

National Party in India

❖ Context

- Ten years after it was formed, the **Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)** got the status of a national party after securing nearly **13%** of the vote share and five seats in the Gujarat Assembly election.

Key Highlights

- A national party would be one that **has a presence 'nationally'**, as opposed to a regional party whose presence is restricted to only a particular state or region.
- As of now, the ECI has recognised **eight parties as national parties.**
- The ECI has laid down the technical criterion for a party to be recognised as a national party.
- A party may gain or lose national party status from time to time, depending on the fulfilment of these laid-down conditions.
- As per the **ECI's Political Parties and Election Symbols, 2019** handbook, a political party would be considered a national party if
 - It is **'recognised' in four or more states;** or
 - If its candidates **polled at least 6% of total valid votes** in any four or more states in the last **Lok Sabha or Assembly elections** and has **at least four MPs** in the last Lok Sabha polls; or
 - If it has **won at least 2% of the total seats in the Lok Sabha** from not less than three states.

State Party

- To be recognised as a state party, a party needs-
 - At least **6% vote-share** in the last Assembly election and have at least 2 MLAs; or
 - **Have 6% vote-share** in the last Lok Sabha elections from that state and **at least one MP** from that state; or
 - **At least 3% of the total number of seats or three seats**, whichever is more, in the last Assembly elections; or
 - **At least one MP for every 25 members** or any fraction allotted to the state in the Lok Sabha; or
 - Have **at least 8% of the total valid votes** in the last **Assembly election or Lok Sabha election** from the state.

Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)

❖ Context

- Recently, The Centre cancelled the **Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)** licences of two non-government organisations – **Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF)** and **Rajiv Gandhi Charitable Trust (RGCT).**

About FCRA

- FCRA regulates foreign donations and **ensures that such contributions do not adversely affect the internal security** of the country.
- The FCRA Act, first **enacted in 1976** was **amended in the year 2010 and then 2020.**
- FCRA is implemented by the **Ministry of Home Affairs.**
- **Registration under FCRA**
 - FCRA registrations are **granted to individuals or associations** that have definite cultural, economic, educational, religious, and social programmes.
 - The MHA is required to **approve or reject** the application within **90 days.**
 - Once granted, FCRA registration is **valid for five years.**
- **Cancellation of Approval**
 - The **government reserves the right to cancel** the FCRA registration of any NGO if it finds it to be in violation of the Act.
 - Once the registration of an NGO is cancelled, it is **not eligible for re-registration for three**

FCRA Amendment Act, 2020

- The **Bill adds public servants** (as defined under the Indian Penal Code) to this list.
- The **Bill prohibits the transfer of foreign contributions** to any other person not registered to accept foreign contributions
- The term **'person'** under the Act includes an **individual, an association, or a registered company.**
- The Act makes Aadhaar number mandatory.
- The Act provides that foreign contributions **must be received only in an account designated by the bank as FCRA account** in such branches of the State Bank of India, New Delhi as notified by central govt.
- **Renewal of the certificate** within six months of expiration is **mandatory.**
- **Not more than 20%** of the total foreign funds received could be defrayed for administrative expenses.
 - In the FCRA Act 2010 this limit was 50%.
- The Bill adds that **suspension of registration of a person** may be extended up to an additional 180 days.
 - In the 2010 Act this limit was up to 180 days only. Central government may permit a person to surrender their registration certificate.



years.

- All orders of the government can be **challenged in the High Court.**

Gamma Ray Burst (GRB)

❖ Context

➤ A team of astronomers has recorded a rare astronomical event, a first of its kind detection.

Key highlights

- The event, that occurred on December 11, 2021, involved a **compact binary merger** emitting long Gamma Ray Burst (GRB) **twinned with a kilonova emission.**
- **India's largest optical telescope** — the 3.6 metres Devasthal Optical Telescope (DOT) — operated by Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences (ARIES), Nainital, was among the key global telescopes that together **confirmed** this rare combination.
- The burst of high energy light was identified as **GRB211211A.**

What are short GRBs?

- When a pair of **binary compact systems** — either two blackholes, dense celestial bodies or neutron stars — rotate in a spiral fashion for billions of years, their ultimate merger leads to release of short GRBs. **These emissions last for less than two seconds.**
- GRBs are **massive but extremely bright, high-energy** short gamma radiations.
- The **energy** associated with GRBs is **many folds larger than what the Sun can emit in its entire lifetime**, making its study key to understanding the life and death of stars in our Universe.

- **Kilonova** — the radiation emerging from the merger of neutron stars or any binary system — has been associated with short GRBs.

What are long GRBs?

- When very **massive stars die**, the event results in the release of long GRBs.
- The associated gamma radiations last for more than **two seconds or longer.**

Why was the event unique and a rarity?

- **The burst of the high energy light lasted for over 50 seconds.**
- The scientists have, so far, associated short GRBs with supernovae.
- It unfolded nearby, in the outskirts of our Milky Way at some **one billion light years away.**
- It deviated from the **standard non-thermal power law.**
- The **after-glow properties of this event leaned towards kilonova.** This could mean that some processes are common between the long and short GRBs.

News in Between the Lines

Election Security Deposit

**Election
Security Deposit**

❖ Context

➤ The state Assembly polls in Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat have concluded. There will also be **contestants who will lose their security deposit** – an indicator of clear rejection at the hands of the voters.

❖ Election Security Deposit

- According to the **Representation of People Act, 1951**, it is mandatory for every candidate contesting a Parliamentary or Assembly election to deposit a certain security amount.
- To contest a **Parliamentary election**, the amount is **Rs 25,000** and in case of an **Assembly election**, it is **Rs 10,000.**
- This amount is **deposited with the Election Commission** and is called a security deposit in the election.
- The deposit **amount is mandated to ensure only serious candidates file nomination to contest elections.**
- The Election Commission of India takes many steps to conduct free and fair parliamentary and assembly elections in the country.



Vermins



- So the deposit of security amount is one of them.
- Now, **if the candidate gets fewer than one-sixth of the total number of valid votes** cast in the constituency, his security deposit will be lost.
- This means that the candidate who had deposited Rs 25,000 or Rs 10,000 or any other amount would not be refunded by the Election Commission of India.

❖ Context

- Recently, The Rajya Sabha passed the **Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2022**, which has invited scrutiny over the **sweeping powers given to the Centre to declare species as vermin.**

❖ Key Highlights

- The House was divided on the issue, with members from Kerala highlighting the growing number of **wild boar** attacks in the state, and others seeking a more tempered and scientific approach in declaring a species as vermin.

❖ About Vermin

- **Vermin means wild animals which are believed to be harmful.**
- The Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 does not define the term 'vermin'.
- However, its Schedule V contains a list of animals designated 'vermin', including rats, crows and foxes.
- **Section 62** of the Act empowers the Centre to declare wild animals of any species as 'vermin' in any area and for a specified period of time.
- These animals are deemed to be included in **Schedule V, opening them up to be hunted.**
- Since 1972, the WLPA has identified a few species — fruit bats, common crows and rats — as vermin.
- **Any species can be declared vermin except-**
 - Species which are listed in Schedule I of WPA1972.
 - Species which are listed in Part II of Schedule II of WPA 1972.
- **Killing animals outside this list was allowed under two circumstances-**
 - Under **Section 62 of WLPA**, given sufficient reasons, any species other than those accorded the highest legal protection (such as tigers and elephants but not wild boars or nilgais) can be declared vermin at a certain place for a certain time.
 - Under **Section 11 of WLPA**, the **chief wildlife warden of a state** can allow the killing of an animal, irrespective of its status in the Schedules, if it becomes "dangerous to human life".

Nai Roshni Scheme

"Nai Roshni"

The Scheme for
Leadership Development
of
Minority Women

❖ Context

- Recently, Minister of Minority Affairs informed Rajya Sabha that **no training centres are set up by the Ministry under Nai Roshni Scheme.**

❖ Key Highlights

- It's a **Central Sector Scheme started in 2012-13.**
- **Nodal Ministry-** Ministry of Minority Affairs.
- The scheme was implemented through **Programme Implementing Agencies (PIAs)**. Now, the scheme has been merged with PM VIKAS as a component.
 - It is run with the help of NGOs, Civil societies and Government Institutions all over the country.
- Nai Roshni scheme **aims to empower and enhance confidence among minority women** by generating awareness about women rights and interventions for '**Leadership Development**'.



- It is a **six-day non-residential/five-day residential training programme conducted for women** belonging to minority community between the age group of **18 years to 65 years**.
- The training modules cover areas related to programmes for women such as Health and Hygiene, Legal Rights of Women, Financial Literacy, Digital Literacy, Swachh Bharat, Life Skills, and Advocacy for Social and behavioural changes.
- Since inception, about 4.35 lakh beneficiaries have been trained under the 'Nai Roshni' scheme.

Conjugal Rights



❖ Context

- The **State of Punjab** has allowed conjugal visits for inmates in prisons.

❖ Key highlights

- Conjugal rights are **rights created by marriage** i.e. right of the husband or the wife to the company of their spouse.
- In the context of prisons, conjugal rights refer to the concept of allowing a prisoner to spend some time in privacy with his spouse within the precincts of a jail.
- Prisoner rights are internationally recognised through **United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners**, the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** etc.
- The move has furthered the prisoners **right to life, personal liberty & inherent dignity**.
- However, **the state guidelines** clarify that conjugal rights are a matter of privilege rather than a right.
- According to the notification, the average time for conjugal visits shall be two hours, allowed once every two months.
- Moreover, such a facility will not be extended to high risk prisoners, terrorists, child abuse and sexual offenders, death row convicts, prisoners who suffer from HIV etc.

SPIN



❖ Context

- The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** has signed an MoU with an innovation development platform private company to launch **SpaceTech Innovation Network (SPIN)**.

❖ Key highlights

- SPIN is **India's first dedicated platform** for innovation, curation and venture development for the space entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- The partnership will work towards unleashing the market potential of the most promising space tech innovators and entrepreneurs in **three distinct categories**:
 - Geospatial Technologies and Downstream Applications.
 - Enabling technologies for Space & Mobility.
 - Aerospace Materials, Sensors and Avionics.
- The resources of both ISRO and Social Alpha will be made available to the selected startups.
- The startups will be provided with hand holding in critical areas such as access to product design, testing and validating infrastructure, intellectual property management, go-to market strategies and long-term patient capital, among other technical as well as business inputs.



Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary



❖ Context

- An 18-member herd of female elephants were found to be moving through the sanctuary from Tamil Nadu.

❖ Key highlights



- The sanctuary is located in **Palamner - Kuppam forest ranges of Chittoor district** of Andhra Pradesh.

- This sanctuary comes under **Project elephant** - a country wide Elephant

Conservation Project taken up by Government of India.

- It is the **only home for Asiatic Elephants** in the State of Andhra Pradesh. **Asiatic Elephant is the indicator species** in the sanctuary.
- It is characterised by **southern tropical dry deciduous forest**, with **patches of thorn, scrub and grassy plains**.

UNSC 2593



❖ Context

- The first meeting of the NSAs of India and Central Asian countries was held at New Delhi.

❖ Key highlights

- The NSAs of India, **Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan** participated in the meeting. **Turkmenistan** was represented by its ambassador.

- Central Asia was described by India as an **“extended neighbourhood”**.
- They discussed the current **situation in Afghanistan** and its impact on the security and stability of the region, reiterating strong support for a **“peaceful, stable and secure”** Afghanistan.

- The officials agreed that the expansion of terrorist propaganda, recruitment and fund-raising efforts have serious security implications for the region, and therefore, a collective and coordinated response is essential.

- The meeting also strongly called for the early adoption of the **UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism** to effectively deal with the menace.

- The officials reaffirmed the importance of **UNSC Resolution 2593 (2021)** that **“no terrorist organisation** including those designated by the UN Security Council Resolution 1267 **should be provided sanctuary or allowed to use the territory of Afghanistan”**.

- The NSAs will be meeting again under the rubric of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in India next year as well.

