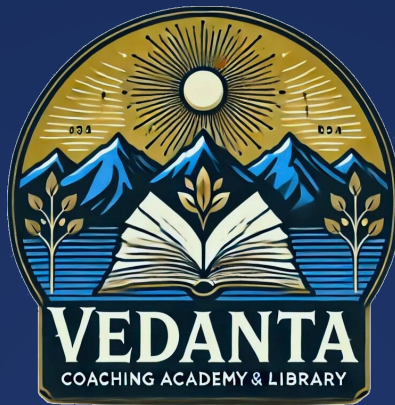


DAILY UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS



# The Hindu Analysis

Current Affairs for UPSC & State PSC

25 August 2026

MONDAY

Jolari River Pollution

Political Clearance

ISRO & Privatisation

Youth Unemployment

Smart Glasses & Privacy

ECI Form 7 / SIR

COMPILED BY

**Sapna Chauhan**

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MONDAY · 25 AUGUST 2026

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## HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

- ◆ Each topic follows a fixed flow: **Why in News** → **Analysis** → **Value Addition** → **Newspaper Clipping** → **Syllabus Link**.
- ◆ The **Value Addition** boxes carry Prelims-ready facts; the **Practice Zone** at the end has 2 Mains questions and 10 MCQs with a full answer key.
- ◆ Topic spread today — **GS 2:** 2 • **GS 3:** 3 • **Prelims:** 1.

## EDITOR'S FOCUS FOR TODAY

- **Environment + rights:** the SC's Jojari river order links pollution control to Article 21.
- **Federalism angle:** 'political clearance' for a CM's foreign trip raises Centre–State questions.
- **Tech & governance:** smart glasses vs the DPDP Act, and ECI's Form-7 deletions under SIR.

# 01 SC Bans Construction Near Rajasthan's Jojari River

PRELIMS The Hindu · Page 4

## WHY IN NEWS

The Supreme Court banned any construction within 100 metres of the Jojari river in Rajasthan and prohibited hazardous industries within 500 metres of the flood line, to curb pollution affecting nearly two million lives.

- The order, by a Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta, is the latest in a series of interventions to protect the seasonal river.
- On August 4, the Court asked Rajasthan to prepare a **20-point resolution plan** for contamination in the Jojari, Bandi and Luni rivers.
- **River geography:** the Jojari passes through Jodhpur, the Bandi flows through Pali, and the Luni runs through Balotra; the Bandi and Jojari merge with the Luni near Balotra.
- The SC took **suo motu** cognisance of the pollution following reports of industrial effluent discharge, and constituted a High-Level Ecosystem Oversight Committee under former HC judge Justice Sangeet Lodha.

## SC bans constructions near Rajasthan's Jojari river to curb pollution

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday banned any construction or development activities within 100 metres of Jojari river in Rajasthan. The court also prohibited hazardous industries within 500 metres on either side of the existing flood line along the river's flow path.

The decision by a Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta is the latest in a series of interventions made by the apex court to protect the seasonal river, which has faced a barrage of contamination that has affected around two million lives in the water-starved State.

On August 4, the apex

court had suggested that the Rajasthan government prepare a 20-point resolution plan to deal with the issue of contamination in the Jojari, Bandi and Luni rivers in the State.

The Jojari river passes through Jodhpur, the Bandi river flows through Pali, and the Luni river runs through Balotra. The Bandi and Jojari rivers merge with the Luni river near Balotra city.

### 'Consider relocation'

The Supreme Court had said that the entire industrial area in Pali was located along the riverbank. It had said that the State authorities would have to consider relocating industries away from the river in the long run.

'SC bans constructions near Rajasthan's Jojari river to curb pollution.'

## VALUE ADDITION — RIVERS & RIGHTS

- ◆ **Luni:** the largest river of the Thar/Rajasthan, ending in the Rann of Kutch; saline in its lower course.
- ◆ **Article 21:** right to life includes the right to a clean environment, health and dignity.
- ◆ **Suo motu:** the Court initiating proceedings on its own motion.
- ◆ The order invokes the **precautionary** and **polluter-pays** principles of environmental law.

## PRELIMS POINTERS

- **Jojari** (Jodhpur) → **Bandi** (Pali) → merge with **Luni** near Balotra.

- Luni is a west-flowing, largely seasonal river of arid Rajasthan.
- **NGT** (National Green Tribunal) often handles such pollution matters.

Syllabus link — Prelims: Geography of Indian rivers · GS 3: Environmental pollution & judicial activism.



## 02 Political Clearance & a CM's Foreign Trip

GS 2 The Hindu · Page 5

### WHY IN NEWS

Telangana CM Revanth Reddy's US visit was cancelled after the MEA denied 'political clearance', which he termed an insult to the State — spotlighting the little-known clearance regime for official foreign travel.

- **Political clearance** is granted by the MEA and is required for any government servant's official foreign trip.
- Decisions weigh the nature of the event, participation from other countries, the invitation, and India's relations with the host country — ensuring visits carry no unassessed diplomatic implications.
- Since 2016, applications are made on the MEA portal **epolclearance.gov.in**, processed via a dedicated Coordination Division.
- Per a Cabinet Secretariat circular (6 May 2015), **prior political clearance and FCRA clearance are mandatory**; CMs and State ministers must also inform the Cabinet Secretariat.

### The asymmetry

- State ministers/officials also need clearance from the **Department of Economic Affairs (DEA)**, which acts only if MEA clearance is attached.
- **Union ministers** need a second nod from the PM; **Lok Sabha** members go to the Speaker and **Rajya Sabha** members to the Chairperson — but a **State CM is cleared by an authority outside the State's own structure**.

## Denial of nod for U.S. trip an insult to Telangana: Revanth

Move reflects discrimination against State, he says, adds that it was an effort to rob investments from Telangana in favour of Gujarat; the CM denies reports of plan to meet New York Mayor

R. Ravikanth Reddy  
HYDERABAD

**T**elangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Monday termed the Centre's refusal to grant political clearance for his proposed visit to the U.S. an insult to Telangana. He alleged that the decision reflected discrimination against the State, and was an effort to rob investments from Telangana in favour of Gujarat.

The Ministry of External Affairs, which had been approached by the State government for clearance for the Chief Minister's official visit to the U.K. and the U.S., approved only the U.K. leg of the tour.

The MEA cited denial of



clearance from the "political angle."

Mr. Reddy said the State government had provided detailed information to the Centre about the purpose and objectives of his proposed foreign visit. "If the proposal of a Chief Minister is rejected without properly reviewing the infor-

mation, can such a decision be taken without the knowledge of the Prime Minister," he asked presspersons here after his return from the U.K. leg of the trip on Monday.

He questioned the Centre's approach by citing the foreign visits of Gujarat Chief Minister Bhu-

pendra Patel. "If the Gujarat Chief Minister can travel to the U.S. and Canada to promote Vibrant Gujarat 2047, why was the visit of the Telangana Chief Minister denied when it was proposed for similar purposes under Telangana Rising 2047," he asked.

Rejecting rumours of his scheduled meeting with New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani, Mr. Reddy said no such appointment was fixed. "Mr. Mamdani is not an antisocial element. He is an elected mayor," the Chief Minister added.

Mr. Reddy said Telangana should not be treated as a lesser State. He added that his government would continue with Telangana Rising 2047 programme.

'Denial of nod for U.S. trip an insult to Telangana: Revanth.'

#### VALUE ADDITION — FEDERAL ANGLE

- ◆ **MEA:** nodal ministry for political clearance of official foreign travel.
- ◆ **FCRA:** Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act — governs foreign funding.
- ◆ **Article 21:** right to travel abroad (Maneka Gandhi, 1978).
- ◆ The issue touches cooperative federalism and Centre–State trust.

#### PRELIMS POINTERS

- Portal: **epolclearance.gov.in** (since 2016).
- Union ministers face a **second gate** — clearance from the PM.
- MPs are cleared **within** their House (Speaker/Chairperson).

Syllabus link — GS 2: Federal structure · Functions and responsibilities of the Union and States.



## 03 Opposition Raises Concerns Over 'Weakening' of ISRO

GS 3 The Hindu · Page 11

#### WHY IN NEWS

Government and Opposition sparred over ISRO's future — Congress alleging a privatisation push, while the Centre said the space programme was being 'scaled up', not scaled back.

- Congress alleged ISRO's role in rocket development and manufacturing could be 'severely limited', with satellite assets possibly transferred to private firms, and questioned handing the Kulasekarapattinam spaceport (Tamil Nadu, ~₹1,000 crore) to a private company.
- The government said ISRO is **concentrating on frontier missions** — Gaganyaan, Chandrayaan-4, the Bharatiya Antariksh Station and lunar/interplanetary missions.
- Citing 440+ space start-ups and the July 18 launch of Skyroot's **Vikram-1** (first privately developed Indian rocket to reach orbit), the Centre called it 'ISRO's legacy bearing fruit'.
- Target: a **\$44-billion space economy** needing private rocket factories, satellite manufacturing and a deeper supply chain.
- **Sriharikota** stays central to PSLV, LVM3 and human spaceflight; **Kulasekarapattinam** adds capacity for the small-launch sector; foreign satellites launched by ISRO rose from 35 (pre-2014) to 430+.

## Opposition raises concerns over 'weakening' of ISRO; Centre hits back

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The government and the Opposition sparred on Monday over the future of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), with Congress general secretary (communication) Jairam Ramesh raising concern over a reported privatisation push in the space sector, and Union Minister of State for Science and Technology Jitendra Singh asserting that the country's space programme was being "scaled up", not scaled back.

Reports about ISRO's future role had raised "legitimate concerns", given the capabilities it built over six decades under scientists, including Vikram Sarabhai, Satish Dhawan, Brahm Prakash, U.R. Rao, and A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Mr. Ramesh said.

ISRO's role in rocket development and manufacturing could be "severely limited", he alleged, adding that a substantial part of its satellite-related assets could be transferred to private companies. He questioned the reported plan to hand over the second spaceport being developed at Kulasekarapattinam in Tamil Nadu, for which ISRO is investing



Union Minister of State for S&T Jitendra Singh says ISRO is focusing on frontier missions such as Gaganyaan. FILE PHOTO

about ₹1,000 crore, to a private company.

### 'Over 100 resignations'

"The future of the historic Sriharikota spaceport in Andhra Pradesh is itself anybody's guess," Mr. Ramesh said. He also claimed that 100-120 key ISRO professionals had left the organisation in recent months, "perhaps seeing the writing on the wall".

Responding to Mr. Ramesh, Dr. Singh accused him of being determined to "run down every Indian achievement".

"ISRO is not being weakened. It is being enabled to concentrate increasingly on the frontier missions — Gaganyaan, Chandrayaan-4, the Bharatya Antariksh Station, and future missions to the moon,

Venus and Mars," the Minister said. As India targets 50 launches a year, industry would have to emerge as the manufacturer at scale while ISRO focused on developing next-generation technologies and missions, Dr. Singh said. He described this as the "natural evolution" of the space programme.

### More start-ups

Citing the expansion of private participation, he said India now had more than 440 space start-ups, and referred to the July 18 launch of Skyroot Aerospace's Vikram-1, which he said was the first privately developed Indian rocket to reach orbit. "That is not ISRO's legacy being diluted. That is ISRO's legacy bearing fruit," Dr. Singh said.

### Space sector is expanding: BJP

NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday said that India's space programme was expanding. Responding to MP Jairam Ramesh's charge, BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said: "I understand your frustration with India's remarkable journey in space. But the numbers tell a story that is difficult to ignore."

The government was targeting a \$44-billion space economy, requiring private rocket factories, satellite manufacturing facilities, and a deeper supply chain, alongside ISRO's research and frontier missions, he said.

Sriharikota would remain central to major programmes, including PSLV, LVMS and human spaceflight, while Kulasekarapattinam would add capacity for the growing small-launch sector, he said.

Dr. Singh also cited the increase in foreign satellites launched by ISRO from 35 before 2014 to more than 430, and Chandrayaan-3's successful landing near the Moon's south polar region, to highlight the government's space strategy.

'Opposition raises concerns over weakening of ISRO; Centre hits back.'

### VALUE ADDITION — SPACE GOVERNANCE

- ◆ **IN-SPACe:** single-window promoter/regulator for private space activity.
- ◆ **NSIL:** New Space India Ltd — ISRO's commercial arm.
- ◆ **Bharatiya Antariksh Station:** India's planned space station (target ~2035).
- ◆ **Gaganyaan:** India's first human spaceflight programme.

### PRELIMS POINTERS

- **Vikram-1** (Skyroot) — first private Indian rocket to orbit (18 July).
- Second spaceport: **Kulasekarapattinam**, Tamil Nadu (small-launch focus).
- **Chandrayaan-3** landed near the lunar south pole (2023).

Syllabus link — GS 3: Science & Technology · Space sector reforms and private participation.



## 04 Youth Unemployment Has a Household Cost

GS 3 The Hindu · Page 6

### WHY IN NEWS

Beyond the headline unemployment rate, youth joblessness imposes a measurable cost on the households that financed the degree and continue to support the job search.

- PLFS 2025 reports a **14.8% unemployment rate among 18-29 year-olds**, rising to **29.4%** among the tertiary-educated (diploma/graduate/post-graduate).
- The broader picture is larger: **40.1% of tertiary-educated youth are NEET** (not in employment, education or training); among tertiary-educated NEET women, 74.7% are outside the labour force.



## The household lens

- ~15.4% of households have a tertiary-educated young adult; **one in five (20.8%) supports at least one unemployed such youth.**
- Such households spend on average **₹1,087 less per month** overall (₹710 less per member), have only 1.5 earners (vs two), and in 62.5% no one holds a regular salaried job.
- Persistence deepens the strain: **58%** of unemployed tertiary-educated youth have searched for over a year; 28.9% for over two years — pushing families to accept 'any job' over a 'good job'.

***The fact is youth unemployment has a household cost***

India's youth unemployment crisis is usually told through a single statistic: how many young people cannot find work. The latest Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS 2025) reports an unemployment rate of 14.8% among 18-29 year-olds, rising to 29.4% among those who are tertiary educated (with a diploma, graduate or post-graduate levels). The broader picture is larger than the unemployment rate alone suggests. Unemployment as a measure captures only those people who are not working but are actively seeking or available for work. It excludes those outside the labour force, including those who may have stopped looking for work, a group that may include many young women. Against the narrower measure of unemployment, the broader picture is considerably larger: 40.1% of tertiary-educated youth are neither in employment, education nor training, commonly referred to as NEET. Among tertiary-educated young women who are NEET, 74.7% are outside the labour force — neither working nor classified as unemployed because they are not seeking or available for work.

**A framing that misses another issue**  
Unemployment is only the most visible part of a wider problem of educated young people remaining outside employment. And for those who are looking for work, the wait can be long. Examination paper leaks, recruitment delays and debates over India's demographic dividend have kept the spotlight firmly on young jobseekers. Yet, this framing misses an important question. Unemployment is rarely experienced by individuals alone. Behind every unemployed graduate is often an entire household that financed the degree, adjusted its spending and continues to support a young adult's job search. Looking at youth unemployment through the household rather than the individual raises a

**The households that invested in education**  
Around 15.4% of Indian households have a tertiary-educated young adult (18-29 years). These are households that have invested in higher education in the expectation that it would provide a pathway to secure employment and upward mobility. Yet, one in five households is supporting at least one unemployed tertiary-educated young adult (20.8%). The household consequences are measurable. Compared to households without any educated unemployed youth, those with unemployed youth spend, on average, ₹1,087 less per month on consumption overall, and ₹710 less per household member. On average, these households have only 1.5 earning members, compared with two in households without an unemployed educated youth. For 14.4% of them, there is no active earning member at all, while 39.5% depend on a single earner. And in nearly two-thirds (62.5%), no one in the household has a regular salaried job. The pressure on households becomes more serious when unemployment persists. Nearly three in five (58%) unemployed tertiary-educated youth have been searching for work for more than a year. Close to three in 10 (28.9%) have been unemployed for more than two years. A household supporting an unemployed graduate for a few months faces a different pressure than one financing a job search stretching across one or two years. Extended unemployment depletes savings, reduces consumption, and forces

different question: what happens to families when an educated young adult cannot find work? How households experience that unemployment may depend not only on the absence of work, but also on how long the search lasts and on the resources families have to sustain it.

difficult choices about what employment the young adult should accept. The data show a clear pattern: the ability to sustain prolonged job search is associated with household earning capacity. For someone in a household surviving on one earner or without a regular salary, the pressure to start earning is likely to arrive much sooner. What looks like the duration of an individual's unemployment, therefore, is also a measure of how long a family must sustain the wait. These families must push their unemployed youth toward immediate employment, even if it means accepting positions far below their qualifications. The choice is not between a 'good job' and 'bad job'. It is between 'any job' and economic insecurity.

**The policy question**  
Current employment policy largely treats youth joblessness as an individual problem, addressed through apprenticeships, skilling and hiring incentives. The evidence here suggests that the consequences of unemployment extend beyond the individual jobseeker to the household supporting them. The length of the transition from education to work also matters, because someone is financing that wait. Recruitment delays, prolonged selection processes and extended job searches impose very different costs on a household with several earners than on one relying on a single income or without a regular salaried worker. Therefore, employment policy needs to pay greater attention to how long young people remain unemployed, and to the economic circumstances of the families supporting them during that period. Reducing avoidable delays in entry into work is not only a labour market concern; it can also reduce the strain that prolonged unemployment places on households.

*The views expressed are personal*

'The fact is youth unemployment has a household cost.'

### VALUE ADDITION — EMPLOYMENT CONCEPTS

- ◆ **NEET:** Not in Employment, Education or Training.
- ◆ **Unemployment rate** counts only those actively seeking work — it excludes those outside the labour force.
- ◆ **Demographic dividend:** realised only if the young are productively employed.
- ◆ **PLFS:** NSO (MoSPI) — the official employment data source.

### PRELIMS POINTERS

- **29.4%** unemployment among tertiary-educated 18-29 year-olds.
- **NEET** captures the 'hidden' jobless outside the labour force.
- Household consumption falls measurably where educated youth are jobless.

Syllabus link — GS 3: Employment, growth and inclusive development · Demographic dividend.



## 05 Smart Glasses Highlight Gaps in Privacy Laws

GS 3 The Hindu · Page 7

### WHY IN NEWS

AI-powered 'smart glasses' with hidden cameras and microphones expose how current laws struggle to keep pace with surveillance-enabling consumer technology.

- The glasses let users take calls and capture photos/videos via 'discreetly integrated' tiny speakers, microphones and a lightweight camera — inconspicuousness the maker 'flaunts'.
- A shutter sound on recording is a weak indicator; the 'control' the maker touts is limited to the wearer, not the **recorded subject**.
- NCRB data: in 2023 (before market entry) there were **3,678 women-centred cybercrimes**, of which 2,767 involved transmission/publication of sexually explicit material — a risk such glasses magnify.

### The legal lacuna

- The **DPDP Act, 2023** is technology-agnostic and makes purpose the key consideration — but in public spaces people can neither grant consent nor monitor use.
- Post K.S. Puttaswamy (2017), a reasonable expectation of privacy is a fundamental right under **Article 21**, extending even to public spaces — but the DPDP Act excludes publicly available information, so the Act does not regulate how one is recorded in public.

### Smart glasses highlight gaps in privacy laws

In June, reality star Kylie Jenner posted her latest collaboration on social media — a new design for Meta's line of AI-powered 'smart glasses'. Images of her wearing the glasses filled social media, as did videos of her teenage self lamenting the lack of privacy she was afforded because of her fame. The irony was unmissable: how is Ms. Jenner, who was once so worried about privacy, now promoting a device that enables surveillance?

Smart glasses are the latest addition to the wearable technology space. It is also a dangerous example of how current laws are unable to keep up with today's tech innovation.

According to Meta, these glasses allow you to see and answer calls, messages, and notifications via voice command. Built-in speakers help you listen to music and an integrated camera enables you to capture photos or videos through the lenses. Meta describes these glasses as "normal-looking eyewear with discreetly integrated glasses technology." Hidden from the naked eye, these glasses contain "tiny speakers, microphones, (and) a lightweight camera." The tech giant isn't shying away from how inconspicuous these features are; rather, it is flaunting it.

**Privacy and data concerns**  
In India, the glasses, which have been advertised everywhere, retail at around ₹25,000. Stickers that claim to completely cover the LED recording indicator are also widely available. Meta says that if the LED is covered, the glasses will block the recording until the sticker is removed. Yet, workarounds are just a Google search away. The glasses also make a shutter sound when they start and stop recording, but this is not a strong indicator that you are being recorded. Further, Meta argues that the glasses are "designed for privacy, controlled by you" but this "control" is limited to the wearer, and not the recorded



Sonikka Loganathan

subject, such as requiring additional verification before use.

The website adds, "Meta collects data needed to help ensure that your glasses and app are reliable, secure and operating normally." An investigation by Swedish newspapers Svenska Dagbladet and Göteborgs-Posten found that Meta's contracted workers, who sometimes review the data to track user experience, were able to view sensitive content filmed on the smart glasses, including wearers using the toilet. In a comment to *BBC News*, Meta said its privacy policy states that it sometimes uses contractors to review data shared with them.

In this context, concerns about women's privacy have grown. Data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) show that in 2023, before the glasses entered the market, there were 3,678 cases of women-centred cybercrimes. Of these, 2,767 cases involved the transmission or publication of sexually explicit material.

Consider how much easier these glasses would make it to record people without their knowledge, including in private spaces. The potential risks to children are equally concerning. In 2023, the NCRB recorded over 698 cases related to the use or storage of child sexual abuse material. If adults cannot often recognise when the glasses are recording, a child certainly cannot.

These risks are compounded by the glasses' battery life, offering 49 hours of active use. This means entire movies can be recorded, university lectures can be taped, confidential documents scanned, and patient information collected. It also means that even those who are not intentionally engaging in malpractice could invariably do so — by capturing something private in the frame's periphery, for example. Ultimately, these glasses allow for the extensive, non-consensual collection of data.

**Lacuna in the law**  
India's laws today do little to

protect people from this surveillance. The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDPA) is technologically agnostic, making the purpose of data collection the key consideration. In a public space, people can neither grant consent nor monitor how their information is used.

Following the landmark K.S. Puttaswamy vs. Union of India 2017 judgment, reasonable expectation of privacy was recognised as a fundamental right under Article 21. This means that people, even in public spaces, don't generally expect to be captured in detail. But the DPDPA excludes information that is made publicly available. Hence, the reasonable expectation of privacy granted by Puttaswamy is not met because the Act does not regulate how someone is being recorded in public. The Act's scope is diluted further since there are minimal indicators that you could be in someone's frame, unlike someone recording on their phone.

This combination of rapid tech innovation and a lack of legal regulation and public awareness creates the perfect storm. With devices such as these glasses becoming common, people may be collecting information with little knowledge of where the data are being used. Without legal safeguards, digital accountability risks becoming an afterthought.

Banning such devices isn't practical from a business or tech standpoint. Meta might be the biggest player in this space today, but Google and Reliance are also entering the smart glasses market. As wearable tech becomes more advanced, banning it will become increasingly difficult. Instead, laws should be framed with an understanding of how AI is changing the landscape. There is a need for assessments on how technology will evolve, the role that may accompany it, and the government's responsibility in ensuring that citizens are adequately protected.

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'Smart glasses highlight gaps in privacy laws.'

### VALUE ADDITION — PRIVACY LAW

- ◆ **K.S. Puttaswamy (2017):** privacy is a fundamental right under Article 21.
- ◆ **DPDP Act, 2023:** consent-based data protection; technology-agnostic.
- ◆ **NCRB:** National Crime Records Bureau — official crime statistics.
- ◆ 'Reasonable expectation of privacy' can exist even in public.



## PRELIMS POINTERS

- Glasses retail in India at ~₹25,000.
- **DPDPA 2023** excludes 'publicly available' personal data.
- Google and Reliance are also entering the smart-glasses market.

Syllabus link — GS 2/3: Data protection, privacy and emerging technologies.



## 06 Invisible Actors — Bulk Deletion of Voters (Form 7)

GS 2 The Hindu (Editorial) · Page 6

### WHY IN NEWS

The ECI's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) has drawn allegations of bulk filing of Form 7 applications to delete voters' names — raising concerns about protecting individual voting rights.

- Ground reports (Rajasthan, Gujarat, UP, Uttarakhand, Karnataka) show **Form 7** — used to object to or seek deletion of a name (for death, shifting or ineligibility) — filed in bulk using names of people unaware of the filing.
- The Booth Level Officer / ERO must inquire and issue notice to the voter before any action.
- **Booth Level Agents (BLA)** can file up to 10 Form 7s a day (max 30), but there is no limit on how many an individual voter from the same constituency can submit; more than five objections trigger a mandatory ERO review.
- Opposition parties allege 'systemic and coordinated' misuse to delete eligible voters; in Uttarakhand, the Congress alleged 'institutional' access to bulk online submission.
- In most cases voters were unaware their deletion had been sought — the editorial urges a uniform, countrywide SOP requiring verification of the objector's identity and due process before any elector is deleted.

### Invisible actors

The ECI must stop filing of bulk applications for deletion of voters

**T**he Election Commission of India (ECI)'s Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls has seen allegations of bulk filing of applications seeking to delete voters' names from draft lists using Form 7 in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and, more recently Uttarakhand. Ground reports by *The Hindu* from Karnataka, Rajasthan and Gujarat noted that these forms were often filed in bulk fraudulently using names of people who were unaware of the filing. In several instances, hundreds of objections were filed under a single person's name. Form 7 is filed to object to an existing name — or to request its deletion — on the electoral rolls for reasons such as death, shifting, or ineligibility. The ECI's Booth Level Officer or the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) has to conduct an inquiry on the application and issue a notice to the voter before taking any action. While Booth Level Agents (BLA) of political parties can file up to 10 Form 7s a day, totalling 30, there is no limit on how many forms an individual registered as a voter from the same constituency can submit. To prevent misuse, the ECI has said that if a person files more than five objections, it will trigger a mandatory review by the ERO to ensure the legitimacy of the claims. The Opposition parties have alleged that the

the Opposition parties have alleged that the form was being misused through "systemic and coordinated efforts" to delete names of eligible voters and embolden the BJP's efforts to wrongfully gain electoral advantage. In the case of Uttarakhand, the Congress has alleged that the manner in which the bulk forms were submitted online pointed to "institutional" access being granted to some in the process. These parties have also sent delegations and submitted representations to the ECI. What is important to note is that in most cases, voters were unaware that applications for deletion of their names had been filed at all, leaving it to workers of political parties active in the constituency to bring it to their notice. According to ECI data, for the third phase of the SIR covering 16 States/three Union Territories there are 3,42,409 BLAs of political parties for an electorate of 36,73,87,831 or one BLA for approximately 1,073 voters. These numbers include agents from ruling and Opposition parties. In such a situation, it is incumbent upon the ECI to step in and protect the voting rights of an individual rather than leave it to the grassroots strength of political parties. The ECI should thus take immediate steps to address this concern. Abnormal patterns should be investigated and the process should be monitored, with a uniform, countrywide Standard Operating Procedure, requiring verification of identity and constituency of the objector and the following of due process before any elector is deleted pursuant to a Form 7.

Editorial: 'Invisible actors' — the ECI must stop bulk deletion filings.

### VALUE ADDITION — ELECTORAL ROLLS

- ◆ **ECI**: constitutional body under Article 324 conducting elections.
- ◆ **Form 6** (new inclusion), **Form 7** (objection/deletion), **Form 8** (correction/shifting).
- ◆ **ERO / BLO**: Electoral Registration Officer / Booth Level Officer.
- ◆ **SIR**: Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls.

### PRELIMS POINTERS

- **Form 7** = objection to / deletion of an existing entry.
- **BLAs cap**: 10 forms/day, 30 total; individuals have no cap.
- **Article 326**: adult (universal) suffrage.

Syllabus link — GS 2: Election Commission · Electoral processes and reforms.



## Practice Zone

MAINS · PRELIMS · ANSWER KEY

### Q1 · GS 2

The requirement of 'political clearance' from the Union for a Chief Minister's official foreign visit has raised federalism concerns. Critically examine the rationale for, and the criticism of, this clearance regime. (250 words)

किसी मुख्यमंत्री की आधिकारिक विदेश यात्रा के लिए केंद्र से 'राजनीतिक स्वीकृति' की आवश्यकता ने संघवाद संबंधी चिंताएँ उत्पन्न की हैं। इस स्वीकृति व्यवस्था के औचित्य एवं उसकी आलोचना का समालोचनात्मक परीक्षण कीजिए। (250 शब्द)

**Approach:** Explain the MEA/DEA/FCRA process and its foreign-policy rationale; contrast with the self-clearance of Union ministers and MPs; discuss the Centre-outside-State asymmetry, cooperative federalism and Article 21 (right to travel); suggest a transparent, time-bound SOP.

### Q2 · GS 3

"Emerging consumer technologies like AI smart glasses expose the limits of a consent-based, technology-agnostic data law." Discuss with reference to the DPDP Act, 2023 and the right to privacy. (250 words)

"एआई स्मार्ट ग्लास जैसी उभरती उपभोक्ता प्रौद्योगिकियाँ सहमति-आधारित एवं प्रौद्योगिकी-निरपेक्ष डेटा कानून की सीमाओं को उजागर करती हैं।" डीपीडीपी अधिनियम, 2023 एवं निजता के अधिकार के संदर्भ में चर्चा कीजिए। (250 शब्द)

**Approach:** Explain surveillance risks and the consent gap in public spaces; link Puttaswamy (2017) and Article 21; note the DPDPA's 'publicly available' exclusion; suggest tech-specific safeguards, indicators of recording, and accountability.

## Prelims MCQs

10 QUESTIONS

**Q1.** With reference to 'political clearance' for official foreign travel, consider the following statements:

1. It is granted by the Ministry of External Affairs.
2. A Union minister needs an additional clearance from the Prime Minister.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Q2.** A Member of the Rajya Sabha requires clearance for official foreign travel from:

- (a) The Prime Minister
- (b) The Speaker of the Lok Sabha
- (c) The Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha
- (d) The Ministry of External Affairs only

**Q3.** The Jojari, Bandi and Luni rivers, recently in the news, are located primarily in which State?

- (a) Gujarat
- (b) Madhya Pradesh
- (c) Rajasthan
- (d) Maharashtra

**Q4.** With reference to the Luni river, consider the following statements:

1. It is a west-flowing river.
2. It finally drains into the Rann of Kutch.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Q5.** Vikram-1, in the news, is associated with:

- (a) ISRO's Gaganyaan crew module
- (b) The first privately developed Indian rocket to reach orbit
- (c) A new communications satellite
- (d) India's second spaceport

**Q6.** India's second spaceport, meant to boost the small-launch sector, is being developed at:

- (a) Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh
- (b) Kulasekarapattinam, Tamil Nadu
- (c) Thumba, Kerala
- (d) Balasore, Odisha

**Q7.** With reference to youth employment (PLFS 2025), 'NEET' refers to persons who are:

- (a) Newly employed and trained
- (b) Not in Employment, Education or Training
- (c) Non-eligible for entrance tests
- (d) Nominally engaged in temporary work

**Q8. The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 is best described as:**

- (a) Sector-specific and prescriptive
- (b) Technology-agnostic and consent-based
- (c) Applicable only to government bodies
- (d) A replacement for the IT Act, 2000

**Q9. The reasonable expectation of privacy as a fundamental right under Article 21 was recognised in:**

- (a) Maneka Gandhi vs Union of India
- (b) K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India
- (c) Kesavananda Bharati vs State of Kerala
- (d) Shreya Singhal vs Union of India

**Q10. With reference to Form 7 used in electoral roll revision, consider the following statements:**

1. It is filed to object to or seek deletion of an existing entry.
2. A Booth Level Agent can file an unlimited number per day.

**Which of the statements is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

#### ANSWER KEY & RATIONALE

**Q1 – C.** Political clearance is granted by the MEA, and a Union minister requires a further clearance from the PM. Both are correct.

**Q2 – C.** A Rajya Sabha member is cleared by the Chairperson of that House (a Lok Sabha member by the Speaker).

**Q3 – C.** These rivers flow through Rajasthan – Jojari (Jodhpur), Bandi (Pali) and Luni (Balotra); the Bandi and Jojari merge with the Luni near Balotra.

**Q4 – C.** The Luni is a west-flowing river of arid Rajasthan that terminates in the Rann of Kutch, becoming saline downstream.

**Q5 – B.** Vikram-1, by Skyroot Aerospace, was described as the first privately developed Indian rocket to reach orbit (launched July 18).

**Q6 – B.** Kulasekarapattinam in Tamil Nadu is the second spaceport, focused on the small-satellite launch sector.

**Q7 – B.** NEET = Not in Employment, Education or Training; 40.1% of tertiary-educated youth fell in this category.

**Q8 – B.** The DPDPA is technology-agnostic, making the purpose of data collection central, and is built on a consent framework.

**Q9 – B.** The K.S. Puttaswamy judgment (2017) recognised privacy as a fundamental right under Article 21.

**Q10 – A.** Form 7 seeks objection/deletion (statement 1 correct). BLAs are capped at 10 per day (max 30) – so statement 2 is incorrect.

#### QUICK REVISION RECAP

- ◆ **Jojari/Bandi/Luni** (Rajasthan): SC banned construction within 100 m; Luni drains into the Rann of Kutch; suo motu + Art. 21.
- ◆ **Political clearance:** MEA-granted; Union ministers need PM's nod; MPs cleared within their House; CMs cleared outside the State.

- ◆ **ISRO:** IN-SPACe, NSIL; Vikram-1 (Skyroot) first private rocket to orbit; Kulasekarapattinam second spaceport; \$44-bn target.
- ◆ **Youth unemployment:** 29.4% among tertiary-educated (18-29); 40.1% NEET; measurable household cost.
- ◆ **Smart glasses:** DPDP Act 2023 is technology-agnostic; Puttaswamy (2017) — privacy under Art. 21; public-space consent gap.
- ◆ **Form 7** (objection/deletion): BLAs cap 10/day (30 total); >5 objections trigger ERO review; ECI under Art. 324.

#### PRELIMS TRAP-SETTERS

- ◆ **Luni** drains into the **Rann of Kutch**; Jojari → Jodhpur, Bandi → Pali.
- ◆ Political clearance via MEA portal **epolclearance.gov.in** (since 2016).
- ◆ **Vikram-1** (Skyroot) — first private Indian rocket to orbit; **IN-SPACe** regulates.
- ◆ **NEET** = Not in Employment, Education or Training (40.1% of tertiary youth).
- ◆ **DPDPA 2023** excludes 'publicly available' personal data.
- ◆ **Form 7** = deletion/objection; ECI under Art. 324; universal suffrage Art. 326.
- ◆ **Suo motu** = court acting on its own motion (Jojari pollution case).
- ◆ **Chandrayaan-3** (2023) landed near the lunar south pole.
- ◆ **Gaganyaan** = India's first human spaceflight; space station targeted ~2035.