



VAJIRAM & RAVI
Institute for IAS Examination

The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

21st February 2026



CONTEXT: An issue of national interest: Chairperson of JPC

Simultaneous Elections

- Democracy is based on the premise of political accountability
- Niti Ayog - Structuring election cycle
- 1951-52, 1957, 1962 and 1967

Need for Simultaneous Elections

- **Governance**
 - MCC - new welfare schemes, transfers, appointments - approval of ECI
 - Star campaigners
 - District administration
- **Legislative** - disrupted, logjam prevails as parties seek spotlight
- **Economic** - curb corruption, massive expenditure
- **Aggravation of vines** - communalism, vote bank
- **Unpopular decisions for long term interest**
- **Reduction of policy indecision, focus on policy issues**

Constructive Critic

- **Article 85 & 174**
- **Political reality** - untimely dissolutions - NCM, 356, PM/CM advises
- **Accountability** - Limiting the chance to express his displeasure or voice his opinions against the activities of the government will serve as an obstacle against Indian democracy.
- **Logistics** - dearth of security personnel
- **Regional issues focus over national issues**
- **Monetary concern over democratic principles**



P.P. Chaudhary: This reform is necessary from an economic standpoint to prevent wastage of manpower and to avoid disruption of investment. 'One nation, one election' is key for 'Viksit Bharat'. In Uttarakhand, for instance, tourism accounts for 43% of the State's revenue and operates effectively for only four months. An election held in April-May during this window severely disrupts the economy. Nationwide, separate voter lists for panchayat, municipal, Assembly and Lok Sabha elections must be prepared repeatedly, largely by government school teachers. Their frequent deployment for training and election duties disrupts teaching, hurting students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. A paper presented to the Ram Nath Kovind Committee (an 8-member high-level panel on simultaneous elections) by [former Finance Commissioner] N.K. Singh and Prachi Mishra [economics professor] estimated a recurring loss of 1.6% of the GDP, roughly ₹7 lakh crore, due to frequent elections, a cost that could otherwise fund housing, infrastructure, and development. [Former IMF chief economist] Gita Gopinath has also acknowledged the economic impact. Elections cause investment delays, including FDI, as investors wait for political clarity at both the State and



P.P. Chaudhary: This is an important point. Section 82 A(5) of the new Bill states that "if the Election Commission is of the opinion that the elections to any Legislative Assembly cannot be conducted along with the general election to the House of the People, it may make a recommendation to the President to declare by an order that the election to that Legislative Assembly may be conducted at a later date". The word used is **opinion**, which some members feel may not necessarily be based on objective criteria unless safeguards are built in. Some experts have sug-



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Recommendations

- **Law Commission of India 170th report (1999)**
 - clubbing if 6 months gap
- **79th report of PSC on Law and Justice**
 - 2-phase election schedule
- One of two conditions
 - motion for an early general election - $\frac{2}{3}$
 - NCM with no alternative government within 14 days
- **Other Suggestions**
 - Newly Elected house after premature dissolution for remainder
 - Germany - NCM to be accompanied with CM
 - Sweden - proportional electoral system
 - South Africa

Food for thought

- **Logistical issues are subservient to legal framework.**
- **Stable governance**
- **Several electoral reforms waiting in line** - Transparency of funding, paid news on polls prediction, stopping one candidate from more than one seat, passage of the Women's Reservation Bill.

To achieve synchronisation, some Assemblies may need shorter initial terms. This is constitutionally defensible: if a no-confidence motion can legitimately bring down a government within a year, resulting in a curtailed term, Parliament can similarly legislate a one-time adjustment in public interest.

Maintaining the synchronisation thereafter would require addressing scenarios where governments fall midterm. The panel is examining the 'remainder term' principle, already used in Panchayati Raj institutions, where no-confidence motions are restricted for a certain period and any subsequent fresh election is held only for the remaining term. Applying similar principles to State Assemblies and Parliament could deter political instability since representatives would risk returning to office for only two or three years.

The panel is also exploring options for rare cases of legislative deadlock such as enabling a national government or electing a Prime Minister or Chief Minister on the floor of the House for the remainder of the term. Another question under consideration is whether no-confidence motions should be barred during the final year of a five-year cycle since holding elections for a one-year term is impractical. We are actively considering

**MAINS PRACTISE
QUESTION**

Discuss the need for simultaneous elections in India. Critically examine the challenges associated with their implementation.



CONTEXT: Brazilian President in India with a large business delegation

India Brazil

Significance

Strategic Context

- Diplomatic relations: 1948
- Strategic Partnership in 2006
- Plurilateral fora: BRICS, IBSA, G20, G-4, CDRI
- President Bolsonaro
- Multi-party delegation led by Dr. Shashi Tharoor

Institutional Mechanisms

- Joint Commission Meeting
- Strategic Dialogue between NSAs
- Foreign Office Consultations
- Trade Monitoring Mechanism

Economy & Agriculture

- Bilateral trade \$ 12.20 billion
- Indian exports: Processed petroleum (diesel), agro-chemicals, pharma, engineering goods, AI
- Imports: Crude oil, soya oil, gold, raw sugar, cotton, iron ore
- Indian cos. & investment
- Cattle genetic heritage

Defence Cooperation

- Defence Cooperation Agreement
- Joint Defence Committee
- 2+2 Political-Military dialogue

Space Cooperation

- Framework agreement for peaceful use of outer space (2004)
- Data sharing and satellite tracking
- Satellite Amazonia-1

Energy Cooperation

- India's upstream investment destination
- JWG on Oil & Gas
- MoU on Bioenergy Cooperation (2020)

- GBA, ISA

Cultural Relations & Diaspora

- First ICC in Latin America
- Filhos de Gandhi
- Indian community ~4k
- ITEC, ICCR Scholarships
- Ayurveda and Yoga

Latin America: Why Engage?

1. Recent High-Level Engagements

- Chilean President Gabriel Boric's Visit
 - Codelco-Adani Deal
 - CEPA Announcement
- Peru's FM Visit
- EAM visited 8 Latin American & Caribbean countries (2019-2023)
- Political Will
 - "Relationships that count"

2. Strategic Economic Hedge

- Energy & Food Security
 - 15-20% of India's petroleum imports
 - Vegetable oils, agri-products
- Critical Minerals Access
- Regional Value Chains:
 - Lower US tariffs
- China's Chancay Port (Peru)



CONTEXT: Brazilian President in India with a large business delegation

Latin America: Why Engage?

3. Growing Economic Ties

- **Trade Growth:**
 - \$50 billion (2022)
 - Auto Sector
- **Trade Drivers:**
 - **India-Brazil:** Oil, edible oils, auto, pharma
 - **Edible Oil Shift:** Ukraine war
 - **Commodity Boom:** Mineral exports (gold, copper) doubled (\$4B → \$8B, 2020-22)
- **Investments:** Indian firms invested \$16B
 - Pharma & IT Expansion
- **Private Sector Perspective - Latin America as a "Goldilocks Zone":**
 - Purchasing power > SE Asia
 - Less regulated than US/EU, more competitive than Africa

4. Political & Strategic Shifts

- G20 Focus: Argentina, Brazil, Mexico
- Brazil's Strong Ties:
 - through BRICS, IBSA, G20
- Strategic Alignment:
 - Shared stance on "Active Non-Alignment"
 - Similar positions on Ukraine war

5. Social & Cultural Exchanges

- **Historical Ties:**
 - 19th-20th century exchanges
 - Literary connections (Tagore, Octavio Paz, Victoria Ocampo)
- **Modern Interactions:**
 - Football
 - **Learning Opportunities:** conditional cash transfers, biodiversity conservation, RE models



India Brazil

Challenges

- Economic Diversification
- Competition in Agriculture & Biofuels
- Geographical Barrier
- Regional priorities
- China angle

Suggestions

- India Latin America PTAs
- Address tariff and non-tariff barriers
- Green Partnership
- Institutional Mechanisms: sister-city agreements
- New areas of collaboration



INDIA - BRAZIL



CONTEXT: Brazilian President in India with a large business delegation

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

Examine the significance of India–Brazil relations in the contemporary global order. Discuss the key challenges affecting the partnership and suggest measures to strengthen bilateral ties.



SYLLABUS : Prelims:

GS 2 Paper : Governance

Newspaper: The Indian Express **Page Number: 8**

Background

Provisions

- Indian citizenship
- Before December 2014
- “religious persecution or fear of religious persecution”.
- Fast track citizenship
- Definition of illegal migrant
- Exception – Sixth Schedule Areas

Concerns

- Religion Centric Approach
- Constitutionality
- Technical Legal Shortcomings
- Assam Discord
- Other Issues
 - Exclusion of Atheists & Jews
 - Exclusion of Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar

Decoding the News

¹[6B. Special provisions as to citizenship of person covered by proviso to clause (b) of sub-section (1) of section 2.—(1) The Central Government or an authority specified by it in this behalf may, subject to such conditions, restrictions and manner as may be prescribed, on an application made in this behalf, grant a certificate of registration or certificate of naturalisation to a person referred to in the proviso to clause (b) of sub-section (1) of section 2.

²[(b) “illegal migrant” means a foreigner who has entered into India—

(i) without a valid passport or other travel documents and such other document or authority as may be prescribed by or under any law in that behalf; or

(ii) with a valid passport or other travel documents and such other document or authority as may be prescribed by or under any law in that behalf but remains therein beyond the permitted period of time;]

³[Provided that any person belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian community from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan, who entered into India on or before the 31st day of December, 2014 and who has been exempted by the Central Government by or under clause (c) of sub-section (2) of section 3 of the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 (34 of 1920) or from the application of the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946 (31 of 1946) or any rule or order made there under, shall not be treated as illegal migrant for the purposes of this Act;]



SYLLABUS : Prelims:

GS 2 Paper : Governance

Newspaper: The Indian Express **Page Number: 8**

Decoding the News

West Bengal, the Centre on Friday operationalised the process of granting citizenship under the Citizenship Amendment Act through a gazetted notification, notifying the constitution of an Empowered Committee in the state to process applications under the Act.

Vyas said: “In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 6B of the Citizenship Act, 1955 (57 of 1955) read with sub-rules (1) and (3) of rule 11A of the Citizenship Rules, 2009, the Centre appoints the Deputy Registrar General of the Directorate of Census Operations, West Bengal, as the head of the committee.”

According to the order, members will be a Deputy Secretary-rank officer from the Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau, nominees from the jurisdictional Foreigners Regional Registration Officer and the State Informatics Officer of the National Informatics Centre of the State of West Bengal (both not below

committee’s job is to scrutinise applications from eligible persecuted minorities (as defined by the CAA), coordinate with district verification bodies, and approve or reject citizenship grants. “Two invitees will join



Parent Consent must for Marriage



SYLLABUS : GS 2 Paper : Governance

Newspaper: The Indian Express Page Number: 1, 10

Decoding the News

THE GUJARAT government's move to mandate consent of parents for registration of a marriage flies in the face of constitutional rights of individuals that are routinely safeguarded by several court rulings.

Agency and personal autonomy are key facets of Article 21 of the Constitution which guarantees the protection of life and personal liberty. This right has been interpreted by the Supreme Court to include the freedom to choose a partner without external interference.

High Courts also routinely protect couples seeking police protection from their families.

Kothari said requiring parental consent is essentially an attempt to curb interfaith and intercaste marriages.

“States have schemes promoting intercaste and interfaith marriages on one hand, but create legal barriers to prevent them. In the process, this move undermines the agency of women,” Kothari said.

In a 2021 ruling in *Laxmibai Chandaragi B versus State of Karnataka*, the Supreme Court reiterated that the consent of “the family or the community or the clan” is not necessary for adults to marry.

the choice of an individual is an inextricable part of dignity, for dignity cannot be thought of where there is erosion of choice. Such a right or choice is not expected to succumb to the concept of ‘class honour’ or ‘group thinking’,” it had said. In this case, the top court had also directed police authorities to lay down guidelines and implement training programmes to train police personnel on socially sensitive cases which may impact such as a person's right to marry.



Parent Consent must for Marriage



SYLLABUS : GS 2 Paper : Governance
Newspaper: The Indian Express Page Number: 1, 10

Decoding the News

In 2018, the Supreme Court, in *Shafi Jahan v KM Ashokan*, in a case of interfaith marriage that was challenged by the woman's parents, had upheld an individual's right to marry a person of one's own choice as well as the right to choose a religion. In doing so, the Court overruled a Kerala High Court verdict which had invoked its *parens patriae* jurisdiction (a legal doctrine allowing the state to play the guardian for individuals unable to care for themselves) and

in *Lata Singh v State of Uttar Pradesh*, the Supreme Court recognised the family as a site of violence and protected inter-caste marriages.

The Delhi High Court in 2009 and the Allahabad High Court in 2021 had even struck down the mandatory 30-day notice of a couple's intention to marry under the Special Marriage Act, citing an invasion of privacy, even from family. "Such

Supriya Chakraborty v Union of India

- No legal recognition to unions other than heteronormative ones
- no fundamental right to marry

Concerns

- "majoritarian morality" precedence over "constitutional morality"
- Narrow interpretation of A-21
- Right to Life



Implementation of SANKALP Scheme



SYLLABUS: GS 2 Paper Governance:
Newspaper: The Hindu Page Number: 12

SANKALP

- Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP)
- 2018
- Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
- WB loan-assisted project
- Aligned with objectives of National Skill Development Mission (NSDM)
- Transforming the overall skilling ecosystem
 - Enhanced access, quality and capacity skills training for female trainees and other disadvantaged groups
 - Encourages innovative best practices at the local level
- Key result areas
 - Institutional Strengthening (at National, State & District level)
 - Quality Assurance Quality Assurance of skill development programs;
 - Inclusion of marginalised population in skill development;
 - Expanding Skills through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

ship programme of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

The panel was examining a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report that highlighted significant delays and shortfalls in both financial and physical progress under the scheme. According to the CAG, only 44% of the budgeted provision for SANKALP was disbursed between 2017-18 and 2023-24 (as of October 2023). The audit also flagged weak adherence to implementation guidelines and a sluggish pace of execution across components.

Approved by the Cabi-

net Committee on Economic Affairs in October 2017 with a total outlay of ₹4,455 crore, SANKALP was designed to strengthen short-term skill training through better institutional frameworks, enhanced industry linkages, and targeted inclusion of marginalised communities.

The scheme was slated to be financed through a World Bank loan of ₹3,300 crore, State leverage of ₹660 crore, and industry leverage of ₹495 crore.

Launched in 2018, SANKALP was originally scheduled for completion by

March 2023 but was later extended to March 2024.

Against the first tranche of the agreed loan of \$250 million, the Bank disbursed ₹1,606.15 crore (86%), but the Ministry utilised only ₹850.71 crore as of December 2023.

The CAG attributed part of the delay to “non-preparedness” within the Ministry before the commencement of the loan period. The PAC members echoed this during the meeting, questioning the government over the absence of a central monitoring mechanism and gaps in due diligence.



US Iran Conflict: Stakes for India



SYLLABUS : GS Paper 2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests

Newspaper: The Hindu **Page Number:** 14

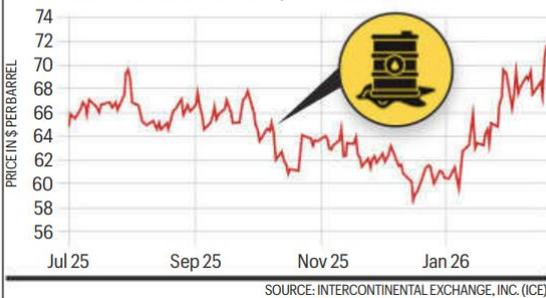
Decoding the News

U.S. ADDS NAVAL FIREPOWER TO MIDDLE EAST



Crude oil price movement

Data for Brent Crude Futures April 2026 Contract



Trump said Thursday that Iran had 10-15 days to agree to a "meaningful deal" with Washington. This is being interpreted as an ultimatum.

Oil markets worry

The reason why oil markets appear jittery is the apprehension that military action against Iran could choke supplies from the wider Gulf region, which accounts for the lion's share of global oil exports. At the heart of the apprehensions is the risk that the regime in Tehran, if cornered, could disrupt energy flows via the Strait of Hormuz — a narrow but vital waterway that is a critical chokepoint for global oil and gas flows — that connects the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

The global oil market is currently well-supplied with surplus, which is perhaps em-

gion. Other major Gulf oil producers, like Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the UAE, and Kuwait, are also heavily dependent on the strait to feed the global market. Therefore, despite their often-strained ties with Tehran, some Gulf nations have been actively engaging with the US to prevent military intervention.

'Violating UN Charter'

Iran also accused Washington of violating the UN Charter, particularly Article 2(4), which prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. It called



US Iran Conflict: Stakes for India



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Newspaper: The Hindu **Page Number:** 14

Given India imports around 2 billion barrels of oil annually, every \$1 increase in prices could increase the already hefty oil import bill by around \$2 billion on an annualised basis. According to tanker data, over 40% of crude oil imported by India transits the Strait of Hormuz.

Strategic significance of Strait of Hormuz

Characterised by the US Energy Information Administration as the world's most important oil transit chokepoint, the Strait of Hormuz handles approximately one-fifth of global liquid petroleum consumption and global LNG trade.

The narrow waterway between Iran and Oman, connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, sees roughly 15 million barrels of crude and 20% of global LNG volumes pass through every day.

While some pipelines exist in the Gulf States to bypass the waterway, their capacity is restricted. Even at full utilisation, 9 million barrels per day (bpd) — 9% of global demand — would remain structurally at risk during a major escalation,

Analysts believe a full blockade would be politically self-destructive for Tehran. Such a move could alienate key allies like China, which is the destination for most of Iran's own oil. It would infringe upon Oman's territorial waters, souring relations with a neighbour that serves as a vital back-channel for diplomacy with the US. Further, Iran would almost certainly face international military retaliation if it attempted to halt global energy shipments.

Now, the US is interpreting previous confrontations to reinforce its current assumptions that future strikes will be similarly low-risk. Such views are also based on the US's own high oil production levels and Washington's belief that West Asian heavyweights like Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, can quickly recover from any disruption to keep the global oil market well-supplied,



Why Observer in "Board of Peace"



GS Paper 2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests

Newspaper: The Indian Express **Page Number:** 20

Decoding the News

Board of Peace

- Announced by Trump in Sept 2024
- Gaza-focused plan
- Mandate later expanded to "resolving global conflict"
- **West Asian Members:** Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Turkey, Bahrain
- **US Allies & Others:** Trump's right-wing allies (Argentina, Hungary) + Vietnam, Cambodia, Pakistan
- **Absentees:** Russia, China, France, UK (P5 members)
- **First Meeting Outcome**
 - Trump announced \$7 bn in relief pledges from 9 members for Gaza
 - \$10 bn US pledge (unspecified use)
- Trump claims: will function "in conjunction with UN"

Concerns of India Being a Part

- Risk to Multilateralism: India's commitment to the UN
- Mandate Creep: Charter is "for the world"
- Potential for India-Pakistan Meddling: Trump's past claims
- Pakistan's Presence
- Trump's passion project
- Trump's Unpredictability
- Parallel Body Risk

Why India Has Joined as an Observer

- Circumspect Engagement
- Maintains Bilateral Ties
- Presence in the Room
- Counter Pakistan's Moves
- Ringside View on West Asia
- Ahead of PM's Israel Visit
- Risk Mitigation



Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Brazil:

1. Brazil shares a border with every country in South America except Chile and Ecuador.
2. Brazil shares a land boundary with Peru and Colombia.
3. Brazil has a coastline only along the Pacific Ocean.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: a

Q2. With reference to the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), consider the following statements:

1. Citizenship is a subject under the Union List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.
2. The constitution of the Empowered Committees for processing CAA applications is done by the State Government independently.
3. The Central Government appoints the Chairperson of the Empowered Committee under the Citizenship Rules.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 1 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: a

Q3. With reference to judicial decisions relating to marriage and individual autonomy, consider the following statements:

1. In *Shafin Jahan v. K.M. Ashokan* (2018), the Supreme Court upheld the right of an adult to marry a person of their choice.
2. In *Shafin Jahan*, the Supreme Court affirmed the power of the State to act as *parens patriae* to invalidate marriages of consenting adults.

3. In *Supriyo Chakraborty v. Union of India*, the Supreme Court declined to legally recognise same-sex marriages and held that there is no fundamental right to marry.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) Only One
- b) Only Two
- c) All Three
- d) None

Answer: b

Q4. With reference to the SANKALP (Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion) programme, consider the following statements:

1. It is implemented by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.
2. It is a World Bank-assisted project aimed at strengthening the overall skilling ecosystem in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: c

Q 5. With reference to the United Nations Charter, consider the following statements:

1. Article 2(4) of the UN Charter prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State.
2. Article 2(4) permits the use of force if a country considers it necessary to protect its national interests.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: b





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