

Daily Current Affairs, 13-12-17

Krishna Pradeep's 21st Century IAS , Hyderabad

1. 100 % deployment of VVPATs at all Polling Stations
2. Special courts to try politicians
3. India, Australia call for 'open' Asia-Pacific zone
4. Volatility is due to food, says expert
5. Human rights and Indian values
6. Perils of going cashless
7. Information at the court's discretion
8. Prelims Special

1. 100 % deployment of VVPATs at all Polling Stations

Context: The Election Commission has put in place an elaborate framework of administrative system, security protocols and procedural checks-and-balances in Gujarat elections, which prevent any possible misuse of EVMs/VVPATs or procedural lapses in the use of EVMs and VVPATs during polls.

What is VVPAT?

1. A Voter-verified paper audit trail (VVPAT) unit provides feedback to voters using EVMs for voting.
2. The VVPAT functions as an independent verification system for EVMs and allows voters to verify that their votes are cast as intended.
3. It also serves as an additional barrier to changing or destroying votes.

How a VVPAT unit works?

VVPAT device functions like a printer attached to the ballot unit and kept inside the voting compartment. When the voter presses the button against the name of the candidate of her/his choice on the EVM unit, the VVPAT unit generates a paper slip, also called 'ballot slip'. the ballot slip neither goes into the hands of the voter nor others get to see it.

Benefit of VVPAT

1. The use of VVPAT gives the voter an opportunity to challenge her/his vote on the basis of the paper receipt for the first time.
2. It bolsters confidence of voters in free & fair elections

Benefit of VVPAT

1. The use of VVPAT gives the voter an opportunity to challenge her/his vote on the basis of the paper receipt for the first time.
2. It bolsters confidence of voters in free & fair elections

2. Special courts to try politicians

Context: The Centre has informed the Supreme Court that it will set up at least 12 special courts to try exclusively criminal cases involving MPs and MLAs.

Advantages:

1. In a determined effort to cleanse politics of criminality and corruption, the court said it took years, probably decades, to complete the trial against a politician.
2. Boost the trust in law maker of the country
3. Now it can disposed of within one year

Challenges

1. Funding
2. The Centre also sought more time to collect and collate data of pending cases against lawmakers across the country.

3. India, Australia call for 'open' Asia-Pacific zone

Context: the strategic bilateral discussion, Australia and India on Tuesday discussed the need to maintain the Asia-Pacific region as a “free” and “open” zone under the “2+2” dialogue model which includes the foreign and defence secretaries of both sides.

Advantages of “free” and “open” zone

1. Freedom of navigation
2. reduce China's Maritime influence
3. Counter Piracy
4. To have good trade

Both sides agreed that a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region serves the long-term interests of all countries in the region and of the world at large. There is a growing convergence of strategic perspectives between the two countries,

4. Volatility is due to food, says expert

Context: Retail inflation zoomed in November, experts attributed it to the rise in food and oil prices.

Retail inflation accelerates, industrial growth slows - India suffered a macroeconomic setback with retail inflation unexpectedly accelerating to a 15-month high of 4.88% in November and industrial production slowing to 2.2% in October.

- a. CPI with base 2012

- b. It is released by the Central Statistics Office of the Ministry of Statistics

5. Human rights and Indian values

Context: In a little more than a year there have been sites where a fellow citizen has been brutally murdered by another Indian. They should be a source of deep shame to us as these were not random events. eg -Mohammad Akhlaq, Pehlu Khan and Afrazul Khan were murdered for the identity assigned to them.

Acts of hate

1. “cross-community” marital relationships
2. injuring the sensibilities of Hindus few people say
3. maintained social distance due to caste and economic differentiation, newer axes of power have emerged
4. Hardening patriarchy and Hindu chauvinism are India’s unanticipated demon

Four days after the killing of Afrazul Khan on December 6, India celebrated Human Rights Day. Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu said two noteworthy things.

1. India’s commitment to human rights emphasising the duty of governments to ensure them to individuals.
2. he observed that human rights existed in India not due to some constitutional morality but because of the DNA of Indian civilisation.
3. He is referring to the many assurances of the freedom of thought and expression and the right to life and liberty in the Constitution

In the light of these violations, we cannot rely on civilisational values that may or may not be enshrined in the constitution to deliver us rights that we adopt democracy as the form of government.

Way Forward

1. “constitutional morality”, a term used by Ambedkar to appropriately reject any role for “societal morality” in the Republic, is of course a useful guide to the courts when it comes to adjudicating between individuals, it is by itself helpless in preventing acts of violence.
2. An effective protection of individuals, in this case women and minorities, from acts of violence requires the power of the state to weigh in on their side

We want to ensure the flourishing of all the peoples of India not out of self-preservation but because we want to be civilised. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, anyone?

6. Perils of going cashless

Context: The “bail-in” clause of the Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill (FRDI) has led to worries about the safety of bank deposits. It is the push by governments towards a cashless society.

why, it needs to be reiterated that by far the biggest challenge for a government launching a “bail-in” attack on deposits is that depositors can promptly withdraw their money from the bank by demanding cash

1. Such **an event can lead to severe bank runs and destabilise the banking system** because bank deposits are only fractionally backed by actual cash
2. Such **rapid withdrawal of cash deposits, however, may slowly cease to be an option for depositors** as the world increasingly turns away from cash and towards digital money.
3. So a cashless world will, once and for all, **free banks from the obligation to meet cash demands from depositors**, thus protecting them from any liquidity crisis
4. More importantly, it would also **strip depositors of the power to withdraw** their deposits in the form of cash to escape any tax or other forms of confiscation by the government

other reasons why governments prefer moving towards a cashless society.

1. The banks have been a major source of funding for governments and their economies across the world. Most of such lending happens through loans which are not backed by savings but instead through fresh money creation, which in turn leads to economic crises and bank runs led by depositors.
2. It makes **easier for banks to carry out their business of credit creation** without the risk of having to satisfy the demand for cash from depositors
3. it **prevents recurrent crises of liquidity** that are faced by banks.
4. **negative interest rates, which would otherwise push depositors to rush out of banks** to escape the tax imposed on their deposits, become more feasible under a cashless banking system in which depositors are essentially locked in by banks

Depositors in such cases will have no other option but to spend their money to escape a penalty on it. So, when it comes to the war on cash, there is a lot more to it than what just meets the eye.

7. Information at the court's discretion

Context: A six-year-long farce concluded at the Delhi High Court on November 21, 2017, and the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005 is the worse for it. At issue was the right of citizens to get information from the Supreme Court , and by implication, India's higher judiciary, which has strongly resisted the RTI.

Is RTI facing resistance from the judiciary?

In the last ten years, scores of RTI applications have been filed by citizens seeking information from the courts, many of which have required judicial adjudication. Five such matters reached the Supreme Court, three of which were referred to a constitution bench that is yet to be set up and others where rejected.

1. Information denied on appointment of judges
2. CIC order on assets of judges challenged before apex court

Does 'Judiciary too resists accountability'?

1. Unfortunately we have seen that when it comes to themselves, the courts do not want any accountability or any transparency and this we have seen in all kinds of issues."

Recommendation - 'Public pressure can change the tune'

8. Prelims Special

1. Dr. Mahesh Sharma leads Indian delegation to Second UNWTO/UNESCO World Conference on Tourism and Culture at Muscot

- a. The Conference had also on its agenda themes such as culture and tourism as a factor of peace and prosperity;
- b. tourism development and protection of cultural heritage; culture and tourism and urban development and creativity; and
- c. exploring cultural land escapes in tourism. The conference also finalized the 2030 Agenda.

2. 27th National Energy Conservation Day to be celebrated on 14th December, 2017 .

It is organized on 14th December each year by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under Ministry of Power, with an aim to demonstrate India's achievements in energy efficiency and conservation, while working for its ambition of holistic development as part of the nation's overall effort towards climate change mitigation.

3. Quick Estimates of Index of Industrial Production and Use-Based Index for The Month of October, 2017

- a. Index of Industrial Production (IIP) with base 2011-12

- b. It is released by the Central Statistics Office of the Ministry of Statistics

- c. Index of Industrial Production (IIP), slowed in October from an upwardly revised 4.14% in September.

Reasons for decrease in IIP

1. This is partly due to the base effect, as last year October saw strong growth
2. The onset of GST initially led to people destocking, so demand for newly manufactured products went down to almost zero