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ANTI-DEFECTION LAW

Context

Political events in Maharashtra have raised concern over the effectiveness of the anti-defection law.

About

The Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, also known as the anti-defection law, was added to prevent political defections.

In 1985, the Tenth Schedule of the 52nd amendment to the Constitution of India was passed by the Parliament of India to achieve this, which resulted in introduction of the new word 'Political Party' in the Constitution of India.

The rationale to curb such defections was that they undermine the foundations and principles of Indian democracy.

The law disqualifies legislators for violating the will of their political party.

However, the presence of the Anti-Defection Law has also undermined democracy by inhibiting legislators from exercising their choice and ability to function independently, and restricted decision making in legislatures to a few who control political parties.

In 2003, the Constitution (91st Amendment) Act was introduced in the Parliament as a result of which the provisions regarding protection granted to legislators in cases of a split in the party under the Tenth Schedule were deleted.

The primary intentions of the law were

To curb political corruption, which was seen as a necessary first step to addressing other forms of corruption in the country.

To strengthen democracy by bringing stability to administration and ensuring legislative programmes of the Government are not jeopardised by a defecting parliamentarian.

To make members of parliaments more responsible and loyal to the political parties with whom they were aligned at the time of their election.

Features of the Anti-Defection Law

Disqualification on ground of defection: A legislator belonging to a political party will be disqualified if he

- voluntarily gives up his party membership, or
- votes/abstains to vote in the House contrary to the direction issued by his political party.
- A member is not disqualified if he has taken prior permission of his party, or if the voting or abstention is condoned by the party within 15 days.
- Independent members will be disqualified if they join a political party after getting elected to the House.
- Nominated members will be disqualified if they join any political party six months after getting nominated.

Exemptions in cases of merger: Members are exempted from such disqualification when at least two-thirds of the original political party merges with another political party. Further:

- the members must have become members of the party they have merged with/into, or
- they should have not accepted the merger and chosen to function as a separate group.

Decision making authority: The decision to disqualify a member from the House rests with the Chairman/Speaker of the House.

Bar of jurisdiction of courts: This provision bars any court jurisdiction in case of disqualification of a member under this schedule. This paragraph was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of India in KihotoHollohon vs Zacillu, 1992.

Advantages of Anti-Defection Law

It provides stability to the government by restricting the shift of party relations.

It ensures that candidate shall be loyal to his party and citizens also gave vote to him

It also promotes party discipline.

It allows the merger of political parties without disqualifying a member on the ground of defection.

It also helps in reducing corruption at the political level by restricting the change of party.

It provides procedure for those who defects from one party to another.

Issues of Anti-Defection Law

The law does not define a time period within which disqualification proceedings against a legislator ought to be decided.

With the role of the Speaker of the House getting more and more political by virtue of this law, disqualifications were either decided immediately or kept pending indefinitely depending on which of the two suited the political party that the Speaker was earlier affiliated with.

Additionally, with the Courts having no jurisdiction over disqualification proceedings, judicial remedy could be sought only against the decision of the Speaker or on his inaction in deciding the disqualification proceedings.

This made the proceedings under the Tenth Schedule useless to a large extent and did not discourage legislators from jumping ship.

In 2020 however, the Supreme Court in an order stated that Speakers ought to decide on the disqualification proceedings pending before them within a “reasonable time”.

Way forward

Indian politics is at a crossroads between the legislators' dilemma and voters' mandate. The current laws eclipse their primary objective by providing a veil of legitimacy to undemocratic and illegal practices.

The present conundrum raises two divergent courses of action – either strengthen the law or repeal it altogether.

Cross-voting on salient issues builds the public's overall trust in the system.

India is witnessing a political consolidation at the federal level not encountered for at least three decades. This has fostered a lack of accountability and a tendency to suppress criticism of the government.

Abolishing the anti-defection law will bolster the real voice of the legislators.

Political defections wither the very roots of democracy in India and lead to a gradual decay of political morality.

The main objective for which the Anti-Defection law was introduced was to combat “the evil of political defection” but so far it has failed to fabricate results as the instances of political defections still continue unabated.

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AUKUS NUCLEAR SUBMARINE DEAL

Context

Australia has unveiled plans to buy up to five U.S. nuclear-powered submarines, then build a new model with U.S. and British technology under an ambitious plan to bulk up Western muscle across the Asia-Pacific in the face of a rising China.

About

The defence deal called AUKUS was agreed upon by Australia, UK and the US in September 2021.

The first aspect of the pact is equipping Australia with submarines and this part of the agreement is called Pillar One. The US and UK will share plans for their submarines that will help Australia build its own eventually.

The AUKUS agreement is aimed a preserving a "free and open" Indo-Pacific.

Before the pact, Australia planned to buy diesel-powered subs from France in a $60 billion deal in 2016.

But Canberra abruptly scrapped it and joined AUKUS, leading to diplomatic tensions with Paris, which have subsided after the election of Anthony Albanese.

Significance

The three nations will create a new fleet of cutting-edge tech which include Rolls-Royce reactors made in the UK.

Under the deal, members of the Royal Australian Navy will be trained to use the subs and will be embedded at submarine bases in the US and the UK.

The country will receive at least three nuclear-powered submarines from the US in the early 2030s.

These Virginia-class vessels will be second-hand and need the approval of the US Congress. Australia will have the option to purchase two more. These have an estimated value of $3 billion each.

Compared with the Collins-class submarines due to be retired by Australia, the Virginia-class is almost twice as long and carries nearly three times more crew, with a capacity for 132 on board.

The US vessels are also able to stay submerged almost indefinitely and launch powerful cruise missiles.

Australia will get up to eight new submarines called SSN-AUKUS. They will have British designs and will be powered by the American combat system, according to a report by ABC Australia. These attack crafts will be built in Britain and Australia.

The UK is expected to get deliver the first home-built sub by the late 2030s. Australia will deliver new vessels to its navy by the early 2040s.

These boats will be faster than Australia's existing fleet. They will come with cruise missiles that have the capability of striking targets on land and at sea, reports the BBC.

With the deal, Australia will join a group of seven countries which have such ships: the US, Russia, China, the UK, France and India.

Opinion of Leaders

Joe Biden said that the moment was "an inflection point in history, where the hard work of enhancing deterrence and promoting stability is going to affect the prospect of peace for decades to come".

Australia's Albanese said that the submarine deal marked the "biggest single investment in Australia's defence capability in all of its history". According to him, this is the first time in 65 years and the second time in history that the US has shared its nuclear propulsion technology.

Talking about new security challenges like Russia's "illegal invasion" of Ukraine, "China'a growing assertiveness" and "destabilisingbehaviour of Iran and North Korea", Sunak said, "Faced with this new reality, it is more important than ever, that we strengthen the resilience of our own countries."
"But ultimately, the defence of our values depends, as it always has, on the quality of our relationships with others.

What threats does Australia face?

The AUKUS pact is seen as an answer to counter China's growing military presence in the Asia Pacific region.

Albanese has described the deal as the "single biggest leap" in the history of Australia's nuclear capabilities. The submarines will give the Australian navy the capability to reach far out in the ocean and launch attacks.

Australia currently has diesel-powered submarines, which can also carry nuclear warheads. However, these ships need to frequently resurface over water, making them easier to detect. They are smaller, cheaper and easier to maintain but advancements in tech have made them obsolete.

Reaction of China

Beijing has long criticised the deal, calling it a "dangerous" provocation in the past. It has repeatedly accused Australia, the UK, and the US of adopting a "Cold War mentality" that risks a greater escalation in the region.

After the AUKUS deal was announced, China's mission to the UN said that it is a "blatant act that constitutes serious nuclear proliferation risks, undermines international non-proliferation system, fuels arms races, and hurts peace and stability in the region".

BIOCOMPUTERS

Context

Scientists at Johns Hopkins University (JHU) recently outlined a plan for a potentially revolutionary new area of research called “organoid intelligence”, which aims to create “biocomputers”: where brain cultures grown in the lab are coupled to real-world sensors and input/output devices.

About

Biological computers use biologically derived molecules — such as DNA and/or proteins — to perform digital or real computations.

The development of biocomputers has been made possible by the expanding new science of nanobiotechnology. The term nanobiotechnology can be defined in multiple ways; in a more general sense, nanobiotechnology can be defined as any type of technology that uses both nano-scale materials (i.e. materials having characteristic dimensions of 1-100 nanometers) and biologically based materials.

A more restrictive definition views nanobiotechnology more specifically as the design and engineering of proteins that can then be assembled into larger, functional structures.

The implementation of nanobiotechnology, as defined in this narrower sense, provides scientists with the ability to engineer biomolecular systems specifically so that they interact in a fashion that can ultimately result in the computational functionality of a computer.

Scientific Background

Biocomputers use biologically derived materials to perform computational functions. A biocomputer consists of a pathway or series of metabolic pathways involving biological materials that are engineered to behave in a certain manner based upon the conditions (input) of the system.

The resulting pathway of reactions that takes place constitutes an output, which is based on the engineering design of the biocomputer and can be interpreted as a form of computational analysis.

Three distinguishable types of biocomputers include biochemical computers, biomechanical computers, and bioelectronic computers.

Opportunities

Many examples of simple biocomputers have been designed, but the capabilities of these biocomputers are very limited in comparison to commercially available non-bio computers.

Some people believe that biocomputers have great potential, but this has yet to be demonstrated.

The potential to solve complex mathematical problems using far less energy than standard electronic supercomputers.

To perform more reliable calculations simultaneously rather than sequentially, motivates the further development of "scalable" biological computers, and several funding agencies are supporting these efforts.

Challenges

Although biocomputing has similarities with biology and computer science, it doesn't fit seamlessly with either one. In biology, the goal is to reverse engineer things that have already been built.

Biocomputing aims to forward engineer biology.

Experts in computer science are accustomed to machines executing programmed commands; when dealing with biological environments in what is known as a "wet lab," organisms might react unpredictably.

The culprit could be the cell's programming, or it could easily be something external such as the environmental conditions, nutrition, or timing.

Way forward

While human brains are slower than computers at, say, simple arithmetic, they outshine machines at processing complex information.

Brain organoids can also be developed using stem cells from individuals with neurodegenerative diseases or cognitive disorders. Comparing the data on brain structure, connections, and signalling between 'healthy' and 'patient-derived' organoids can reveal the biological basis of human cognition, learning, and memory.

They could also help decode the pathology of and drug development for devastating neuro-developmental and degenerative diseases such as Parkinson's disease and microcephaly.

Conclusion

The work in biocomputing thus far has focused on DNA-based systems because, at this point, genetic engineering is understood enough (even if all of its secrets aren't known) to make progress possible.

There are many more biological systems to tackle, such as those based on nerve cells.

The future is expected to include using the knowledge gleaned from developing biocomputers for DNA-based systems and apply it to neurochemistry.

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CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Context

The Supreme Court ordered the Government of India to support the rule that permits hanging by the neck as a method of execution.

Introduction

Capital punishment, also known as the death penalty, is the execution of a criminal who has been sentenced to death by a court of law for a serious felony.

It is known as the most severe form of punishment. It serves as punishment for the most heinous, grievous, and abhorrent crimes against humanity.

Capital Punishment in India

Capital punishment, also known as the death penalty, is awarded in the rarest of the rare cases. Section 354(3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure provides a method to execute the death penalty, i.e., "Hanging by the neck until dead."

Recently, the convicts of the Nirbhaya case were hanged until death in Tihar Jail. Let's know more about Capital punishment or Death Penalty.

Constitutional validity of death penalty in India

The validity of the death penalty has been contested on several occasions since the Indian Constitution was established through Supreme Court petitions.

The constitutional validity of the death penalty was challenged from time to time in various ways:

- The Supreme Court's five-judge bench unanimously maintained the death penalty's constitutionality in Jagmohan Singh v. State of Uttar Pradesh, concluding that it did not violate Articles 14, 19, or 21.
- In this case, the validity of the death sentence was contested on the grounds that it contravened Articles 19 and 21 because no procedure was provided.
- The Supreme Court held that "the choice of death sentence is done by the procedure established by law".
- It was noted that the judge decides between a death sentence and a life sentence based on the circumstances, facts, and type of crime presented during the trial.

What is the practice in other countries?

According to Amnesty International, 55 countries around the world have the death sentence on the books. While death by hanging is still the most prevalent form of execution, especially in the former British colonies, other modes are followed in some countries.

In the United States, for example, an intravenous lethal injection is given in every state (27 states and American Samoa) that allows the death penalty.

In India, The Air Force Act, 1950, The Army Act 1950, and The Navy Act 1957 say that execution has to be carried out either by hanging by the neck until death or by being shot to death.

Advantages of Capital Punishment

It is analogous to the offense in cases of murder (i.e., a death for a death)

It has popular appeal in cases of murder

It prevents criminals from repeating their crimes

It deters others by making a lasting impression on them

Disadvantages of Capital Punishment

It eliminates any restitution or special service that the criminal might perform

It creates a financial loss to society by permanently removing criminals from the work force

It is not a heavy punishment to criminals who have little to live for

It is irreversible in cases of error

Conclusion

India is one of the biggest countries in the world, and as a result, there are a lot of crimes and criminals there. To deal with these issues, India has some incredibly strict regulations. Every offense results in punishment for the offender. The death penalty, which is rarely passed in India, is one of the corrections.

G-20 AND INDIA'S PRESIDENCY

Context

Deep divisions between the United States-led Western countries and the Russia-China combine upended India's attempt to forge a consensus at the G-20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

About G-20

The Group of Twenty (G20) is an intergovernmental forum comprising 19 countries - Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States and the European Union.

The G20 members represent around 85% of the global GDP, over 75% of the global trade, and about two-thirds of the world population.

The G20 was founded in 1999 after the Asian financial crisis as a forum for the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors to discuss global economic and financial issues.

It was upgraded to the level of Heads of State/Government in the wake of the global economic and financial crisis of 2007, and, in 2009, was designated the "premier forum for international economic cooperation".

About G-20 Summit

The G20 Summit is held annually, under the leadership of a rotating Presidency.

Working of G-20

The G20 Presidency steers the G20 agenda for one year and hosts the Summit. The G20 consists of two parallel tracks: the Finance Track and the Sherpa Track. Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors lead the Finance Track, while Sherpas lead the Sherpa Track.

The Finance Track is led by Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of the member countries.

Within the two tracks, there are thematically oriented working groups in which representatives from the relevant ministries of the members as well as from invited/guest countries and various international organisations participate.

The G20 process from the Sherpa Track is coordinated by the Sherpas of member countries, who are personal emissaries of the Leaders.

The Sherpa Track oversees inputs from 13 Working Groups, 2 Initiatives – Research Innovation Initiative Gathering (RIIG) and G20 Empower, and various Engagement Groups, all of whom meet throughout the year and develop their Issue Notes and Outcome Documents in parallel. These substantive discussions then feed consensus-based recommendations to the Sherpa Meetings.

The outcome document of the Sherpa-level meetings eventually forms the basis of the Leaders' Declaration, which will be debated and signed (after and if consensus is reached) at the final New Delhi Summit.

In addition, there are Engagement Groups which bring together civil societies, parliamentarians, think tanks, women, youth, labour, businesses and researchers of the G20 countries.

The Startup20 Engagement Group will be established under India's G20 Presidency for the first time, recognising the role of startups in driving innovation that responds to a rapidly changing global scenario.

Active consultation with the Engagement Groups forms an integral part of India's "inclusive ambitious, decisive, and action-oriented", G20 approach, as outlined by Prime Minister in the Bali Summit 2023.

India's G -20 Presidency

India holds the Presidency of the G20 from December 1, 2022 to November 30, 2023. The 43 Heads of Delegations- the largest ever in G20-will be participating in the final New Delhi Summit in September next year.

The G20 Logo draws inspiration from the vibrant colours of India's national flag – saffron, white and green, and blue. It juxtaposes planet Earth with the lotus, India's national flower that reflects growth amid challenges.

The Earth reflects India's pro-planet approach to life, one in perfect harmony with nature. Below the G20 logo is "Bharat", written in the Devanagari script.

The theme of India's G20 Presidency - "VasudhaivaKutumbakam" or "One Earth

One Family ·One Future" - is drawn from the ancient Sanskrit text of the Maha Upanishad.

For India, the G20 Presidency also marks the beginning of "Amritkaal", the 25-year period beginning from the 75th anniversary of its independence on 15 August 2022, leading up to the centenary of its independence, towards a futuristic, prosperous, inclusive and developed society, distinguished by a human-centric approach at its core.

A new working group on Disaster Risk Reduction will be established under India's Presidency to encourage collective work by the G20, undertake multi-disciplinary research and exchange best practices on disaster risk reduction.

India's special invitee guest countries are Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, Spain and UAE.

G-20's invited international organisations are UN, IMF, World Bank, WHO, WTO, ILO, FSB, OECD, AU Chair, NEPAD Chair, ASEAN Chair, ADB, ISA and CDRI.

G20 meetings will not be limited only to New Delhi or other metropolises. Drawing inspiration from its G20 Presidency theme of "VasudhaivaKutumbakam'-"One Earth One Family One Future, as well as the Prime Minister's vision of an 'all of government" approach.

The Presidency is also a chance for the G20 Secretariat to provide the country's citizens with the unique opportunity be a part of India's G20 story.

India's G20 Priorities

Green Development, Climate Finance &LiFE: The opportunity to lead G20 comes at a time of compounding existential threat, with the COVID-19 pandemic having exposed the fragilities of our systems under the cascading impacts of climate change.

- In this regard, climate change is a key priority for India's presidential Presidency, with a particular focus towards not only climate finance and technology, but also ensuring just energy transitions for developing nations across the world.

Accelerated, Inclusive & Resilient Growth

- An accelerated, resilient and inclusive growth is a cornerstone for sustainable development. During its G20 Presidency, India aims to focus on areas that have the potential to bring structural transformation.
- This includes an ambition to accelerate integration of MSMEs in global trade, bring in the spirit of trade for growth, promote labour rights and secure labour welfare, address global skills gap, and build inclusive agricultural value chains and food systems etc.

Accelerating progress on SDGs

- India's G20 Presidency collides with the crucial midpoint of the 2030 Agenda. As such, India acknowledges the detrimental impact of COVID-19, which changed the current decade of action into a decade of recovery.
- In line with this perspective, India wants to focus on recommitting G20's efforts to achieving the targets laid out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Technological Transformation & Digital Public Infrastructure

- As G20 Presidency, India can foreground its belief in a human-centric approach to technology, and facilitate greater knowledge-sharing in priority areas like digital public infrastructure, financial inclusion, and tech-enabled development in sectors ranging from agriculture to education

Multilateral Institutions for the 21st century

- India's G20 priority will be to continue pressing for reformed multilateralism that creates more accountable ,inclusive just, equitable and representative multipolar international system that is fit for addressing the challenges in the 21st century.

Women-led development

- India hopes to use the G20 forum to highlight inclusive growth and development, with women empowerment and representation being at the core of India's G20 deliberations. This includes a focus on bringing women to the fore, and in leading positions, in order to boost socio-economic development and achievement of SDGs.

NATIONAL SECURITY ACT

Context

National Security Act has been invoked in the case of self-styled Sikh preacher and on-the-run Waris Punjab De chief Amritpal Singh.

About

The National Security Act is an act by the Indian parliament promulgated on September 23, 1980, solving the purpose of preventive detention law.

The National Security Act (NSA) allows the central government or a state government to detain a person to prevent him from engaging in any kind of activity that might jeopardise national security.

The government may also detain the individual to prevent him from disrupting public order. The period to be detained is twelve months.

The extension will take place if the government issues fresh evidence against the individual.

Historical background

The Bengal regulation III was enacted by the East India Company during the presidency of Bengal in 1818.

Later in 1919, the British government enacted the Rowlatt Acts of 1919 that allowed the imprisonment of the suspect without trial. NSA is considered a close iteration of the 1950 Act.

When the Prevention Detention Act 1950 expired on December 31, 1969, Indira Gandhi introduced the controversial Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) in the year 1971

The MISA also provided similar powers to the government as in the Prevention Detention Act.

Eventually, the MISA was repealed in the year 1977 when the Janata Party came to power, but when Indira Gandhi got back into power she brought NSA 1980.

Provisions of the Act

The person can't be charged during the detention period

The government can detain a person from disrupting public order and maintaining supplies and services essential to the community

If evidence shows the detainee is proven right, then the period can be extended to more than 12 months.

Constitutional Provisions

The NSA is mentioned in Article 22 (3) of the Indian constitution, which allows preventive detention and restriction on personal liberty for reasons of state security and public order.

Also, Article 22(4) mentions that no law is there to authorize the detention of a person for more than three months unless the advisory board is reported with a sufficient cause for extended detention.

The advisory board consists of judges from the high court.Under the 44th amendment act 1978, the detention period without obtaining the opinion of the advisory board was reduced from three to two months.

Currently, the original period of three months continues, and the provision has not been brought into force.

Criticism of the Act

The NSA has been criticized for its misuse by the authorities and sometimes the government uses it as an extra-judicial power.

The Act has often been criticised on the grounds that it places arbitrary power in the hands of the government and is often misused by the authorities.

Certain provisions of the Act, such as those which provide that the detenu shall have no right to be represented by a legal representative before the Advisory Board, need to be amended.

The detained person may not have the requisite knowledge that is essential to make an adequate representation.

Period of confinement

- The maximum period to be detained is 12 months. It can be extended if there is fresh evidence against the detainee by the government
- A person can be held for 10 days without being informed about the charges against them
- During this time, the person can appeal to the high court advisory board but won't be allowed a lawyer during the trial.

Way Forward

The National Security Act is certainly a necessity to protect the nation from the abuse of democratic rights by certain anti-social elements.

At the same time, questions about a conflict between human rights and national security will always arise.The need is to provide a balance between the two.

There is an urgent need for the courts to evolve well-defined and precise standards to which the preventive detention laws must conform.

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NEWS BROADCASTING & DIGITAL STANDARDS AUTHORITY

Context

The News Broadcasting and Digital Standards Authority (NBDSA) has found that some programs broadcast on some news channels violate the Code of Ethics, Broadcasting Standards, and Special Guideline

About

Structure: The NBDSA is an independent body set up by the News Broadcasters & Digital Association (NBDA), which serves as a representative of private television news, current affairs and digital broadcasters.

- It describes itself as "the collective voice of the news, current affairs and digital broadcasters in India."

Members: The NBDA has presently 26 leading news and current affairs broadcasters (comprising 121 news and current affairs channels) as its members.

- The NBDA presents a unified and credible voice before the Government, on matters that affect the growing industry.

Funding: Funded entirely by its members, the NBDA has 26 news and current affairs broadcasters (comprising 119 news and current affairs channels) as its members. Various senior members of Indian media organisations serve on its Board of Directors.

Objectives: Apart from presenting a unified front, it carries out activities "to promote, protect and secure the interests including the right of freedom of speech and expression of the news broadcasters, digital news media and other related entities."

- It shares developments in the industry with members, provides a space for achieving common goals and consensus.
- It aims to protect all its members from persons carrying "unfair and/or unethical practices or who discredit the television news broadcasters, digital news media and other related entities.

Concern

The media industry has undergone major changes after analogue to digital migration. Digital broadcasting has reduced the entry barrier which has for years been a source of competitive advantage.

It has fragmented the audiences and this has posed a great danger to television stations which make revenue solely via advertisements.

- As a result, competition is cut throat and the television stations had to adopt relevant competitive strategies.

Manipulating News for TRPs is not only a financial scam but also morally and ethically wrong.Some Channels are spreading a hate narrative which is a violation of the fundamental right of the citizen to know the truth through the media.

Functions of NBDSA

Maintaining and improving the standards of broadcast, and maintaining the independence of broadcasters, television journalists and/or news agencies;

Ensuring compliance by broadcasters, television journalists and news agencies with the Code of Conduct and adherence by the said persons to high professional standards;

Ensuring the maintenance of high standards of public taste and fostering a due sense of both the rights and responsibilities of citizens;

Fostering and encouraging the growth of a sense of responsibility and public service among all those engaged in and associated with the profession of television journalism and business of broadcasting;

Keeping under review and scrutiny any developments likely to or having the tendency to restrict the gathering, supply and dissemination of news of public interest and importance:

Such other aspects as may be incidental, consequential, related and/or otherwise materially concerned with the above precepts.

Powers of NBDSA

NBDSA administers the Codes of Ethics & Broadcasting Standards, which has been voluntarily drawn by the News Broadcasters & Digital Association (NBDA) for its member broadcasters to demonstrate their commitment to responsible broadcasting and to self regulate themselves.

The Authority may initiate proceedings on its own and issue notice or take action in respect to any matter which falls within its regulations.

- This can also be through complaints referred to the Authority by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting or any other governmental body, or by anyone else via its website.

It can also recommend to the concerned authority for suspension/revocation of the license of such broadcasters, who do not adhere to its guidelines.

- The fine imposed by the Authority shall not exceed Rs. 1 lakh and such fine shall be recovered from the concerned broadcaster.

NBDSA has no involvement in the day-to-day operations of the broadcasters. NBDSA does not monitor programming, nor does it pre-clear or pre-censor programming. The broadcasters have complete creative and editorial independence.

Way Forward

Ensure that their actions do not excuse or inspire violations of press freedom. Democratic nations have a particularly important role to play in maintaining media freedom.

The televisions have to be proactive in scanning the external environment so as to identify such technologies and take the necessary strategic steps to cushion the firm from adverse effects.

Another recommendation is that the television stations will have to expand their revenue stream from pure advertising to set top boxes subscription as well as by moving into the outdoor advertising.

Further, profitability can be increased by signing long term contracts with the advertisers accompanied by rewards to enhance customer loyalty. This can increase the switching costs.

Television stations should strive for the top positions in terms of the most competitive human resource, cost management and differentiation an aspect perceived to bring forth best performance of the television stations.

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SMART CITIES MISSION

Context

Under the Smart Cities Mission, cities across the country were asked to submit proposals for projects to improve municipal services and to make their jurisdictions more liveable.

About

The 100 Smart Cities Mission in India was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 25, 2015. Smart Cities Mission is an urban renewal and retrofitting programme launched by the Government of India to develop smart cities and make them citizen friendly and sustainable.

The Union Ministry of Urban Development is responsible for implementing the mission in collaboration with state governments; this is expected to complete between 2019 and 2023.

Need for the Mission

Cities accommodate ~31% of India's current population and contribute 63% to the GDP (Census 2011).

By 2030, urban areas are expected to accommodate 40% of India's population and contribute 75% to the GDP.

Population growth in cities leads to infrastructure management and service delivery challenges.

The Smart Cities Mission in India is an initiative that aims to efficiently and effectively tackle these challenges.

Conclusion

COVID-19 has affected almost the entire world, causing widespread disruptions in economies and healthcare services. But, the mission to develop 100 smart cities in India has seen an upturn in the months following the lockdown as funds utilisation has almost doubled.

One of the greatest challenges facing smart cities is how to finance them. Smart city infrastructure requires a large capital investment. The government is concentrating on encouraging Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) for successful implementation of the smart city project in India (at present, about 21% funding of the smart cities projects is via the PPP mode).

For example, in June 2020, Sterlite Power entered a PPP agreement with the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) to build and maintain the fibre network in Gurugram Sub City 2 for 21 years.

Smart Cities Mission in India

Vision

- With an increase on urban population and rapid expansion of areas, government is looking at smarter ways to manage complexities, increase efficiencies and improve quality of life.
- This has created a need for cities that monitor and integrate infrastructure to better optimise resources and maximise services to citizens.

Objective

- The objective of the smart city initiative is to promote sustainable and inclusive cities that provide core infrastructure to give a decent quality of life, a clean and sustainable environment through application of some smart solutions such as data-driven traffic management, intelligent lighting systems, etc.

The core infrastructure elements in a Smart City are as follows:

- Adequate water supply
- Assured electricity supply
- Sanitation including solid waste management
- Efficient urban mobility and public transport
- Affordable housing, especially for the poor
- Robust IT connectivity and digitalization

Coverage

- The mission will cover 100 cities that have been distributed among the States /Union Territories (UT) on the basis of an equitable criteria.
- The formula gives equal weightage (50:50) to urban population of the State/UT and the number of statutory towns (a town with a municipality, corporation, cantonment board or notified town area committee) in the State/UT.
- Based on this formula, each State/UT will, therefore, have a certain number of potential Smart Cities, with each State/UT having at least one.

Strategy

- Components of area-based development in the 100 Smart Cities Mission in India comprise city improvement (retrofitting), city renewal (redevelopment) and city extension (greenfield development), along with a pan-city initiative.

Administrative Structure: Guidelines on Smart City provide monitoring at three levels – national, state and city

- National: An Apex Committee, headed by the Secretary of the Ministry of Urban Development and comprising representatives from related ministries and organisations, has the mandate to approve proposals, monitor progress and release funds.
- State: A High Powered Steering Committee (HPSC) to be headed by the Chief Secretary of the State, which would steer the Smart City Mission as a whole.
- City: A Smart City Advisory Forum in all Smart Cities, comprising the District Collector, Chief Executive Officer of Special Purpose Vehicle (an SPV is created for implementation at the city level. Its role is to release funds, and implement, monitor and evaluate the Smart City development projects), member of Parliament, member of Legislative Assembly, Mayor, local youth, technical experts and representatives of the area Resident Welfare Association to advise and enable collaboration

Financing

- The Smart Cities Mission in India is a centrally sponsored scheme. It also requires state governments and urban local bodies (ULBs) to contribute an equal amount for implementing projects under the Smart City Proposal (SCP). States are expected to seek funds for projects outlined in the Smart City Proposal from multiple sources including the following:
  - Using State/ULB's resources (from collection of user fees, beneficiary charges & impact fees, land monetisation, debt, loans, etc.)
  - Deploying additional resources transferred due to acceptance of recommendations of the Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC)

Budget Allocation

- Under Union Budget 2021-22, the Smart Cities Mission in India has been allocated Rs. 6,450 crore (US$ 868 million) as compared to Rs. 3,400 crore (US$ 457 million) in FY21 (revised estimates).

Status Update

- The total allocated investments for the Smart City Mission stood at ~Rs. 205,018 crore (US$ 27.60 billion) as of March 2021. Of the total investments, 5,614 projects worth ~Rs. 173,018 crore (US$ 23.29 billion) have been tendered, work orders have been issued for 4,912 projects worth ~Rs. 139,851 crore (US$ 18.83 billion) and 2,420 projects worth ~Rs. 40,152 crore (US$ 5.40 billion) have been completed as of March 2021.