing simultaneous elections would require significant constitutional amendments and changes to existing electoral laws, posing legal complexities.
- Federalism & State Autonomy: Synchronising terms effectively curtails or extends the tenure of State Assemblies, which undermines the constitutional autonomy of states.

Way Ahead

- Synchronized polls for all 3 tiers of government will improve governance architecture. It will enhance "transparency, inclusivity, ease and confidence of voters.
- The law commission is likely to recommend holding simultaneous polls for all three tiers of the government – the Lok Sabha, state assemblies and local bodies like municipalities and panchayats – starting 2029.

Source: TH

TOWARD STRATEGIC AUTONOMY: INDIA'S FIRST INTEGRATED REPM SCHEME

Context

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the "Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Sintered Rare Earth Permanent Magnets" with a financial outlay of 7,280 crore.

About the Scheme

- This first-of-its-kind initiative aims to establish 6,000 Metric Tons per Annum (MTPA) of integrated Rare Earth Permanent Magnet (REPM) manufacturing capacity in India.
  - REPMs—such as Neodymium-Iron-Boron (NdFeB) and Samarium Cobalt (SmCo)—are among the strongest permanent magnets in the world.
  - Capacity will be allocated to five beneficiaries through a global competitive bidding process, each receiving up to 1,200 MTPA.
- The Scheme will support the creation of integrated REPM manufacturing facilities, involving conversion of rare earth oxides to metals, metals to alloys, and alloys to finished REPMs.
- Duration of scheme: 7 years
  - 2 years: Gestation period
  - 5 years: Incentive disbursement

Why Does India Need This?

- Rising Demand: REPMs are critical for industries such as: electric vehicles, renewable energy, electronics & smartphones, aerospace and defence and strategic systems. India's demand for REPMs is projected to double by 2030.
- Heavy Import Dependence: India currently imports nearly all of its ~900 tonnes annual REPM requirement.
  - Global supply shortages (2021–22) caused price spikes of 200–300%, exposing India's vulnerability.
- Strategic Autonomy: REPMs are classified as Critical Materials globally. Securing REPM production aligns with:
  - Atmanirbhar Bharat
  - National Security Strategy
  - Net Zero 2070
  - Viksit Bharat @2047
- Mineral Potential: India has the world's 5th-largest rare earth reserves (~6.9 million tonnes), primarily located in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Kerala, Jharkhand and Rajasthan.

Challenges

- Technological Complexity: NdFeB and SmCo magnet production involves ultra-high vacuum sintering and cryogenic milling.
  - India lacks trained metallurgists and engineers specializing in rare earth magnet technologies.
- China's Dominance: China controls ~85–90% of global REPM production, making competition difficult.
- High Capital Costs: Integrated REPM facilities require high-temperature furnaces, rare earth purification units and powder metallurgy lines.
- Environmental and Regulatory Issues: Wastewater from rare earth processing contains radioactive thorium and heavy metals.

Steps Taken by India

- National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM): Launched in 2025, to establish a robust framework for self-reliance in the critical mineral sector.

  - Under this mission, the Geological Survey of India (GSI) has been tasked with conducting 1,200 exploration projects from 2024-25 to 2030-31.
- Strengthening Domestic Capacity: IREL (India) Limited, under the Department of Atomic Energy, is modernising processing facilities.
  - Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) developing rare earth metal reduction & alloying technologies.
- International Partnerships: MoUs with Australia, U.S., Europe, and Japan on critical mineral supply and technology sharing.
  - India joined the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP) in 2023.
- Demand-Side Drivers: Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for solar modules, electronics, drones, auto & EV components.
  - The EV mission alone could require 15,000–20,000 tonnes of REPMs annually by 2047.
- Research & Innovation: BARC, ARCI, and IITs advancing — high-performance magnet research, recyclable magnets and waste-free extraction technologies.

Conclusion

- This initiative marks a transformational step toward building a self-reliant and competitive REPM ecosystem in India.
- By fostering indigenous manufacturing, it will secure critical supply chains, support electric mobility and renewable energy, and strengthen national defence capabilities.
- The scheme contributes to India's Net Zero 2070 goals, reduces import dependence, and aligns with the broader vision of Viksit Bharat @2047—creating a technologically advanced, globally competitive, and sustainable industrial base.

Source: PIB

ROAD MAP TO BUILD FUTURE-READY FORCE

In News

- The Army Chief has unveiled a comprehensive three-phase roadmap to build a future-ready force by 2047, aligning military transformation with India's vision of Viksit Bharat.

Comprehensive three-phase roadmap

- The plan emphasizes modernization, integration, and resilience to meet evolving security challenges.
- Phases: The first phase, 'HOP 2032', forms a comprehensive framework under the Army's decade of transformation initiative launched in 2023.
  - The second phase, 'STEP 2037', comprises a five-year period of consolidating the gains from the first phase.
  - Third phase, 'JUMP 2047', under which the Army aims to emerge as an integrated, future-ready force.

Do you know?

- The Army Chief outlined four "springboards" to drive the transformation plan:
  - Self-reliance through indigenisation: Strengthening domestic defence manufacturing and technology absorption, with more progress needed.
  - Accelerated innovation: Moving from experimentation to large-scale impact in AI, cyber, quantum, autonomous systems, space, and advanced materials.
  - Adaptation and ecosystem reform: Reshaping structures and processes to meet evolving security needs.
  - Military-civil fusion: Building deep synergy between academia, industry, and the military, with initiatives like opening ranges, funding start-ups, and joining national technology missions.

Objective and Need

- The roadmap stems from India's changing security environment, marked by hybrid warfare, cyber threats, and regional instability.
- With the rise of disruptive technologies and contested borders, the Army is evolving beyond conventional warfare.
- The plan aligns with the government's push for Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence, reducing reliance on imports and strengthening indigenous production.

Challenges

- India's defence modernization faces key hurdles like resource constraints in balancing fiscal discipline with high costs,
- Technology gaps due to limited domestic production of advanced systems
- Operational complexity in integrating new doctrines while staying combat-ready

- Human capital challenges in training personnel for emerging domains like cyber, space, and electronic warfare.

Way Ahead

- The Army chief outlined a long-term transformation plan for India's Army, focusing on structural reforms, stronger civil-military-industrial partnerships, and sustained R&D investment.
- The goal is to build a future-ready, resilient force by 2047 that can safeguard sovereignty and support India's rise as a global power, while modernizing and indigenizing capabilities despite fiscal and technological challenges.

Source :TH

NEWS IN SHORT

NAIVE PAINTING OF KOVACICA

Context

- Last year UNESCO recognised the Kovacica painters on its list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

About

- The naïve painting practices of Kovacica, Serbia refer to the tradition of painting and decorating objects with representations of the folk life, rural environment, history and everyday lives.

- It originated in the town of Kovacica in the 1930s and spread to other towns with Slovak communities in Serbia over time.
- Practitioners are self-taught, they use oil paint in bright hues to depict traditional culture, objects, history and values.
- An identifying factor, the practice is a means of transmitting the cultural heritage and history of the Slovak community in Serbia.
    - The Slovak minority accounted for less than one percent of Serbia's population in the 2022 census.
    - A 2024 study found the community has declined over the last three decades, partly due to its ageing population and migration to Slovakia.

UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage

- So far, approximately 730 elements corresponding to 5 regions and 145 countries have been listed as Intangible Cultural Heritage.
- India has 15 elements included in this prestigious list, all of which are part of the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
    - Garba from Gujarat was the most recent addition to the list in 2023.

Source: TH

INDIA AND INDONESIA MAKE PROGRESS ON BRAHMOS DEAL

Context

- Defence Ministers of India and Indonesia co-chaired the third India–Indonesia Defence Ministers' Dialogue in New Delhi.

About

- Both sides made notable progress on the proposed BrahMos supersonic missile deal.
    - Indonesia has maintained strong interest in acquiring BrahMos, especially to bolster maritime security in the Malacca Strait and the broader Indo-Pacific.
    - Indonesia will be the second country to procure the weapon system from India, after the Philippines which has procured it in 2022.
- Progress in joint exercises — Super Garuda Shield, Garuda Shakti, Samudra Shakti, MILAN, and upcoming air manoeuvre drills — was reviewed, alongside plans to expand officer exchanges and training programmes.
- The meeting reaffirmed the robust foundation of defence ties driven by the Defence Cooperation Agreement and the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee.

About BrahMos

- The missile has been jointly developed with Russia and is named after the rivers Brahmaputra and Moskva in Russia.
- The supersonic missile can cruise at around Mach 3 (more in the case of supersonic speeds) and has a range of up to 290 kilometres (up to 500 or 800 kilometres in its advanced variants).
- It is also equipped to deliver a 200- to 300-kilogram high-explosive warhead.
- Fire-and-Forget: No further operator input required after firing.
- Its ongoing development towards greater range, speed, and stealth capabilities sees BrahMos sitting at the top as one of the world's leading cruise missile systems.

Source: TH

TEX-RAMPS SCHEME

In News

- The Government of India has approved the Textiles Focused Research, Assessment, Monitoring, Planning and Start-up (Tex-RAMPS) Scheme, to Strengthen Research, Innovation and Competitiveness in the Textiles Sector.

Textiles Focused Research, Assessment, Monitoring, Planning and Start-up (Tex-RAMPS) Scheme

- It brings together research, data, and innovation to empower India's textile sector and position the nation as a global leader in sustainability, technology, and competitiveness
- It is designed to address critical gaps in research, data systems, innovation support and capacity development..
- It will be implemented as a Central Sector Scheme, fully funded by the Ministry of Textiles.

Features

- Research & Innovation: Advancing smart textiles, sustainability, and emerging technologies to strengthen innovation capacity.
- Data, Analytics & Diagnostics: Building robust systems for employment studies, supply chain mapping, and evidence-based policy.
- Integrated Textiles Statistical System (ITSS): Creating a real-time analytics platform for structured monitoring and decision-making.
- Capacity Development & Knowledge Ecosystem: Enhancing state-level planning, sharing best practices, and organizing workshops and sectoral events.
- Start-up & Innovation Support: Promoting incubators, hackathons, and academia-industry collaboration to foster high-value textile entrepreneurship

Benefits

- Enhance India's competitiveness in global markets
- Strengthen research and innovation ecosystems
- Improve data-driven policymaking
- Generate employment opportunities
- Foster deeper collaboration between States, industry, academia, and government institutions

Source :PIB

BASIC ANIMAL HUSBANDRY STATISTICS 2025

In News

- The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying and Panchayati Raj released the annual publication of 'Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2025'.
  - It provides comprehensive data on milk, eggs, meat, and wool production, along with state-wise estimates of per-capita availability and animal numbers involved in production.

Key Findings

- Milk: India ranks 1st globally, producing 247.87 million tonnes in 2024-25, up 3.58% from last year. Per capita availability rose to 485 gm/day.
  - Top producers are Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Maharashtra (together 54.09%). Growth was seen across crossbred cattle (+4.97%), indigenous cattle (+3.51%), and buffaloes (+2.45%).
- Eggs: India is 2nd globally, with 149.11 billion eggs produced in 2024-25, a 4.44% rise. Per capita availability increased to 106 eggs/year.
  - Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, West Bengal, and Karnataka contribute 64.37% of output. Commercial poultry dominates (84.49%), while backyard poultry adds 15.51%.
- Meat: India ranks 4th globally, producing 10.50 million tonnes in 2024-25, up 2.46%. Poultry accounts for half the output (5.18 million tonnes).
  - West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana together contribute 57.55%.
- Wool: Production reached 34.57 million kg, rising 2.63%.
  - Rajasthan leads with 47.85%, followed by Jammu & Kashmir, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Himachal Pradesh, together contributing 85.98%.

Source :PIB

CENTRAL EMPOWERED COMMITTEE

Context

- The Supreme Court directed that the Union government not to take any steps to disband the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) without first obtaining the prior approval of the Court.

About

- The Cabinet Secretariat has cited the example of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), and said that with both NGT and CEC functional, duplicity of agencies may be leading to a delay in deciding the jurisdiction between the two.
- The Cabinet Secretariat had asked the Environment Ministry to refer the matter of the CEC's future to the Law Commission.

Central Empowered Committee (CEC)

- The CEC was formed in 2002 (and reconstituted in 2008) by the Supreme Court under the T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad vs. Union of India judgement.
  - It became a statutory body in 2023.
- The Committee functions under the administrative control of the Central Government in the Ministry of Environment.
- Composition: A member secretary, and the remaining three expert members, who are civil servants appointed by the Union Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
- Functions: It advises the court on writ petitions related to environment and forest matters, and assists in monitoring and compliance of its orders.
  - The CEC also deals with any application made to it by any aggrieved person.

Source: IE

SKYROOT'S FIRST ORBITAL ROCKET, VIKRAM-I

In News

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Indian space startup Skyroot's Infinity Campus and Skyroot's first orbital rocket, Vikram-I, with the capability to launch satellites to orbit.

Do you know?

- Skyroot is India's leading private space company, founded by Pawan Chandana and Bharath Dhaka, both alumni of the Indian Institutes of Technology and former scientists of ISRO turned entrepreneurs.
- In November 2022, Skyroot launched its sub-orbital rocket, Vikram-S, becoming the first Indian private company to launch a rocket to space.
  - The rapid rise of private space enterprises is a testament to the success of the transformative reforms carried out by the Government in the last few years, reinforcing India's leadership as a confident and capable global space power.

Vikram-I

- It is built by Skyroot Aerospace and is named after Vikram Sarabhai, the father of India's space programme.
- It is India's first private orbital-class launch vehicle designed to serve the small satellite market with rapid, cost-effective launches.
- It is a four-stage, 20-metre rocket which produces 1,200 kN thrust with an all-carbon composite structure.
- It combines solid-fuelled stages with a hypergolic liquid upper stage for precise manoeuvres.
- It can deploy up to 350 kg into low Earth orbit (LEO) and 260 kg into a sun-synchronous orbit (SSO), with specific payload capacities based on mission profiles, such as 290 kg for a 500 km SSO and 480 kg for a 500 km LEO at a 45-degree inclination.
- Key innovations include 3D-printed engines, advanced avionics, and low-shock separation systems

Relevence

- Vikram-I is set to debut in early 2026, supporting India's projected $77 billion space economy by 2030.
- Industry leaders highlight its role in easing ISRO's load, fostering indigenous access to orbit, and strengthening India's private space ecosystem, which will accelerate satellite deployment and downstream applications in defence, disaster management, environment, and infrastructure, positioning India as a global space technology hub.

Source :IE