

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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—It's about quality—

Carcasses of Olive Ridley turtles are washing ashore along the Visakhapatnam coast, likely due to marine pollution and trawling activities during the breeding season.

Carcasses of Olive Ridley turtles continue to wash ashore in Vizag

V. Kamalakara Rao
VISAKHAPATNAM

Carcasses of Olive Ridley turtles, which are currently in their breeding season, continue to wash ashore along the Visakhapatnam coast.

For the past few days, visitors continue to find the carcasses on the beaches in the city such as Mangamaripeta, near Bhimili. Eyewitnesses say that a number of carcasses were found on the beach on Saturday night.

Environmental experts say that a majority of the deaths are due to marine pollution and trawling activities for catching fish.

National Fisherfolk Forum general secretary A.



The carcass of an Olive Ridley turtle found at R.K. Beach in Visakhapatnam. K.R. DEEPAK

Dasu said, "We saw dead turtles on the city beaches where at least 10 carcasses were washed ashore on Saturday. During this season, the turtles come close to the shore, up to nearly 500 metres, to lay eggs."

The Andhra Pradesh

State Forest Department usually takes up conservation of turtles every season. Officials say that this year too they have started four artificial hatcheries as part of the conservation measures.

"Four hatcheries (nest-

ing points) have been set up in areas such as R.K. Beach and Jodugullapalem," said Visakhapatnam District Forest Officer Shambanghi Venkatesh.

"We usually receive reports of dead turtles on city beaches. This happens when the turtles come to the surface of the sea to breathe and are accidentally caught by heavy fishing vessels during trawling operations," he said.

"Nobody will intentionally harm a turtle. However, we are continuously educating the fishing community and others to take special care of turtles in the deep sea during the breeding season," Mr. Venkatesh told *The Hindu* on Sunday.

- The turtles come close to shore to lay eggs, making them vulnerable to accidental capture by fishing vessels.
- The Andhra Pradesh Forest Department has set up hatcheries to aid conservation efforts.
- Despite education initiatives, the issue persists, highlighting the need for better protection during the breeding period.

Olive Ridley Turtles:

- **Smallest sea turtle:** Olive Ridleys are the smallest sea turtles, with adults reaching about 2 feet in length and weighing up to 100 pounds.
- **Conservation status:** Listed as 'Vulnerable' by the IUCN.
- **Most abundant:** They are the most numerous sea turtle species globally, though still considered vulnerable.
- **Unique nesting:** Olive Ridleys are famous for their "arribadas," mass nesting events where thousands of females come ashore simultaneously.
- **Wide distribution:** They inhabit tropical and subtropical waters of the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian Oceans.
- **Diet:** Olive Ridleys are omnivores, feeding on jellyfish, crabs, snails, shrimp, and algae.
- **Threats:** These turtles face dangers such as entanglement in fishing gear, habitat destruction, and climate change.

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2018

Ques : Consider the following statements about the National Wildlife Action Plan (NWAP) 2017-2031:

1. It focuses on protecting marine ecosystems and species.
2. It emphasizes mitigating human-wildlife conflict.
3. Olive Ridley Turtles are a priority under marine conservation efforts.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

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

Ans: d)

The Jalvahak scheme aims to boost cargo movement via inland waterways, providing incentives for transport on National Waterways 1, 2, and 16.

- The scheme offers a 35% reimbursement of operating expenses to encourage businesses to use waterway transport.

Centre launches Jalvahak scheme for cargo movement via inland waterways

Dinakar Peri

NEW DELHI

The Centre on Sunday launched the Jalvahak scheme to boost long-haul cargo movement via inland waterways.

The scheme incentivises cargo transport on National Waterways 1 (Ganga), 2 (Brahmaputra), and 16 (Barak) and provides an opportunity for the trade interests to explore movement of cargo via waterways with positive economic value proposition, Union Minister for Ports, Shipping, and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal said.

He flagged off cargo ships *MV AAI*, *MV Homi Bhaba*, and *MV Trishul* along with two dumb barges *Ajay* and *Dikhu* from the G.R. Jetty in Kolkata.

This marks the beginning of fixed scheduled sailing service of cargo vessels from Haldia for NW-1



New network: Sarbananda Sonowal, Minister for Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, flags off cargo vessels in Kolkata on Sunday. PTI

(Ganga) and NW-2 (Brahmaputra), the Ministry said in a statement.

“With its advantage of being an economical, ecologically sound, and efficient mode of transportation, we want to boost cargo movement via waterways to decongest the railways and roadways,” Mr. Sonowal said.

Further, the regular scheduled freight service,

which began from Kolkata, will ensure that the cargo is transported and delivered within a stipulated time frame, he said.

35% reimbursement

The Jalvahak scheme offers reimbursement of up to 35% of the total operating expenditure incurred, the Ministry said.

To encourage the business proposition of vessel

operators, the scheme encourages cargo owners to hire vessels owned or operated by government entities. “The incentive scheme is ideal for major shipping companies, freight forwarders, trade bodies and associations that handle bulk and containerised cargo. By opting for the scheme, it provides them an opportunity to optimise their supply chain network. The scheme is initially valid for three years.”

The fixed day scheduled sailing service will ply vessels between Kolkata-Patna-Varanasi-Patna-Kolkata stretch of NW-1 and between Kolkata and Pandu in Guwahati on NW-2 via Indo Bangladesh Protocol Route (IBPR), the Ministry said.

UltraTech Cement said it became the first cement company to leverage NW-1 for gypsum transport at scale.

Launch of Jalvahak Scheme

- The scheme was launched to promote cargo movement via inland waterways on National Waterways 1, 2, and 16.

- It offers financial incentives to encourage cargo transport through these waterways.
- The scheme is valid for an initial period of three years.

Objective of the Scheme

- The aim is to decongest road and railways by promoting more economical, ecologically friendly, and efficient waterway transport.
- The scheme provides an opportunity for trade sectors to explore cargo movement via waterways.

Incentives and Benefits

- The scheme offers a reimbursement of up to 35% of the total operating expenses for eligible cargo vessels.
- It encourages cargo owners to hire government-owned or operated vessels to enhance business prospects.

Operational Details

- The scheme features fixed scheduled sailing services for cargo vessels from Kolkata, operating along specific stretches of NW-1 and NW-2.
- It includes services like the Kolkata-Patna-Varanasi-Patna-Kolkata route and Kolkata-Pandu-Guwahati route.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques : Consider the following statements regarding the Jalvahak Scheme:

1. The Jalvahak Scheme aims to provide drinking water to rural households through water tankers in water-scarce areas.
2. It is implemented by the Ministry of Jal Shakti as part of the Jal Jeevan Mission.
3. The scheme also promotes sustainable groundwater recharge techniques in urban areas.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A) 1 only
- B) 1 and 2 only
- C) 2 and 3 only
- D) 1, 2, and 3

Ans: b)

The article discusses a new method to study black holes by analyzing light echoes, which can reveal a black hole's mass and spin.

Can we make black holes reveal themselves in echoes of light?

When light passes around a black hole, its path bends. So some parts of the light take a direct route to the viewer while others pass around the black hole a few times before getting back on the original path. In this way, light emitted by a distant source in the cosmos may reach the earth at different instances, creating light echoes

Qudsia Gani

When it comes to making sense of our universe, the importance of black holes is hard to understate. Scientists know that a black hole exerts a strong gravitational pull, so much so that any object that gets closer to its centre beyond a point can never get back out. The effects of black holes on their surroundings include the release of a tremendous amount of energy. These effects are crucial to determining the structures of the galaxies they occupy and how the stars around them evolved over time.

A study published in the *Astrophysical Journal Letters* on November 7 is notable in this wider context. It was carried out by astrophysicists from the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, and led by George Wong of the School of Natural Sciences at Princeton University. In their study, the researchers presented a new method to measure the properties of black holes by using the effects they have on light flowing around them.

Signatures in the light

When light passes around a very heavy object, like a black hole, its path bends. As a result some parts of the light may take a direct route to the viewer while others may pass around the black hole a few times before getting back on its original path. In this way, light emitted by a distant source in the cosmos may reach the earth at different instances, depending on its interactions with black holes on the way. When two beams of light emitted by the same source reach the earth at different points, the beam to arrive second will be an echo of the beam that arrived first. This phenomenon is thus called a light echo.

The manner and extent to which light circles around a black hole depends on the black hole's mass and radius. If the black hole is spinning (a.k.a., a Kerr black hole), it will also depend on the object's angular momentum. Thus, according to the study, scientists can use light echoes as a new and independent way to the masses and spins of black holes.

In general, the task of measuring a black hole's mass and spin is quite tedious because all the matter, hot gases, and the radiation swirling around the object complicate observations and make signals harder to extract from the noise. Light, fortunately, is affected differently and light echoes could offer a better signal-to-noise ratio.

An object that bends light is called a



A view of the M87 supermassive black hole in polarised light as captured by the Event Horizon Telescope and released in 2021. EHT COLLABORATION (CC BY 4.0)

lens. Black holes do this by the sheer strength of their gravity; thus, the phenomenon is called gravitational lensing. Scientists theorised long ago that gravitational lensing could create light echoes, but they have not been directly measured so far. To get around this issue, the new study proposes the use of a technique called long-baseline interferometry. The principle here is that the non-simultaneous arrival of two signals – like two light beams – could interfere with each other to create a new, unique signal.

To spot light echoes created by a black hole, one telescope could be placed on the earth and the other in space. While the number of instruments may seem modest, they will have to operate with supreme technical rigour.

The main motivation for the new study was the fact that some of the supermassive black holes in the centre of the Milky Way and the nearby M87 galaxies have been found to have bright rings of light at a frequency of 230 GHz around them. The structure of these rings is influenced by astrophysical forces and the spacetime geometry of black holes, and scientists have been keen to study them in detail using very long baseline interferometry techniques. One particular aspiration is to trace the black hole's

Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity also anticipated the phenomenon of light echoes. In particular the theory predicts the echoes will be achromatic, meaning light of all frequencies should be able to form echoes

shadow on these rings to understand spacetime around the black holes.

Independent of colour

The analysis in the new study essentially focused on a black hole at the centre of the M87 galaxy – an appealing object of study for light echoes since it's quite large in the sky. But the results are also applicable to other black holes. The baseline in 'long baseline interferometry' refers to the distance between the two telescopes that receive the light. According to the study, it should be at least 40 $G\lambda$, where $G\lambda$ is a unit of measurement that refers to the telescopes' ability to collect signals at a specific frequency.

The Princeton team also carried out preliminary high-resolution simulations to test the credibility of their technique. For this, team members collected several thousand instantaneous images of light

travelling around the M87 black hole, located nearly 55 million lightyears away, using the Event Horizon Telescope. Then they estimated the time beams of light took to travel from the near end of the black hole to its far end, which, according to their idea, would depend on the black hole's mass and angular momentum, after adjusting for the angle at which the telescope was viewing it. From this simulated data, the team inferred the echo delay.

Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity also anticipated the phenomenon of light echoes. In particular the theory predicts the echoes will be achromatic, meaning light of all frequencies should be able to form echoes. (Since $G\lambda$ is inversely proportional to the frequency, building a telescope to detect the echoes is a separate headache.) Thus any approach to detect light echoes at multiple frequencies at the same time could provide a good test of the new technique. A positive result will also be yet another confirmation that the general theory of relativity provides an accurate description of black holes.

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THE GIST

The effects black holes have on their surroundings are crucial to determining the structures of the galaxies they occupy and how the stars around them evolved over time

The mass and radius of a black hole impact the manner in which light behaves. The study claims that light echoes can be used as a new way to determine the masses and spins of black holes

Researchers collected images of light travelling around the M87 black hole. They estimated the time light took to travel from the near end to its far end, which depends on its mass and momentum. From this data, the team inferred echo delay

- This technique uses gravitational lensing and long-baseline interferometry.
- The study enhances understanding of black holes' influence on their surroundings.

Importance of Black Holes

- Black holes have a strong pull that affects stars and galaxies.

- ▶ Studying black holes helps scientists understand how galaxies and stars are formed and evolve.

New Way to Study Black Holes

- ▶ A new study led by George Wong from Princeton University presents a method to measure black holes.
- ▶ This method uses the effect of black holes on light to understand their properties.

What Are Light Echoes?

- ▶ When light passes near a black hole, it bends due to its strong gravity.
- ▶ This causes light to reach Earth at different times, creating light echoes.
- ▶ The second light beam is an echo of the first one.
- ▶ These echoes help scientists measure the mass and spin of black holes.

Challenges in Measuring Black Holes

- ▶ Observing black holes is difficult because of the hot gases and radiation around them.
- ▶ Light echoes are helpful because they provide clearer signals, making measurements easier.

Gravitational Lensing and Interferometry

- ▶ Black holes bend light through their gravity, which is called gravitational lensing.
- ▶ The study suggests using long-baseline interferometry, where two telescopes (one on Earth and one in space) detect light echoes to create a special signal.

Studying Black Holes in M87 and the Milky Way

- ▶ The study focuses on supermassive black holes in the M87 galaxy and the Milky Way, which have bright rings of light at 230 GHz.
- ▶ Scientists want to study these rings to understand the black hole's shadow.

Simulating Light Echoes Around M87

- ▶ The research team tested their method by simulating light around the M87 black hole.
- ▶ This helped them estimate the black hole's mass and angular momentum.

Theory of Relativity and Light Echoes

- ▶ Einstein's theory of relativity predicts that light echoes happen with all types of light, not just one frequency.
- ▶ Testing light echoes at different frequencies will help confirm the new method and the theory of relativity.

UPSC Mains PYQ : 2020

Ques : "What are the key differences between a Neutron Star and a Black Hole? Discuss the significance of the recent findings about Black Holes." **(150 Words /10 marks)**

COP29 in Baku approved standards for establishing an international carbon market, emphasizing its potential to reduce global emissions.

How would a carbon market function?

What are carbon credits and how would they be traded between firms? Why do corporations not want the government to be involved in the issue of carbon credits? Who introduced the concept of carbon credits? Why are some experts critical of carbon offsets?

EXPLAINER

The Hindu Bureau

The story so far:

COP29, the ongoing climate conference in Azerbaijan's capital Baku, has given a fillip to the idea of using carbon markets to curb carbon emissions by approving standards that can help in the setting up of an international carbon market as soon as the coming year.

What is a carbon market?

A carbon market is a market that allows the buying and selling of the right to emit carbon into the atmosphere. Suppose a government wants to limit the amount of carbon emitted into the atmosphere. It can issue certificates called carbon credits that allow the holder of the certificate to emit a certain amount of carbon into the atmosphere. One carbon credit is equivalent to 1,000 kilograms of carbon dioxide. By limiting the number of carbon credits that are issued, governments can control how much carbon is released into the environment. It should be noted that anyone who doesn't hold carbon credits to their name would not be allowed to emit any carbon into the atmosphere. Carbon credits were first used in the 1990s in the U.S., which introduced the cap-and-trade model to control the emission of sulphur dioxide.

Individuals and firms that hold carbon credits but don't actually need them for any reason can sell their credits to interested buyers. The price at which these carbon credits are traded in this case are the supply of carbon credits and the demand for these certificates. A carbon market can also include the trading of carbon offsets. In this case, a business that pollutes the environment for example, can purchase carbon offsets sold by an environmental NGO that promises to plant trees that suck a certain amount of carbon emissions out of the



ISTOCKPHOTO

atmosphere for each offset that it sells.

What is good about carbon markets?

Pollution of the environment and climate change caused by carbon emissions is a classic case of what economists call an externality. An externality is caused when the cost of an economic activity is not properly accounted for (or internalised) by the market price system due to the absence of well-defined property rights. For example, a business that uses raw materials such as iron will have to pay the supplier who owns the iron to be able to procure and use it, thus incurring a certain cost. But when the same firm emits carbon into the atmosphere, it doesn't usually have to pay any money to anyone. In other words, firms are generally able to emit their waste into the atmosphere for free. This of course leads to unhindered pollution of the

atmosphere as firms in this case have no financial incentive to curb their carbon emissions. Carbon markets in which the right to pollute is traded for a price can solve the problem by imposing a certain cost on firms for polluting the atmosphere, helping to curb emissions in the process.

The intersection of standardised accounting frameworks and technological advancements has improved the ability of corporations to monitor and report their carbon emissions. While, this is difficult for the vast majority of small businesses in the developing world, particularly in accurately capturing supply chain emissions, ongoing developments, like real-time data tracking of the energy sector, continue to enhance the granularity and reliability of corporate carbon accounting. However, corporations have preferred a voluntary

reporting system, like the Carbon Disclosure Project. They have been loathe to government interventions limiting carbon emissions, arguing that such budgeting may lead to output restrictions or rise in costs. They also point to varied production processes, some that might have diverse supply chains that might make it difficult to find the optimal carbon budget for their facilities. Large multinational corporations such as ExxonMobil and General Motors have advocated for carbon markets that allows free trading of carbon credits among firms at a price determined by market forces, that would allow these firms to purchase carbon credits from other firms, which don't need them as much. This they say, helps allocate carbon credits more efficiently than government diktat.

What can go wrong?

Even when there is a functioning carbon market, a government that is not very keen on reducing emissions may increase the supply of carbon credits and drive down the price of the right to pollute, leading to no noticeable drop in emissions. Others may keep a strict cap on the supply of carbon credits but allow firms to cheat by allowing them to illegally emit carbon. The success of carbon offsets also depends on the degree of personal incentive that firm owners possess to care about carbon emissions, which may often be very little. Critics claim that firms that purchase carbon offsets often do it for the sake of virtue signalling and may have little incentive to ensure that their investments in these instruments are actually helping offset carbon emissions. Meanwhile, other critics have raised more fundamental questions regarding how exactly a government would be able to arrive at the optimum supply of carbon credits. They argue that politicians, who do not incur any personal economic cost when they legislate emission reductions, may restrict the supply of carbon credits more than what is really necessary, leading to slower economic growth.

THE GIST

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However, corporations have preferred a voluntary reporting system, like the Carbon Disclosure Project. They have been loathe to government interventions limiting carbon emissions, arguing that such budgeting may lead to output restrictions or rise in costs.

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- Carbon markets enable trading carbon credits to internalize environmental costs and curb pollution.
- However, challenges like governmental manipulation and corporate misuse persist.

COP29 and Carbon Markets

- COP29, held in Baku, Azerbaijan, has approved standards to establish an international carbon market, potentially operational by next year.

- This step highlights the role of carbon markets in curbing carbon emissions and addressing climate change challenges.

What is a Carbon Market?

- A carbon market allows buying and selling of rights to emit carbon dioxide.
- Governments issue carbon credits, each equivalent to 1,000 kilograms of carbon dioxide, to limit emissions.
- Entities without carbon credits are prohibited from emitting carbon.
- The market price for carbon credits is determined by supply and demand dynamics.
- Carbon offsets involve businesses purchasing credits from environmental organizations that commit to carbon reduction activities like tree planting.

Benefits of Carbon Markets

- Carbon markets address the problem of externalities, where the environmental cost of economic activities is not internalized in market prices.
- They impose financial costs on firms for carbon emissions, encouraging them to reduce pollution.
- Standardized accounting frameworks and technological advancements have enhanced corporations' ability to monitor emissions and report accurately.
- Voluntary reporting systems like the Carbon Disclosure Project are preferred by corporations, while they oppose government interventions.
- Firms advocate free trading of carbon credits, which they claim ensures efficient allocation of resources.

Challenges of Carbon Markets

- Governments may manipulate the supply of carbon credits, either oversupplying them to reduce prices or allowing firms to bypass regulations.
- Firms purchasing carbon offsets may engage in virtue signaling, with limited actual impact on reducing emissions.
- Critics question governments' ability to determine the optimal supply of carbon credits, as political interests may lead to restrictive or overly lenient policies.
- Restrictive policies may hinder economic growth, while lax regulations may fail to achieve meaningful emission reductions.

The Way Forward

- The effectiveness of carbon markets depends on transparent governance, strict enforcement, and incentivized participation by firms and governments.
- Ensuring accountability in carbon offset mechanisms and maintaining optimal credit supply are critical for achieving environmental goals.

- ▶ Collaboration between governments, corporations, and international bodies is essential to balance economic growth and climate commitments.

UPSC Mains PYQ : 2014

Ques : Should the pursuit of carbon credit and the clean development mechanism set up under UNFCCC be maintained even though there has been a massive slide in the value of carbon credit? Discuss with respect to India's energy needs for economic growth. **(200 words/12.5m)**



In News : Henderson Doctrine

In a recent case, the Supreme Court explained Henderson doctrine, a natural corollary of the Indian doctrine of constructive Res-judicata.



About Henderson Doctrine:

- ▶ Propounded in the English case of Henderson versus Henderson, 1843, the doctrine suggests that all the issues arising in the litigation out of the same subject matter must be addressed in a single suit.
- ▶ The doctrine bars relitigating issues that could or should have been raised in prior proceedings.
- ▶ It held that where a given matter becomes the subject of litigation and the adjudication of a court of competent jurisdiction, the parties so litigating are required to bring forward their whole case.
- ▶ It was further held that the principle of res judicata applies not only to points upon which the Court was called upon by the parties to adjudicate and pronounce a judgement but to every possible or probable point or issue that properly belonged to the subject of litigation and the parties ought to have brought forward at the time.
- ▶ It ensures that litigants are not subjected to repetitive and vexatious legal challenges.

- At its core, the principle stipulates that all claims and issues that could and should have been raised in an earlier proceeding are barred from being raised in subsequent litigation, except in exceptional circumstances.

What is the Principle of res judicata?

- Res judicata literally means 'the thing has been judged'. It is also known as claim preclusion.
- The principle of res judicata applies when a litigant attempts to file a subsequent lawsuit on the same matter after having received a judgment in a previous case involving the same parties.
- It is a judicial concept, which means that the issue before the court has already been decided by another court, between the same parties, and the courts do not allow a petition to be filed in the same court or in another court.
- Therefore, the court will dismiss the case before it as being useless.
- Res Judicata as a concept is applicable both in Civil as well as Criminal legal system.

Let's talk about 'one candidate, multiple constituencies'

Ever since the panel for 'One Nation One Election' led by the former President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, recommended simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, much has been written on its positive and negative aspects, the practical considerations and of course the politics around the subject. Amidst all the political accusations and counter-accusations, another important issue has gone missing from attention. The matter is about one candidate contesting from multiple constituencies (OCMC) for the same office.

The background, the challenges

The Constitution of India provides for regular elections every five years to the Legislative Assembly and the lower House of Parliament. However, the Constitution, other than providing for the Election Commission of India (ECI), has empowered Parliament to regulate the manner of conducting the elections. Therefore, 'contesting from multiple constituencies' has been dealt with in the Representation of the People Act 1951. Under the Act, there was no limit on the number of constituencies a candidate could contest – until 1996. This resulted in candidates contesting from multiple constituencies, sometimes more than two, winning them and vacating all but one seat, in accordance with Section 70 of the same Act. This necessitated by-elections frequently.

Due to this, Parliament amended the Act in 1996 to limit the number of constituencies that a candidate can contest from, to two. The amendment intended to discourage one candidate from contesting from multiple constituencies. Despite this, the practice has continued. The numbers are even more frequent in State Legislative Assembly elections, leading to frequent by-elections – there were 44 by-elections for State Assemblies in November 2024 due to the resignation of sitting legislators.

Frequent by-elections due to candidates winning from multiple constituencies pose several challenges. First, they add to taxpayer costs. The administrative cost of the Lok Sabha elections is borne by the central government, and Legislative Assemblies by the State governments; in the 2014 general election, it amounted to ₹3,870 crore. Adjusted for 6% annual inflation, the 2024 general election is put at a cost of ₹6,931 crore, or ₹12.76 crore per seat. If 10 politicians win from two constituencies, the extra cost of holding a by-election would be around ₹130 crore. While this is relatively small when compared to overall election spending, the real issue lies in the massive expenditure by political parties, estimated at ₹1,35,000 crore for the recent general election, or about ₹250 crore per constituency, according to the estimates by the Centre for Media Studies. This burden ultimately



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falls on the public, and much of the funding comes from black money, which undermines financial transparency.

Second, the by-election necessitated by the vacation of a winning candidate within an initial six months tends to favour the ruling party. This is borne out in by-election trends across multiple States. This emanates from the fact the ruling party can mobilise resources and provide patronage to party workers. Such a scenario of a non-level playing field is skewed against the Opposition, which has negative implications for parliamentary democracy.

Third, the financial burden of organising a by-election disproportionately falls on the already defeated candidate and their party, forcing them to spend resources once again.

Fourth, the saying "Democracy is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people" suggests that elections should serve people's needs. However, a candidate contesting from multiple seats serves as a hedging mechanism against uncertainties and often prioritises the leader's interests, not the people's. This undermines democratic principles, placing politics above the public.

Fifth, OCMC is sometimes used to enhance the reach and message delivery of the leader, relying on their popularity for electoral success. This often reflects the leader's dominance within the party, particularly in family- or leader-centric parties. Moreover, OCMC goes against the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression of citizens. A petition filed in 2023 (*Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay vs Union of India*) argued that when people elect a representative, they trust that person to be their voice. Contesting multiple constituencies, winning them, and vacating one for a by-election violates Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. This practice causes voter confusion and discontent, as seen in Wayanad, Kerala, when Rahul Gandhi vacated his seat in 2024, potentially leading to voter apathy. The voter turnout was 64.24% in the bypoll and 72.92% in the general election.

Some advantages

The OCMC is common in many countries. It may also have some practical considerations. First, contesting multiple seats provides a safety net for candidates, especially in tightly contested constituencies. Second, in a polity such as India, where politics is centered around the leader and family, OCMC smoothens the leader's continuation or transition in case a leader-centric party secures a majority in the elections but the leader of the party loses out. For instance, Mamata Banerjee lost the Nandigram seat in the 2021 West Bengal Assembly elections. To make way for her, another leader elected from the Bhabanipur constituency had to resign from the

Assembly. Similar things unfolded in the case of Pushkar Singh Dhami, Chief Minister of Uttarakhand in the 2022 Assembly elections.

International experience

OCMC is not unique to India. Pakistan and Bangladesh allow candidates to contest multiple constituencies but require them to relinquish all but one seat. Pakistan places no limit on the number of constituencies a candidate can contest, as seen in the 2018 elections when the former Prime Minister contested five seats and vacated four. Similarly, Bangladesh allowed candidates to contest up to five constituencies until 2008 but now limits it to three. The practice was once common in the United Kingdom but has been banned since 1983. Most European democracies have phased it out to promote clear representation and accountability.

The misuse of the OCMC far outweighs the benefits. There have been demands for reforms, and probable solutions may be considered. First, amend Section 33(7) of the RP Act 1951 to ban one candidate contesting from multiple constituencies for the same office. The ECI, in 2004, recommended the government ban the practice. The 255th Law Commission report in 2015 made the same recommendation.

Second, recovering the full cost of by-elections from the candidate vacating a seat can serve to discourage candidates from contesting simultaneously. The ECI recommended cost imposition on candidates contesting from multiple constituencies in 2004. However, the practice of OCMC will continue as the winning candidate or political party can afford to pay the cost.

Third, a more effective deterrent would be to hold the by-elections after a year, allowing voters ample time to make an informed decision and giving the defeated candidate sufficient time to recover and prepare strategically for another contest. This would also provide a more balanced and fair electoral process. This could be done by amending Section 151A, Representation of Peoples Act 1951 which provides for by-election within six months of the occurrence of vacancy.

Holding elections requires substantial financial resources from the state. Furthermore, with elections being a round-the-year affair in India, the frequent need for by-elections takes time and money – resources that could otherwise be better invested in the country's development. However, as the issue of OCMC is political, it requires political willpower and the support of the major parties to bring about change. However, unlike the One Nation One Election, it does not have many proponents in political parties. If "one person, one vote" is the core democratic principle for voters, it is time to enforce "one candidate, one constituency" for candidates.

If 'one person, one vote' is the core democratic principle for voters, it should be 'one candidate, one constituency' for politicians

GS Paper 02 : Indian Polity

UPSC Mains Practice Question: Discuss the implications of one candidate contesting from multiple constituencies on India's democracy and electoral process. Suggest reforms to address the challenges associated with this practice. (250 Words /15 marks)

Context :

- ▶ The practice of one candidate contesting from multiple constituencies (OCMC) in elections, though legally permissible, leads to financial burdens, frequent by-elections, and voter dissatisfaction.
- ▶ This undermines democratic principles while favoring leader-centric politics.
- ▶ Debates around banning OCMC focus on electoral reforms for accountability and transparency in India's parliamentary democracy.

Background of One Candidate, Multiple Constituencies (OCMC)

- ▶ The Constitution of India mandates regular elections every five years for Legislative Assemblies and the Lok Sabha, with the Election Commission (ECI) regulating the conduct of elections.
- ▶ Until 1996, there was no limit on the number of constituencies a candidate could contest, leading to frequent by-elections when candidates vacated seats.
- ▶ In 1996, the Representation of the People Act, 1951, was amended to limit candidates to contesting from a maximum of two constituencies. Despite this, the practice persists.

Challenges Posed by OCMC

1. Financial Burden

- Frequent by-elections increase costs for taxpayers. For instance, the 2014 general elections cost ₹3,870 crore, which rose to ₹6,931 crore in 2024, adjusted for inflation.
- By-elections due to candidates vacating seats after winning can cost around ₹130 crore if 10 candidates vacate seats.
- Massive expenditure by political parties, estimated at ₹1,35,000 crore for the 2024 elections, largely funded by unaccounted money, undermines financial transparency.

2. Electoral Imbalance

- By-elections tend to favour ruling parties due to resource mobilization and patronage, creating a non-level playing field.

- This trend weakens opposition parties and disrupts democratic balance.
- 3. Disproportionate Financial Pressure**
 - By-elections impose additional financial burdens on already defeated candidates and their parties, forcing them to reinvest resources.
- 4. Undermining Democratic Principles**
 - Contesting from multiple constituencies prioritizes a leader's interests over public welfare, serving as a safety net for candidates rather than addressing people's needs.
 - It reflects the dominance of leader-centric or family-based political parties.
- 5. Voter Confusion and Discontent**
 - Vacating constituencies after elections leads to voter dissatisfaction, as seen in Wayanad, Kerala, where voter turnout dropped from 72.92% in the general election to 64.24% in the bypoll.
 - This practice may violate Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution by disregarding the voters' choice of representation.

Advantages of OCMC

- Provides a safety net for candidates in competitive constituencies.
- Ensures continuity for leader-centric political parties if their leader loses an election, as seen with Mamata Banerjee in 2021 and Pushkar Singh Dhami in 2022.

International Practices

- **Pakistan:** Allows candidates to contest unlimited constituencies; they must vacate all but one. In 2018, a former Prime Minister contested five seats.
- **Bangladesh:** Earlier allowed contesting up to five constituencies; now limits it to three since 2008.
- **United Kingdom:** Banned OCMC since 1983 to ensure accountability.
- **European Democracies:** Most have phased out OCMC to promote clear representation and reduce electoral complexities.

Recommendations for Reform

- 1. Ban OCMC**
 - Amend Section 33(7) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, to prohibit candidates from contesting multiple constituencies.
 - The ECI (2004) and the Law Commission (2015) have both recommended this.
- 2. Impose Cost Recovery**

- Candidates vacating a seat could be required to bear the full cost of by-elections, as proposed by the ECI in 2004.

3. Delay By-Elections

- Amend Section 151A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, to allow by-elections after one year of vacancy, enabling informed voter decisions and fair electoral preparation.

Conclusion

- OCMC contributes to inefficiency and voter dissatisfaction, contradicting democratic principles of accountability.
 - While significant reforms require political consensus, enforcing "one candidate, one constituency" aligns with the democratic ideal of "one person, one vote" and strengthens electoral integrity.
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