

April 17

PAPER II **Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies**

Election Commission seeks funds for paper trail units

Introduction:

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) has requested the Union Law Ministry for urgent release of funds, given the “prevailing environment,” to facilitate procurement of VVPAT (voter verifiable paper audit trail) machines for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

Procurement:

Over 16 lakh VVPATs would be required, at an estimated cost of Rs. 3,174 crore, to cover all polling stations in the next Lok Sabha polls.

The EC had earlier informed the government that if the order for the machines was not placed by February, it would become difficult for the manufacturers to supply them by September 2018 to meet the requirement of the next general elections.



It also placed on record the Supreme Court's direction to state the rough schedule within which the entire system could be introduced, subject to the sanction of funds. The machines can be manufactured within 30 months from the date of release of funds, the EC said.

VVPAT Machines

- The Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) is a method that provides feedback to voters.
- It is an independent verification printer machine and is attached to electronic voting machines.
- It allows voters to verify if their vote has gone to the intended candidate.
- When a voter presses a EVM Button, a paper slip is printed through VVPAT.
- The slip contain poll symbol and the name of the candidate. It allows the voter to verify his choice.
- After the voter views the slip, it drops inside a sealed box linked to the EVM seven seconds later. It can only be accessed by authorized persons.

Commitment:

The EC was fully committed to deploying VVPATs along with EVMs in all future elections so that transparency of

1. the electoral process is enhanced,
2. integrity of the voting preserved, and
3. the voters' confidence in the process is further strengthened.

Call for paper ballot:

The Commission had recently received a memorandum from 16 parties demanding that the paper ballot system be reintroduced for greater transparency. The Bahujan Samaj Party, the AAP and the Congress have alleged tampering of EVMs. The Samajwadi Party has also raised doubts.

During the last Parliament session, several members alleged that the voting machines used in the recently concluded Assembly elections were tampered with.

A delegation of representatives from 13 Opposition parties met President Pranab Mukherjee and flagged a range of issues, including that of EVM security.

Allegation:

On its part, the Election Commission has time and again dismissed the allegations that the voting machines can be tampered with.

With the Opposition insisting upon doing away with the EVMs and the controversy

refusing to die down, the EC has now thrown a challenge, inviting computer experts and political leaders to prove that the machines can be hacked in the presence of the EVM manufacturers.

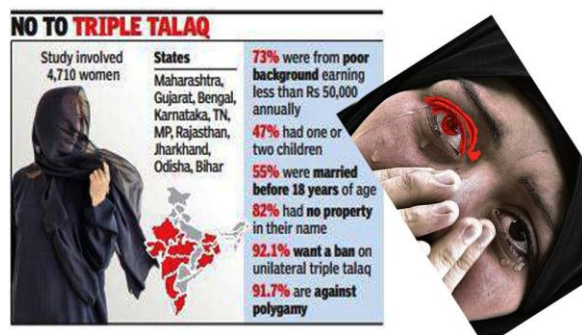
PAPER II

Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

'Triple talaq misuse will lead to social boycott'

Introduction:

Muslim men who misuse triple talaq and use it arbitrarily without valid reason will be subjected to social boycott, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board warned. The AIMPLB, asserted its "full constitutional right" to implement Muslim personal law in the country.



'Meant to shield women'

"It is our responsibility to implement it and the best way is to ensure that is following its guidelines. Islamic Sharia gives equal status to men and women. The truth is that talaq was kept to protect women from danger," AIMPLB said.

Released an eight-point code of conduct for divorce, the Board encouraged Muslim couples to try and resolve differences on their own, and if that fails, adopt the "reconciliation and arbitration" method through involvement of family elders, before settling for a divorce. If after the waiting period (iddat), reconciliation happens, the two can, through mutual consent, restore the relationship with a fresh marriage, says one of the guidelines.

AIMPLB said, there was a lot of "misconception" about Muslim personal law and norms for divorce due to "lack of correct of information."

Elaborating on the threat of social boycott - it would involve restricting the offender entry into public functions and community programmes.

Though it would have no legal standing, the AIMPLB feels the fear of social isolation would serve as a deterrent for men misusing triple talaq.

Success of boycott:

"Man is a social animal. Social boycott has worked well in Mewat [Haryana] where 20-25 years ago a panchayat issued orders that a man uttering talaq thrice would be socially boycotted and denied resources. Since then, hardly any such cases were reported there," AIMPLB said.

PAPER III

Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

States turn to dogs to check wildlife crimes

Introduction:

In a bid to combat wildlife crimes more effectively, the Forest Departments of different States are strengthening law enforcement using squads of sniffer and tracker dogs.

Training of dogs:

Training began at the National Training Centre for Dogs (NTCD), BSF Academy, in Tekanpur, Gwalior earlier this month.

When their training is over in December, States such as Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim, and the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar, will get wildlife sniffer dog squads for the first time. West Bengal's Forest Department will get three squads, Uttarakhand and Assam two, and Odisha and Kerala one each.

NTCD:

The agency had trained dogs for the military and para-military forces for security purposes.

“After talks between different Ministries, the Ministry of Environment and Forests, in consultation with the Home Ministry, gave us the task of training dogs to help check wildlife crimes such as poaching.”

The breeds chosen are German Shepherds and Belgian Malinois.



Role of TRAFFIC:

The training of dogs in India for wildlife crime prevention was pioneered by TRAFFIC, a global wildlife trade monitoring network. Also known as ‘TRAFFIC’s Super Sniffers,’ 43 of the squads have been deployed in the country.

In the past few years, TRAFFIC’s Super Sniffers have helped with at least 150 wildlife seizure cases, leading to the arrest of about 100 people.

They are ‘strength multipliers’ and their sense of smell works across long distances to detect a carcass or trafficked animal parts.

The dogs also provide protection to the forest guard who often has to move alone.

Can save rhino:

In October 2016, in Madhya Pradesh’s Sagar district, a wild boar was killed. When the two suspects denied involvement, a sniffer dog squad was deployed, which not only found the carcass hidden in a shrub, but also the weapons used.

Sniffer and tracker dogs could help protect threatened species like the one-horned rhinoceros.

PAPER II

Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests

Iran’s silence on Jadhav baffling

Introduction:

The lack of investigative support from Iran on the Kulbhushan Jadhav case has raised questions about the overall state of Tehran-New Delhi security cooperation.

Iran is a strategic partner in India’s outreach to Afghanistan and Central Asia, but its silence on the Kulbhushan case has baffled many.

No response to request:

India informed the government of Iran last year about this matter. As to the progress of investigation, but it had not responded to India’s request for investigation in the case.

India has maintained that Kulbhushan Jadhav had been engaged in “legitimate business” in the Iranian port of Chabahar and was kidnapped by Pakistani agents. However, this part of the Indian narrative can be corroborated only if Iran comes forward with an investigation.



Chabahar port:

After years of cooperation, the port of Chabahar received more attention during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Tehran last May when both sides signed a trilateral agreement with Kabul to develop the port and connect it with Afghanistan.

Proximity to Saudis:

Iran understands well that its careful balancing of ties between Pakistan and India would be affected if it were to support India with detailed information that would implicate Pakistan or put India in an uncomfortable position.

Iran and Pakistan had also clashed over alleged Indian espionage from Chabahar during President Hasan Rouhani's March 2016 visit to Pakistan.

Pakistan had aired the video of Kulbhushan Jadhav's alleged confession on disruptive activities in Pakistan during Mr. Rouhani's visit and linked it to Chabahar, which drew a strong response from Iran's envoy to Pakistan.

Commentators also believe that Iran is uncomfortable with India's growing proximity to Saudi Arabia and the UAE and its non-cooperation on the case of Mr. Jadhav is indicative of a larger bilateral problem.

Issue:

Bilateral energy ties were also not in the best shape because of Iran-India disagreement over the Farzad-B gas field which Iran had promised to India. Following pricing issues over the gas field, India has begun to cut gas imports from Iran.

Suggestion:

India's growing ties with GCC states are naturally viewed by Iran with some concern. India should try to upgrade strategic ties with Iran especially since they have been steady security partners since the late 1980s.

Iran was choosing to be prudent in avoiding the problems over espionage between India and Pakistan, as the benefits of being non-cooperative far outweigh the gains.

PAPER II

India and its neighborhood- relations

China-Nepal exercises don't worry us: India

Introduction:

The relationship between Kathmandu and New Delhi has its "own logic", India said. The enduring ties between the two sides are not concerned with the ongoing military exercises between China and Nepal.



First-ever joint exercise:

The issue of China's first-ever military exercise with Nepal forms the backdrop of the state visit of Ms. Bhandari between April 17 and 21.

The China-Nepal exercise, "Sagarmatha Friendship – 2017" began in Nepal Army's paratraining school in Maharajganj.

India was not concerned with the military exercise, it remained concerned about long-term peace, stability and the amendments to the Nepal Constitution of 2015.