

POLITY

PRE-CONTEXT

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 1.

News: "Gyanesh Kumar named CEC after panel meeting."

Context: SC said the order would hold good until a law was made by Parliament. However, when the law was passed, the Centre replaced the CJI with a Union Minister as the third member of the panel, giving the government a dominant role in the appointment process. On February 17, the panel will select a name from a list of five pre-pared by a search committee.

Election Commission of India (ECI)

- ECI is a permanent and an independent body established by Constitution to ensure Free & fair Elections in the country under **Art.324**.
- **Conducts elections to Parliament, State legislature, President, Vice President.**
- **Strength of ECI not specified by Constitution** & left at discretion of President.

Appointment of CEC and ECs

According to Constitution:

- President of India appoints the CEC & two ECs or their appointment is "subject to any law to be made by Parliament".

New Law made by Parliament:

- **CEC and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023.**
 - **Qualification:**
 - CEC and ECs shall be appointed from amongst persons who are holding or have held a **post equivalent to the rank of Secretary to the Government of India** and Persons who have knowledge of and experience in management and conduct of elections.
 - **Search Committee:**
 - **Headed by the Minister of Law and Justice** and comprising two other members not below the rank of Secretary to the Government of India, shall **prepare a panel of five persons** for consideration of the Selection Committee.
 - **Selection Committee:**
 - **CEC & ECs shall be appointed by the President** on the **recommendation of a Selection Committee** consisting of:
 - Prime Minister—Chairperson.
 - Leader of Opposition in the House.
 - Union Cabinet Minister to be **nominated by the Prime Minister.**
 - **Term of CEC and EC: 6 years** or till he/she attains **age of 65 years.**
 - **Resignation:** CEC or an EC may, at any time, **resign** their office by writing under their hand addressed **to the President.**
 - Both CEC and ECs shall **not be eligible for re-appointment.**
 - **Salary of CEC and ECs:** is equal to the salary of a Judge of the Supreme Court.

Removal:

- Removal grounds of CEC **similar to judge of Supreme Court (ground of proved misbehaviour or incapacity).**
- **Election Commissioner(ECs) or a Regional Commissioner shall not be removed from office except on the recommendation of the CEC.**

P.T.O

- **Security of tenure:** **only to CEC** under Election Commission Act 1991.

Other:

- Both CEC, ECs are equal powers in functioning.
- Constitution not debarred from further appointment.
- **61CAA:** lowered voting age from 21 to 18.

Powers

Administrative Powers:

- Determines territorial areas of electoral constituencies.
- Preparation of Electoral rolls & notifying Election dates.
- Recognition of Political Parties and allocating symbols.
- Determine Code of Conduct during Election period.

Advisory Powers:

- **To President:** on disqualification of MPs & MLAs & Holding elections in a state under President rule.
- **To SC & HC:** in matters related to Post-election disputes between candidates and Political parties.

Quasi-judicial Powers:

- Settling disputes related to Recognition of political parties and w.r.t Election symbols.

Challenges

Challenges to ECI (Institutional):

- **Issues of impartiality in appointment** of Election Commissioners by Central govt.
- **Lack statutory powers:** like, to enforce **Model Code of Conduct, internal democracy in parties, to deregister political party.**
- **Election Commissioners lack security of tenure**, which hinders their independence in their work.
- **Partisanship issues:** Eg. ECs having ties with particular political party — **CEC 2009 in writing to President.**
- **No ban on post retirement office holdings:** by of CEC and ECs.
- **No Suo-Motu Legislation powers** in matters related to elections.

Challenges to ECI (Election process):

- **Inclusion and Exclusion error in electoral roll:** 2024 Maharashtra Elections 48 lakh new voters appeared in just six months
- **Violation of MCC:** Eg. Mission Shakti (ATSAT) speech by PM in 2019.
- **Election machinery (Allegations):** EVM malfunctioning, Booth Capturing etc.
- **Criminalisation of Politics:** 35% Elected MPs in 2019— criminal charges, this undermines public trust in efficient functioning.
- **Black money:** Over 55% of the donations received by regional parties in FY 2019-20 came from "unknown" sources—**ADR reports.**
- **Freebies** as lure by political parties to voters.
- **Regulation of Social Media:** to prevent Fake News—lead to —misinformed choice to voter.

Strengthening ECI:

- Inclusion of CJI in selection committee of CEC—**Anoop Baranwal vs Union of India (2023).**
- Appointment must made through collegium system —**Goswami Committee.**
- Statutory Status to MCC — **2nd ARC recommendation.**

P.T.O



- stricter criteria for disqualifying candidates with serious criminal charges — **Law Commission 255th report.**
- Partial state funding of elections to curb black money, corruption — **Indrajit Gupta Committee 1998.**
- **Fast track courts:** for quick disposal of cases against politicians — **Lilly Thomas case 2013.**
- **Criminalisation of Politics:** Candidates to declare criminal antecedents to ECI before contesting polls — **SC 2018.**
- **Equal constitutional protection to all members** of the Commission in matters of removability.
- **Post retirement ban of members of ECI.**

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"Two bulls in one pasture." This suggests that two powerful forces vying for the same space will inevitably clash. Need for dialogue, compromise, and a clear framework to ensure a harmonious and balanced relationship between the judiciary and the executive.

PYQs: CSE (M).

GS II 2017: What To enhance the quality of democracy in India the Election Commission of India has proposed electoral reforms in the 2016. What are the suggested reforms and how far are they significant to make democracy successful?

TECHNOLOGY

PRE-CONTEXT

CYBERCRIMES

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 8.

News: "How did a DDoS attack cripple Kaveri 2.0?"

Cybercrime methods (most common):

- **Denial of Service: Blocking access to websites.**
- **Digital arrest scam:** fraudsters target individuals or businesses, posing as law enforcement or government officials, victims are **threatened with a digital arrest warrant.**
- **Cyber Slavery:** Offenders target innocent individuals and lure them by giving **fake promises to offer them employment or alike** and force them into executing cyber fraud.
- **Social Engineering Attacks: Manipulating** people into revealing confidential information.
- **Ransomware Attacks: Malicious software** that locks data until a ransom is paid. 53% increase in the ransomware incidents in 2022 — **CERT-In report.**
- **Phishing:** Tricking individuals into revealing sensitive information **via fake emails or messages.** 150 million phishing emails sent globally every day.
- **Identity Theft: stealing personal information** to impersonate someone for financial gain.
- **Cyberstalking and Harassment: Using the internet to stalk,** harass, or bully individuals.
- **Cyber Espionage:** using **stealthy IT malware to spy** on both corporate & military data.

18 FEB 2025

ENVIRONMENT

PRE-CONTEXT

NDCs AND STATUS, POWER GENERATION

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 6.

News: "Lighten the pollution burden of thermal power States."

India's NDCs 2016 (COP 21 Paris):

- **Carbon Emissions intensity to be reduced to 35 percent from 2005 levels by 2030.**
 - Target Achieved.
- **Electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based to reach 40 percent energy resources by 2030.**
 - Target Achieved.
- **Carbon Sink** creation equivalent to **3 billion tonnes of CO2** via Forest and tree cover.
- Boost climate resilience in agriculture, water & health.

India's Panchamrit (COP 26 Glasgow):

- Panchamrit is an update to India's existing NDCs 2016. **Five nectar elements (Panchamrit) of India's climate action:**
 - **Non-fossil energy capacity reach 500GW by 2030.**
 - **Carbon emissions to be reduced to one billion tonnes from now 2030.**
 - **Net zero emissions by 2070.**
 - **Carbon Emissions intensity** of the economy to be **reduction to 45 per cent by 2030, over 2005 levels.** [UPDATED]
 - Reached to 36 percent as of year 2020.
 - **Electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based to reach by 50 percent energy resources by 2030.** [UPDATED]
 - By Oct 2024, India achieved 46%.
- **Mission 'LIFE'**— 'Lifestyle for Environment', a mass movement for as a key to combating climate change.

Facts on Electricity Generation:

- Around **60% of the total energy supply** in India is from **coal** — **Ministry of Coal 2023.**
- **Maharashtra** had the highest **non-renewable electricity** generation capacity — **Central Electricity Authority 2023.**
- **Rajasthan** had the highest **renewable electricity generation** capacity India — **Central Electricity Authority 2023.**

Electricity Taxation related facts :

- Electricity is a **Concurrent** subject.
- Electricity is **exempted from GST.**
 - Services related to electricity transmission or distribution by utilities also GST exempt.
- **States are constitutionally permitted to levy taxes on electricity consumption and sale but not on its generation.**
- **Central government does not impose any specific tax** on electricity production.

National Clean Energy and Environment Fund:

- **Created out of cess on coal produced / imported ("polluter pays" principle)** for the purposes of financing and promoting clean energy initiatives.
- **Chaired by Finance Secretary** approves the projects/schemes eligible for financing under the NCEF.
- **Projects include innovative schemes like Green Energy Corridor** for boosting up the transmission sector, **Namami Gange, Green India Mission etc.**

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