



15 March, 2024

## Ramnath Kovind Panel on One Nation, One Election

**Context:** The High-level Committee (HLC) on One Nation, One Election presented its report to President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday morning, March 14th.

### ➤ Report Overview:

- The comprehensive report comprises 21 volumes and 18,626 pages, featuring 11 chapters along with annexures.
- Additionally, the government has released a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to provide key insights into the One Nation, One Election proposal.

### ➤ Simultaneous Elections Explained:

- Simultaneous elections, also known as "One Nation, One Election," involve conducting elections for Lok Sabha, state Legislative Assemblies, and urban and rural local bodies simultaneously.
- Currently, these elections are conducted independently, leading to varying timelines determined by the terms of each elected body.

### ➤ Historical Context:

- Simultaneous elections were previously implemented in India in seven states in 1957, but this practice ceased after the fourth general elections in 1967.
- Over the years, the frequency of elections has increased, with the country witnessing five to six elections annually, causing administrative challenges and disruptions.

### ➤ Rationale for Simultaneous Elections:

- Various reasons support the need for simultaneous elections, including reducing government expenditure, minimizing uncertainty and instability, and ensuring effective governance.
- The frequent use of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and voters' fatigue are among the challenges associated with staggered elections.

### ➤ Initiative and Study Group:

- The High-level Committee (HLC), chaired by former President Ram Nath Kovind, was established in September 2023 to examine the feasibility of simultaneous elections.
- Comprising prominent members from diverse backgrounds, the committee held numerous meetings and engaged with stakeholders to study the issue comprehensively.

### ➤ Recommendations of the Committee:

- The committee has proposed constitutional amendments to enable simultaneous elections in two phases.
- It suggests synchronizing elections for municipalities and panchayats with those for Lok Sabha and state Assemblies, requiring ratification by the states.
- Other recommendations include the preparation of a single electoral roll and election ID, and provisions for logistical planning to ensure the smooth conduct of simultaneous elections.

## Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity

**Context:** Union Minister Shri Piyush Goyal participates in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) Virtual Ministerial Meeting.

### ➤ Overview of Meeting Discussions:

- During the virtual ministerial meeting on Pillars II-IV, IPEF partners acknowledged the progress made since the substantial conclusion of negotiations for proposed agreements in November 2023.
- The partners discussed cooperative work ahead across the three proposed agreements and welcomed the entry into force of the IPEF Supply Chain Agreement on February 24, 2024.

### ➤ Addressing Ministerial Gathering:

- The call for expeditious implementation of action-oriented collaborative elements under various IPEF Pillars was emphasized.
- Ministerial discussions highlighted India's global production capacities and invited investors from IPEF partners to explore opportunities in the clean economy domain.

### ➤ Next Steps and Initiatives:

- Plans were outlined for concrete outcomes under the Framework, including the launching of new Cooperative Work Programs (CWPs) and the inaugural IPEF Clean Economy Investor Forum in Singapore in June 2024.
- Ministers are scheduled to meet in-person in Singapore on June 6, 2024, to discuss key agreements and initiatives.

### ➤ Progress on Proposed Agreements:

- The completion of legal reviews and finalization of texts for proposed agreements marked significant steps forward.
- The proposed agreements aim to enhance collaboration in clean energy transition, promote fair trade and investment practices, and establish mechanisms for ongoing economic cooperation.

### ➤ Pillar II: Building Supply Chain Resiliency:

- The IPEF Supply Chain Agreement entered into force, with partners working on operationalizing the agreement and identifying critical sectors for cooperation.

### Reviving an old debate

Centre has said a committee has been formed to explore the possibility of simultaneous polls for LS and state assemblies

#### PANEL FORMED

While the panel is likely going to be headed by former President RAM NATH KOVIND, its composition and the terms of its functioning will be announced soon

#### WHAT HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT THE IDEA

##### NITI AAYOG

A 2016 paper, co-authored by Bibek Debroy and Kishore Desai, noted...

- Separate elections lead to massive recurring expenditures as well as prolonged deployment of forces
- It suggested holding elections in two cycles with an interregnum of 30 months
- It pegged cost of simultaneous polls at ₹4,500 crore, while the cost of 2014 Lok Sabha polls alone was ₹3,870 crore

##### STANDING COMMITTEE

In 2015, the House panel on personnel, public grievances, law and justice said...

- Elections could be held in two phases
- Polls to some assemblies can be held in Lok Sabha mid-term and remaining assemblies could be held at the end of Lok Sabha term

##### LAW COMMISSION

In 1999, the Law Commission in its 170th report on Reform of Electoral Laws said...

- Holding simultaneous polls would be ideal, but a workable formula is required to be in the Constitution
- The holding of a separate election to assemblies should be an exception and not the rule
- Another law panel report, in 2018, said simultaneous polls don't alter balance of power between Union and the states

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➤ **Pillar III: Accelerating Transition to Cleaner Economies:**

- Progress was discussed, including plans for the IPEF Clean Economy Investor Forum and funding commitments for the IPEF Catalytic Capital Fund to mobilize private investment for climate infrastructure projects.

➤ **New Cooperative Work Programs:**

- Four new CWP's were announced, covering areas such as carbon markets, clean electricity enhancement, workforce development for clean energy transitions, and sustainable aviation fuels.

➤ **Pillar IV: Enhancing Business Environment Transparency:**

- Discussions focused on early results under the proposed Fair Economy Agreement to foster a transparent business environment and drive trade and investment.
- Emphasis was placed on technical assistance and capacity building initiatives to strengthen anti-corruption efforts and tax administration.

➤ **About IPEF:**

- IPEF, launched in May 2022, comprises 14 regional partners aiming to enhance economic cooperation.
- Negotiations led to the substantial conclusion of proposed agreements in November 2023, focusing on supply chain resilience, clean economy, fair economy, and overall framework durability.

## Half of twenty-first century global irrigation expansion has been in water-stressed regions

**Context:** Over half (52%) of the irrigation expansion occurred in regions already facing water stress in the year 2000, with India contributing 36% to this unsustainable global expansion.

➤ **Introduction:**

- Researchers from the USA, Germany, Finland, and China investigated the unsustainable expansion of irrigated agriculture, highlighting concerns about inadequate water supply for nature and human needs.
- Over 90% of global consumptive water use is for irrigated agriculture, contributing to about 40% of global food production, despite irrigated areas covering only 24% of croplands.

➤ **Global Irrigation Expansion:**

- The research, published in the journal Nature Water on March 8, 2024, reveals an 11% increase in the global area equipped for irrigation (AEI) from 2000 to 2015, reaching 330 million hectares.

- Notable expansion occurred in regions like northwest India and northeast China, while some areas, like Russia, experienced decline.

➤ **Countries with Major Expansion:**

- China and India saw significant net expansions, with China increasing by 12.8 million hectares and India by 8.5 million hectares, mainly to maintain food self-sufficiency.
- The expansion resulted in both increased and decreased areas, totaling 65 million hectares and 32 million hectares, respectively.

➤ **Extent of Unsustainable Expansion:**

- The expansion occurred in regions already facing water stress, leading to further depletion of streamflow and aquifers.
- Water stress, classified as green water stress (GWS) or blue water stress (BWS), affects countries like India and Pakistan, where most expansion took place in areas experiencing BWS.

➤ **Sustainable Expansion in Some Countries:**

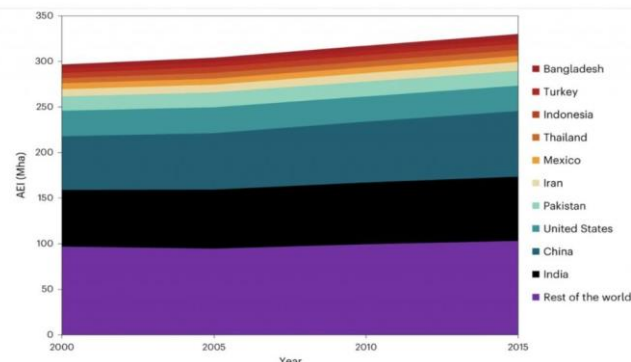
- Countries like Brazil, Indonesia, Peru, Italy, and France achieved mostly sustainable expansion, minimizing adverse impacts on water resources.

➤ **Research Methodology:**

- The study utilized subnational irrigation statistics covering 17,298 administrative units from international databases, agricultural censuses, and government reports.
- Gridded global AEI data for the years 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015 were developed to analyze irrigation expansion trends.

➤ **Implications for Food Security:**

- Unsustainable irrigation expansion poses risks to food self-sufficiency and global food security, potentially limiting crop production and increasing reliance on food imports.
- Continued unsustainable practices may lead to inaccessibility of freshwater resources and economic constraints, affecting both food-importing and exporting countries.



The global AEI shows a net increase for the period 2000–2015. Countries are arranged in order of increasing AEI (top to bottom) in the year 2000.

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## NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

### World Monuments Fund



Recently, the Eri (tank) network in the Kazhuvveli watershed region of Villupuram district, boasting an impressive network of ancient tanks, is set to be proposed for nomination to the World Monuments Fund Watch 2025 programme.

#### About World Monuments Fund:

- The World Monuments Fund (WMF) is a **non-profit organization** that works to protect the **world's most important places** through advocacy, grantmaking, education, training, and fieldwork.
- It was founded in **1965** and has a global team of experts who have preserved more than **700 cultural heritage** sites in **112 countries**.
- Its mission is to enrich people's lives and build mutual understanding across communities and cultures.
- It works to **preserve the world's most treasured** places using the highest international standards.
- Its headquarter in **New York, USA**.

### TRAFFIC



Recently, a joint analysis by TRAFFIC and WWF-India uncovered the extent of illegal shark trade in India.

#### About TRAFFIC:

- The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) founded **TRAFFIC** (Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network) in **1976**.
- It is a **global non-governmental organization** that monitors the trade in wild animals and plants.
- It **works to preserve biodiversity** and **sustainable legal wildlife trade** while opposing unsustainable illegal wildlife trade.
- It has an international network of staff on five continents in **20 countries** and **territories** and ongoing research in dozens of others.
- It has been in **India since 1991** and has since worked closely with the National and the State Governments and various agencies to help study, monitor and influence action to curb illegal wildlife trade.
- TRAFFIC's major projects encompass the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network (**WTMN**), Global Shark and Ray Initiative (**GSRI**), Pangolin Conservation, Timber Trade and Forest Crime, Wildlife Cybercrime, and Ivory and Rhino Horn Demand Reduction.

### Vocal for Local



Recently, NITI Aayog launched the 'Vocal for Local' program under the Aspirational Blocks Programme to promote grassroots entrepreneurship and self-reliance.

#### About Vocal for Local:

- The 'Vocal for Local' is an **initiative** which aims to promote grassroots entrepreneurship and **self-reliance** in India.
- The initiative **primarily focuses on encouraging the production and consumption of local indigenous products**, thereby empowering micro enterprises in Aspirational Blocks.
- During the launch event, the logo for '**Aakanksha**' was **unveiled**, which is a part of the initiative to brand and promote local products effectively.
- As a significant step, indigenous products from **500 Aspirational Blocks** have been meticulously mapped and consolidated under the 'Aakanksha' initiative.
- A dedicated window has been established on the **GeM portal** under the brand name '**Aakanksha**' to facilitate the procurement and promotion of products from Aspirational Blocks.
- Technical and operational support is provided for various aspects** including e-commerce onboarding, financial/digital literacy, documentation/certification, and skill enhancement.
- The 'Vocal for Local' initiative **holds significant importance as it strives to create a conducive environment for local businesses**, thereby driving economic empowerment and fostering self-sufficiency in various regions.

### Cardiovascular Disease



Recently, a global study has challenged the historical assumption that individuals living in extreme poverty have lower prevalence of cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk factors due to dietary and occupational patterns.

#### About Cardiovascular Disease:

- Cardiovascular Disease refers to a **group of disorders of the heart and blood vessels**, including coronary artery disease, stroke, heart failure and hypertension.
- It is a **leading cause of morbidity and mortality globally**, affecting individuals of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds.

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|                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major risk factors for CVD include <b>hypertension, diabetes, smoking, obesity, high cholesterol</b> levels (dyslipidemia), <b>unhealthy diet</b>, physical inactivity, and excessive alcohol consumption.</li> <li>It accounts for a significant proportion of <b>global deaths</b>, with a particularly high <b>burden in low- and middle-income countries</b>.</li> <li>Innovative healthcare delivery models, such as <b>doorstep healthcare services</b> and <b>community-based interventions</b>, aim to improve access to care, particularly for marginalized populations.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <p><b>Place in News</b></p> <p><b>Cyprus</b></p> | <p>Recently, a ship carrying 200 tonnes of aid for Gaza departed from Cyprus as part of a pilot project aimed at establishing a sea corridor for delivering supplies to a population facing famine following five months of war.</p> <p><b>Cyprus (Capital: Nicosia)</b></p> <p><b>Location:</b> Cyprus, officially known as the Republic of Cyprus is the <b>third largest island country</b> in the Eastern <b>Mediterranean Sea</b> after <b>Sicily</b> and <b>Sardinia</b>.</p> <p><b>Boundaries:</b> Cyprus shares maritime borders with several countries including <b>Syria</b> (East), <b>Lebanon &amp; Israel</b> (Southeast), <b>Turkey</b> (North) and <b>Egypt</b> (South).</p> <p><b>Physical Features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The highest point in Cyprus is <b>Mount Olympus</b> (also known as Chionistra), located in the Troodos Mountains in the central part of the island</li> <li>Cyprus has few major rivers, with the <b>Pedieos River</b> being the longest, flowing from the Troodos Mountains to the Mesaoria Plain and into the Mediterranean Sea.</li> <li>The island has a Mediterranean climate.</li> <li>Cyprus has a long history of mining, with significant deposits of <b>copper, asbestos, gypsum</b> and clay.</li> </ul>  |

## POINTS TO PONDER

- Which district in Maharashtra has been recently renamed after the 18th-century Maratha queen Ahilyabai Holkar? – **Ahmednagar (Ahmednagar to be called Ahilyanagar)**
- In which location was the Tri-Services Firing and Manoeuvre Exercise – Bharat Shakti held recently? – **Pokharan, Rajasthan**
- Which historical event is associated with the inauguration of the redeveloped Kochrab Ashram by the Prime Minister on March 12th? – **The Salt Satyagraha March or Dandi March (12th March 1930)**
- Which three countries have recently commenced a joint naval exercise in the Gulf of Oman, as per the provided information? – **China, Iran, and Russia**
- What naval asset recently began its sea trials from Russia's Baltiysk naval base, according to the provided information? – **INS Tushil**

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