

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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KARNATAKA'S MENSTRUAL LEAVE POLICY

Context

- Karnataka has become the **first State** in the country to approve 12 days of **paid menstrual leave per year** (one day per month) for all women employees, covering both government and private sectors.

Arguments in Favour

- Promotes Gender-Sensitive Workplaces:** Recognises biological realities of women and promotes inclusivity and empathy in the workplace.
 - Moves beyond gender-neutral policies to gender-responsive labour reforms.
- Acknowledgement of Menstrual Health:** Encourages open discussion and destigmatisation of menstrual health.
- Improves Productivity and Well-being:** Allows women to rest during periods of pain or discomfort, leading to better overall performance and morale.
- Health and Human Rights Perspective:** Upholds women's right to health, dignity, and bodily autonomy.
- Empowers Working Women:** Particularly beneficial for women in physically demanding jobs or without flexible work conditions.
- Global Alignment:** Reflects global best practices — countries like Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Taiwan, and Spain have similar policies.

Arguments Against

- Risk of Workplace Discrimination:** Employers may become reluctant to hire or promote women, viewing them as less productive or more costly.
 - Could unintentionally reinforce gender bias rather than eliminate it.
- Implementation Challenges in the Private Sector:** Ensuring compliance and monitoring across diverse industries could be difficult.
- Insufficient Scope and Uniformity:** One day per month may be inadequate for many women who experience severe menstrual disorders.
 - Lack of a national framework may create policy inconsistency across states and sectors.
- Period Shaming:** It would exacerbate period shaming in a country where a large number of people consider menstruation to be 'impure'.
- Social Sensitivity Issues:** Women might prefer to keep their **health-related matters private**,

and introducing a specific leave category for menstruation could infringe on **personal privacy**.

Way Ahead

- Women are fighting hard for equality in their workplaces and leadership positions and **menstruation leave could be held against them**.
- Recognising the **diverse nature** of menstrual experiences is essential.
 - Some argue for flexible work hours, work-from-home options, or better menstrual hygiene facilities at workplaces instead of fixed leave days.
- Tailoring support and being accommodative on a **case-by-case basis** promotes inclusivity, while also addressing the individual needs of those navigating their difficult menstrual cycle.

Source: TH

CENTRE SAYS RIGHT TO VOTE DIFFERENT FROM FREEDOM OF VOTING

Context

- The Centre has argued in the Supreme Court that the '**right to vote**' in an election is different from the '**freedom of voting**'.
 - It stated that while the right to vote is a mere **statutory right**, the freedom of voting is a part of the **fundamental right** to freedom of speech and expression.

About

- The petition before the Supreme Court seeks to **declare Section 53(2)** of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, and Rule 11 with Forms 21 and 21B of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 as **unconstitutional**.
- Legal Provisions Involved**
 - Section 53(2), RPA 1951:** If the number of validly nominated candidates equals the number of seats to be filled, the Returning Officer (RO) must declare them elected without conducting a poll.
 - Forms 21 & 21B:** Used by the RO to officially declare candidates elected without voting.
 - Article 19(1)(a):** Guarantees the freedom of speech and expression.

Petitioners' Arguments

- Violation of voters' freedom of expression:** By declaring a candidate elected without polling, citizens are **denied their right to express dissent** through None of the Above (NOTA).

- **NOTA as a democratic tool:** NOTA enables voters to register dissatisfaction with all contesting candidates; removing the opportunity to vote suppresses that expression.

Centre's Response

- Citing the PUCL vs Union of India (2003) judgment, the Centre said that the **freedom of expression arises only** when a poll takes place. Without a poll, there's no occasion to exercise this freedom.
 - ♦ Hence, freedom of voting is an incidence of a poll.
 - ♦ If no election is held (as in uncontested cases), voters cannot claim the right to vote or NOTA.
- The Centre also clarified that **NOTA is not a candidate under Section 79(b) of the RPA, 1951**. It is merely an option or expression, not a contesting entity.
 - ♦ Elections cannot remain undecided; **declaring a winner ensures certainty**.

Significance

- **Democratic Representation:** It raises questions about the balance between electoral efficiency and voter autonomy.
- **Constitutional Interpretation:** Tests the boundary between statutory voting rights and the constitutional right to expression.
- **Electoral Reform Debate:** Could influence future reforms in uncontested seat mechanisms and NOTA's legal standing.

Types of Rights

- **Natural rights** are inherent and inalienable rights that are **bestowed by nature on individuals**.
 - ♦ Right to life and liberty are considered to be natural rights.
 - ♦ Indian courts may decide that a natural right is embodied in a fundamental right, but they do not directly enforce any natural right. For instance, the Right to life under Article 21 is seen as a reflection of the natural right to live with dignity.
 - ♦ The state is prohibited from making laws that violate these rights.
- **Constitutional rights** are contained in the Constitution but outside of **Part III**.
 - ♦ These rights include the right to property, free trade, and no taxation without the authority of law.
 - ♦ They are enforceable in a High Court under Article 226 or as per the legal process in the laws that operationalise them.
- **Statutory or legal rights** are provided and amended by ordinary laws of Parliament or State legislature.

- ♦ Examples include right to work under the MGNREG Act; rights of scheduled tribes under the Forest Rights Act; right to subsidised food grains under the National Food Security Act etc.
- ♦ These are enforceable as per the legal process in the laws that provide these rights.

Status of Right to Vote

- **Article 326** of the Constitution grants every citizen the right to vote, without any discrimination.
- The laws enacted by Parliament in this regard are the **Representation of the People Act, 1950 (RP Act, 1950)** and the **Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act, 1951)**.
- The legal status of the right to vote has been a **subject matter of debate in various cases in India**.
 - ♦ In the N.P.Ponnuswami case (1952) Supreme Court held that the right to vote is a **statutory right** and subject to limitations imposed by it.
 - ♦ In the PUCL case (2003), Justice P.V. Reddy observed that the right to vote, if **not a fundamental right, is certainly a 'constitutional right.'**
 - ♦ In the Anoop Baranwal case (2023), the majority opinion reiterated the judgment in the Kuldip Nayar case, that the **right to vote is only a statutory right**.
- Hence, the **current legal status of the right to vote is that it is a statutory right**.

Source: TH

INDIA'S ELECTORAL SYSTEM: WHY THE NOMINATION PROCESS NEEDS REFORM?

Context

- There is a need for reforms in the **nomination process in India's electoral system** that has become increasingly exclusionary, vulnerable, and convoluted to procedural misuse.

About the Nomination Process in India's Electoral System

- The nomination process is the **gateway to electoral participation**, governed by constitutional provisions and detailed procedures laid out by the **Election Commission of India (ECI)**. It involves:
 - ♦ **Eligibility Criteria:** Candidates need to meet age and voter registration requirements as per the **Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RPA)**.

- ♦ **Filing Nomination Papers:** Candidates submit **Form 2A** (for Lok Sabha) or **Form 2B** (for State Assemblies), along with affidavits declaring criminal records, assets, liabilities, and educational qualifications.
- ♦ **Scrutiny and Withdrawal:** Nomination papers are **scrutinized by the Returning Officer (RO)**, and candidates may withdraw by a specified deadline.
- ♦ **Digital Integration:** The **ENCORE** portal allows online submission of nomination forms and affidavits, enhancing transparency and accessibility.
- Candidates need to be registered voters and **at least 25 years old** to contest Lok Sabha or Vidhan Sabha elections.
- **Filtration Approach:** India's **RO Handbook** attempts through a checklist system without having legal value.
 - ♦ An RO can still reject a previously 'defect-free' nomination at scrutiny, **breeding arbitrariness and undermines trust.**
- **Disproportionate Impact on Marginalized Candidates:** Lack of legal literacy, limited access to professional assistance, and fear of procedural rejection discourage participation.

What Reforms Are Needed?

Lapses & Concerns in Current Nomination System

- **Procedural Complexity vs. Substantive Justice:** The process of verifying **qualifications made under RPA, 1951** has become overly procedural.
 - ♦ The **Returning Officers (RO)** may reject a nomination deemed invalid after a *summary inquiry*, under **Sections 33–36 of RPA, 1951**, and the **Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961**.
 - ♦ RO is unchecked until after the election due to **Article 329(b)**, allowing technicalities to triumph over fairness.
- **Procedural Traps:** Candidates often fall to paperwork errors rather than constitutional disqualifications. Common procedural pitfalls include:
 - ♦ **Oath Trap:** Invalid oaths taken too early, too late, or before the wrong authority.
 - ♦ **Treasury Trap:** Wrong payment mode or late submission of security deposits.
 - ♦ **Notarisation Trap:** Missing notarised affidavits (Form 26).
 - ♦ **Certificate Trap:** Delays in obtaining no-dues certificates from various departments.
- **Constitutional Barriers: Article 329 of the Constitution** bars courts from intervening in electoral matters until after the elections are concluded.
 - ♦ It means that even wrongful rejection of nominations cannot be challenged immediately through writ petitions, and candidates need to wait until after the election to file an election petition.
- **Judicial Complexities:** Judicial interventions, though aimed at transparency, have added new grounds for disqualification.
 - ♦ The **Supreme Court's 2013 Resurgence India judgment** ruled that incomplete affidavits are invalid, but false declarations are not.
- **Restoring Fairness: Returning Officers (RO)** need to be legally required to:
 - ♦ Issue **written notices** specifying exact defects and relevant provisions.
 - ♦ Allow a **48-hour correction window**.
 - ♦ Provide **reasoned rejection orders** detailing evidence and justification.
- **Adopting Digital-by-Default Framework:** The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** can build a digital-by-default framework to simplify nominations:
 - ♦ Online verification of voter ID, age, and constituency.
 - ♦ Digital submission of oaths and affidavits.
 - ♦ Electronic payment options (UPI, RTGS, cards).
 - ♦ Public dashboard tracking every stage of nomination, including reasons for rejection.
- **Strengthening Democracy:** When a nomination is rejected unfairly, two rights are violated, i.e. the **candidate's right to contest**, and the **voter's right to choose**.
 - ♦ India needs a nomination system that is citizen-centric, transparent, and inclusive, and the process needs to move from *rule by law* to *rule of democracy*—**from filtration to facilitation.**
- **Best Practices:** Other democracies take a facilitative approach:
 - ♦ **UK** officials help candidates correct errors before deadlines.
 - ♦ **Canada** allows 48 hours to fix deficiencies.
 - ♦ **Germany** and **Australia** require written notice and provide appeal opportunities.

Source: TH

CONTEMPT OF COURT IN INDIA

Context

- The recent controversy over alleged remarks against the Chief Justice of India and the Supreme Court has sparked concerns about

undermining the court's authority and obstructing the administration of justice, prompting calls for contempt proceedings.

Contempt of Court

• Overview:

- ♦ The **concept of contempt** refers to disobedience to or disrespect for the authority of a **court or legislative body**.
- ♦ The **Contempt of Court** involves behavior that opposes, defies, or undermines the **dignity and authority of the court**, such as willful disobedience of a **court order, interfering with judicial proceedings, or acting** in a way that lowers the court's authority.

• Origin:

- ♦ The idea of contempt of court evolved as a common **law principle in England** to protect the judicial power of the king, that was initially exercised by the monarch himself, and later by judges acting in his name.
 - Any disobedience of a judge's order was seen as an affront to the king.
- ♦ In India, pre-Independence laws of contempt existed in both British Indian courts and some princely states.
 - After Independence, the Constitution of India retained the **principle of 'Contempt of Court'**.

• Types: The Parliament of India enacted the **Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 giving statutory power**, classifying the contempt into two broad categories:

- ♦ **Civil Contempt (Section 2(b)):** Wilful disobedience of a court order or breach of an undertaking given to the court.
- ♦ **Criminal Contempt (Section 2(c)):** Publication or act that — scandalises or lowers the authority of any court; prejudices or interferes with judicial proceedings; or Obstructs the administration of justice in any other manner.

Judicial Interpretation and Key Cases

- The Supreme Court and High Courts are designated as 'courts of record' (**Articles 129 and 215**), empowering them to punish for contempt of themselves. Key Judicial Interpretation are:
 - ♦ **Ashwini Kumar Ghosh vs. Arabinda Bose (1952):** It established that fair criticism of a judgment is permissible.
 - ♦ **Anil Ratan Sarkar vs. Hiralal Ghosh (2002):** It stressed that the power to punish for contempt must be exercised with restraint and only in clear cases of violation.

- ♦ **MV Jayarajan vs. High Court of Kerala (2015):** It upheld a contempt finding against a person who used abusive language against a court order in a public speech, reaffirming that such acts can amount to **criminal contempt**.

- **Recently, the Supreme Court of India** reiterated that the **purpose of contempt law** is to ensure the smooth **administration of justice**, not to protect individual judges.

What Does Not Amount To Contempt?

- Fair and accurate reporting of court proceedings;
- Fair and reasoned criticism of a judicial order after disposal of a case (protected under free speech);
- The **Contempt of Courts (Amendment) Act, 2006**, added that truth became a valid defence if:
 - ♦ It is made in public interest, and;
 - ♦ It is expressed in good faith (bona fide).

Punishment for Contempt

- **Simple imprisonment** up to six months, or a **fine up to ₹2,000**, or **both**.
 - ♦ However, the courts often prefer apology and reform over punishment, using **imprisonment only as a last resort**.

Conclusion

- The contempt law remains a delicate balance between protecting judicial authority and preserving free expression.
- As India's democracy matures, the focus needs to shift from shielding judges' egos to ensuring accountable, transparent, and respected justice delivery — where dignity and dissent coexist harmoniously.

Source: TH

UNIFORM PENALTY FOR VIOLATIONS OF VAN ADHINIYAM, 1980

In News

- The **Forest Advisory Committee (FAC)** of the Union Environment Ministry has recommended standardising penal provisions under the **Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980**, particularly concerning violations involving forest land diversion without prior central approval.

What is Van Adhiniyam, 1980?

- It was originally enacted as the **Forest Conservation Act, 1980** and it was renamed **Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980** under legislative updates.
- It governs the diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes, such as infrastructure, mining, or agriculture.

- It mandates central government approval for any such diversion and aims to prevent deforestation and protect ecological balance.

Latest Recommendations of Forest Advisory Committee (FAC)

- It proposed that **penal compensatory afforestation (CA)** be uniformly levied on an area equal to the forest land violated, in addition to existing penalties under the 2023 Rules.
- While penal CA—restoration beyond mandatory afforestation—was earlier applied inconsistently, the FAC now urges its rationalisation alongside the penal Net Present Value (NPV), introduced following Supreme Court directions in 2017 and formalised in 2023 guidelines.
- The NPV is a **financial measure of the quantified ecological and environmental services** that are lost due to diversion of forest land.
 - ♦ Penal NPV acts as an additional monetary disincentive, ensuring violators compensate for the environmental loss beyond the mandatory NPV already charged for lawful diversions.

Do you know?

- Penal compensatory afforestation refers to restoration efforts which are ordered in addition to the legally mandated compensatory afforestation for non-forestry use of forest land for infrastructure projects, industries.

Why Was This Needed?

- Different states and agencies imposed varying penalties for similar violations, **leading to confusion and perceived unfairness.**
- Absence of a uniform framework made enforcement uneven and diluted the deterrent effect.
- Ensuring violators contribute meaningfully to restoration through afforestation and financial penalties.

Implications

- It enhances India's credibility in global climate and biodiversity forums.
- It supports community-based forest management by reinforcing legal safeguards.
- It encourages corporate accountability in land-use planning and environmental impact mitigation.

Source :IE

NEWS IN SHORT

COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL (CAG)

In News

- The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has granted in-principle approval for setting up two new specialised cadres within the **Indian Audit and Accounts Department (IA&AD).**

Background

- At present, audits of Central receipts and expenditure are handled by different state-based offices, leading to duplication and uneven quality.
- The new structure aims to mirror international practices where revenue and expenditure audits are handled by specialised verticals, enhancing accountability and fiscal transparency.

About Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) (Articles 148 to 151)

- The CAG is the **constitutional body** responsible for auditing the accounts of the Union and States, ensuring accountability in the use of public funds.
- The CAG is **appointed by the President by warrant** under his hand and seal and functions as the guardian of the public purse.
- The salary and office expenses are **charged on the Consolidated Fund of India**, ensuring financial autonomy.
- The tenure of **CAG is of 6 years or up to 65 years of age**, whichever is earlier.
- CAG can be removed in the same manner and on the same grounds as a Supreme Court judge (proven misbehaviour or incapacity).

Duties and Powers (Article 149 & CAG's Act, 1971)

- Audits all receipts and expenditures of the Centre and States.
- Examines accounts of government companies, corporations, and bodies substantially financed by government funds.
- Audits accounts of the Consolidated Fund, Contingency Fund, and Public Account of both Centre and States.
- Submits audit reports to the President (for Union accounts) and Governors (for State accounts), which are then laid before the Parliament or State Legislature.

Source: TH

WRITTEN GROUNDS OF ARREST MUST BE FURNISHED IN LANGUAGE ARRESTEE UNDERSTANDS: SC

In News

- The Supreme Court observed that failure to supply the written grounds of arrest to an arrestee in the language in which he/she understands renders the arrest and subsequent remand illegal.

About

- The Court stated that the genesis of informing the grounds of arrest to a person flows from the Constitutional safeguard provided in **Article 21 of the Constitution**.
- Article 22 of the Constitution** further strengthens the protection of personal liberty of a person by providing that a person arrested must be informed of the grounds of his arrest at the earliest and should not be detained without informing him of such grounds.
- The SC cited that the arrest of an individual invariably impacts not only the person arrested himself, but also the persons associated with him, i.e. family, friends, relatives, etc., affecting their psychological balance and overall social well-being.

Source: TH

ABRAHAM ACCORDS

Context

- The US President confirmed **Kazakhstan** has formally joined the **Abraham Accords**.

About Abraham Accords

- The Abraham Accords refer to a series of normalisation agreements signed in 2020 between **Israel and several Arab countries**, brokered by the **United States under the Trump administration**.
- For decades, **most Arab nations refused to recognise Israel** until the Palestinian issue was resolved.
- The Abraham Accords marked a major shift in Middle East diplomacy by establishing **open relations between Israel and certain Arab states** without prior resolution of the Israel–Palestine conflict.
- UAE became the first Gulf country** to normalise relations with Israel in 2020 as part of the Abraham Accords.
- Countries:** Israel, UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, Morocco and Kazakhstan.

Significance

- Marked a breakthrough in **Arab–Israeli relations** after decades of hostility.
- Reduced Israel's regional isolation** and expanded its diplomatic presence in the Arab world.
- Strengthened U.S. strategic influence** in the Middle East.
- Created **new economic and technological partnerships** across the region.

Source: LM

GPS SPOOFING

In News

- The IGI Airport has for the first time witnessed **GPS spoofing**.

About

- GPS spoofing happens when counterfeit satellite signals are broadcast to deceive GPS receivers, causing them to compute false position, navigation, and timing data.
- GPS spoofing can severely disrupt critical infrastructure across the aviation, logistics, telecommunications, energy, and defense sectors.
- GPS jamming is blocking of signals, spoofing feeds incorrect coordinates, making navigation systems misread the aircraft's real location.

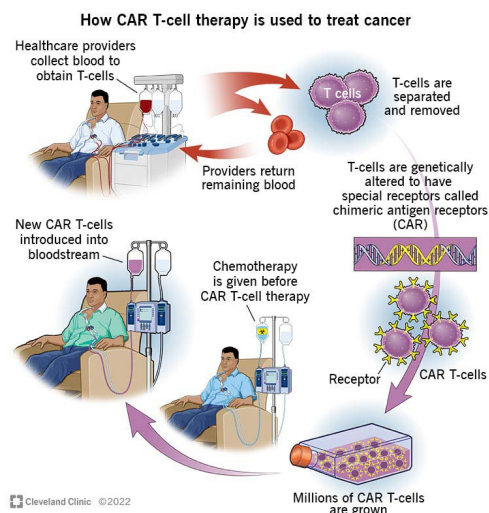
Source: TOI

INDIA UNVEILS ITS FIRST INDIGENOUS CAR-T CELL THERAPY

In News

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched **NexCAR19 for cancer care**.

NexCAR19



- NexCAR19 is **India's first indigenous CAR T-cell therapy**, developed collaboratively by ImmunoACT (incubated under IIT Bombay and Tata Memorial Hospital), with support from **DBT and BIRAC**.
- **CAR (Chimeric Antigen Receptor) T-cell therapy** works by genetically modifying a patient's T-cells—a type of white blood cell with cytotoxic functions—into CAR T-cells that can specifically target and destroy cancer cells.
- NexCAR19 is designed for **treating B-cell blood cancers, particularly leukemia and lymphoma**, especially in patients whose cancer has relapsed or not responded to first-line therapies.

Relevance

- NexCAR19 marks India's entry into the global league of advanced cell and gene therapy innovators, reinforcing its commitment to affordable, cutting-edge healthcare and biotech self-reliance.

Source: ET

STATE OF THE CLIMATE UPDATE FOR COP30

In News

- The World Meteorological Organization's (WMO) **"State of the Climate Update for COP30"** report reveals that 2025 is projected to be the **2nd or 3rd warmest year on record**.

Key Highlights

- The period from 2015 to 2025 marks the **warmest 11 years in recorded history**, with the last three years ranking as the hottest ever observed.
- The average global surface temperature between January and August stood **1.42°C (±0.12) above pre-industrial levels**. This is slightly lower than 2024's record figure of 1.55°C (±0.13), when the world recorded its first full year above 1.5°C.
- The report highlights that **El Niño conditions**—which drove record heat in 2023–24—eased into neutral or La Niña patterns in 2025.
- Atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (NO₂) hit record levels in 2024 and continue to rise into 2025.

Source: TOI

KHANGCHENDZONGA NATIONAL PARK RATED "GOOD" BY IUCN

In News

- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recently rated Khangchendzonga National Park as "good" in its latest global review of natural World Heritage sites.

Khangchendzonga National Park

- It is located at the heart of the Himalayan range in northern India (State of **Sikkim**).
- It is a part of Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve.
- It is the only Indian park to receive a "good" rating, while other important areas like the Western Ghats and Sundarbans are facing serious concerns.
- It is India's first "mixed" **UNESCO** World Heritage Site, recognised in 2016 for its combination of natural beauty and cultural importance.
- It stretches from misty subtropical forests at lower altitudes to the icy summit of Mount Khangchendzonga at 8,586 metres, the world's third-highest peak.
- The larger Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve, expanded in 2018, links core protected areas with buffer zones where villagers practice sustainable farming and harvesting.
- It also holds deep spiritual value for the Lepcha and Tibetan Buddhist communities

Source :Air

INDIA NAVY COMMISSIONS INS IKSHAK

Context

- The Indian Navy has **commissioned INS Ikshak**, the third vessel of the **Survey Vessel Large** class, into active service during a ceremony held at the **Naval Base in Kochi**.

About INS Ikshak

- **Meaning:** *Ikshak* means **"Guide"** in Sanskrit — symbolizing its role in hydrographic precision.
- **Built by:** Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata.
- **Indigenous Content:** Over **80%**, showcasing India's **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** initiative and MSME collaboration.
- **Purpose:**
 - ♦ Conducts **coastal and deep-water hydrographic surveys** of ports, harbours, and sea routes.
 - ♦ Supports **coastal defence, disaster relief, and medical missions**.

Source: PIB

