

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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—It's about quality—

According to data from the Internet Shutdowns Tracker, India experienced the lowest number of mobile Internet shutdowns in eight years, 2024.

India shuts down Internet 60 times in 2024, the lowest in eight years

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

India saw the lowest number of mobile Internet shutdowns in eight years in 2024, rounding out a period where the country became the most frequent deployer in the world of the measure, according to data from the Internet Shutdowns Tracker, maintained by the Software Freedom Law Centre, India.

The reduction – there have been 60 shutdowns so far this year, with 96 last year – comes with fewer shutdowns imposed in Manipur and Jammu and Kashmir, where administrations have imposed a disproportionately high number of curbs in past years.

In the last month, shutdowns were imposed in Ambala, Haryana, as a result of planned farmer agitations, and extended in nine districts of Manipur owing to “the prevailing law and order situation in the State”. The most Internet shutdowns – 132 – happened in 2020, following the revocation of Article 370 of the Constitution the previous year. An extension of an Internet shutdown is counted by SFLC as a fresh shutdown, as



No connectivity: The most shutdowns happened in 2020 after the abrogation of special status of J&K under Article 370. FILE PHOTO

these curbs are usually imposed for a fixed number of days at a time.

Digital rights activists have bemoaned the constant use of shutdowns, arguing they are unnecessary and ineffective as a response to unrest. What's more, States do not always publish the shutdown orders as ordered by the Supreme Court. “Four years after the historic Bhasin versus Union of India judgment, officials continue to fail to publish shutdown orders and have been repeatedly corrected by courts for failing to comply,” the advocacy group Access Now said in May.

“The contribution of the Internet for the well-being of citizens has to be balanced with the need to prevent misuse by anti-social elements requiring temporary suspensions of internet services,” Union

Minister of State for Communications Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar said in a written Rajya Sabha answer on December 12.

No study

The Union government reiterated in Parliament in the Winter Session that it did not have centralised data on Internet shutdowns across India and that it had not conducted any study on the efficacy of the measure. The Department of Telecommunications, under the Union Ministry of Communications, has issued the rules under which State and Union Territory authorities may order Internet shutdowns.

The lack of any study has been particularly marked as digital rights activists have pushed back against the practice, with shutdowns being employed dozens of times

each year. It is also notable as parliamentarians have been pushing on whether a study has been conducted for years.

In November 2019, former Minister for Communications Ravi Shankar Prasad said in a written Rajya Sabha response that the government “has not undertaken any evaluation or study to assess the economic impacts of Internet shutdowns”. Then Minister of State for Communications Sanjay Dhotre said in the Upper House in February 2020 that “records related to Internet shutdowns ordered by State governments are not maintained by either DoT or the Ministry of Home Affairs”.

Mr. Dhotre said the same month that “DoT has not conducted any study on the effect of internet shutdown on economy, tourism, education sector etc”. Similarly in 2021, he had said, “DoT has not conducted any study to calculate the economic cost of Internet shutdowns in the country.”

In 2022, former MoS for Communications Devusinh Chauhan said that “DoT has not commissioned any study to assess the efficacy of internet shutdowns in dealing with public emergencies”.

Analysis of the news:

Daily News Analysis

- ▶ India saw the lowest number of mobile Internet shutdowns in eight years in 2024, with 60 shutdowns, compared to 96 in 2023.
- ▶ Shutdowns were fewer in Manipur and Jammu and Kashmir, regions with historically high numbers of curbs.
- ▶ Recent shutdowns occurred in Ambala, Haryana, due to farmer agitations, and in Manipur due to law and order issues.
- ▶ The highest number of shutdowns, 132, occurred in 2020 after the revocation of Article 370.
- ▶ Digital rights activists argue that shutdowns are ineffective and unnecessary, and often not published as required by the Supreme Court.
- ▶ The government has not conducted any study on the impact or efficacy of Internet shutdowns, and no centralised data is maintained.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques : Consider the following pairs:

Recent developments : Constitutional Provisions

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|------------|
| 1. Freedom of speech | : | Article 19 |
| 2. Right to internet | : | Article 21 |

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

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

Ans: c)

In an exclusive interview, Trump's former envoy discussed potential shifts in U.S.-India relations during his second term.

'U.S.-India ties will be strengthened, but expect tariff hikes'

Former Trump envoy to India says the new administration will push hard on Iran sanctions, China challenge; he says Trump appointees by and large will be furthering the strength of U.S.-India ties; the President-elect has indicated that he will impose tariffs of 10% to 20% on most countries, and this probably will include India; Juster emphasises that the two leaders have a good relationship

INTERVIEW

Kenneth Juster

Suhasini Haidar

With the inauguration of Donald Trump as the President of the United States for the second term just weeks away, New Delhi stepped up its outreach to the incoming administration with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri both spending the year-end week in Washington. In an exclusive interview, Mr. Trump's last envoy to India (2017-2021), Kenneth Juster, spoke about what to expect from his next tenure in office. Excerpts:

Broadly, how do you think President Trump

will approach India, given your experience of the ties during his previous tenure?

I think there is going to be a very strong U.S.-Indian relationship during the second term of the Trump presidency, and I base that on what happened during the first term. President Trump was the first U.S. President to label China as a strategic challenge... we also revived the Quad, which has continued to thrive under the Biden administration. We enhanced our defence cooperation significantly, signing three major foundational agreements, increasing the number of military exercises and having the first ever tri-services exercise. We increased energy exports to India... There's a very strong relationship between the President and the

Prime Minister, and the U.S. really provided very critical and important assistance to India when China came across the Line of Actual control into disputed territory in 2020.

What should one make of Trump nominees thus far?

I think the appointees by and large will be furthering the strength of the U.S.-India relationship... In addition, these advisers see China as the major strategic challenge that the United States faces. And in that sense, I think there is a certain strategic clarity between the United States and India as to what some of the challenges will be in the Indo-Pacific region.

Given Mr. Trump's threats of the past on India being a "tariff



abuser" and how India lost its GSP status for exporters, should India expect more of such shock therapy?

Look, the President has been clear that he believes India should lower tariffs and is too protectionist. I don't think it's correct to say that the GSP issue was a shock therapy. The President-elect has indicated that he will slap tariffs of 10% to 20% on most countries,

the two sides could do some horse trading and reach a broader trade and economic agreement.

The Trump administration strong-armed India on stopping all Iran oil imports. What would be the expectations from India in the next four years?

On Iran, the Trump administration had a maximum pressure campaign, which I think may well get reinstituted in this next term. India was treated like every other country, which meant [India] needed to zero out oil imports from Iran. And India complied with that.

Do you think a Trump administration will approach these DOJ investigations and

indictments in the Adani case, now the Pannun case, and will it affect India-U.S. ties?

I would not expect that the Trump administration would seek to inject itself in these cases. I can't foresee what the legal people at the Department of Justice will do.

But beyond that, I don't see these cases having any substantial effect on the broader U.S.-India relationship.

What are the skills that you think Mr. Trump should be looking for in the next envoy to India?

The choice should be one that understands President Trump and how he operates, so that he or she can help deal with any statements that come out of Washington in terms of

translating them effectively to the Indian government.

There is also some commentary on whether PM Modi will get an invitation to the Trump inaugural on January 20, as Chinese President Xi Jinping has. Your thoughts?

It's not normally been the tradition to have foreign leaders come to an inauguration. Instead, it's been representatives and ambassadors in Washington who attend. I don't know what the thinking is within the administration, and I have not yet heard anything one way or the other in terms of an invitation to Prime Minister Modi. I would emphasise that the two leaders have a very good relationship.

(Full interview at <https://newsth.live/Kennethjuster>)

Strengthening Strategic Ties

- The first Trump administration saw a significant boost in U.S.-India relations, especially in strategic areas.
- U.S. identified China as a strategic challenge, aligning India's interests with the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The Quad (U.S., India, Japan, Australia) was revived and continues under the Biden administration, laying a strong foundation for future cooperation.
- Further strengthening of defense ties is expected, including more military exercises and foundational agreements.
- The focus will likely remain on countering China's growing influence in the region.

Trade Relations: Tariffs and Market Access

- President Trump pushed for India to lower tariffs and open up markets, a stance likely to continue in the second term.

Daily News Analysis

- India lost its GSP (Generalized System of Preferences) status under the previous administration, signaling tensions in trade relations.
- The Trump administration may impose tariffs of 10-20% on most countries, including India, to address perceived protectionism.
- Such tariffs could serve as a negotiation tactic to secure better trade terms, particularly in goods and services.
- The trade discussions will likely focus on finding a balance that benefits both nations.

Energy and Economic Policies

- The previous administration's "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran led India to halt oil imports from Iran, and similar policies are expected in the second term.
- The U.S. may push India to comply with sanctions on other nations, continuing its aggressive foreign policy stance.
- Energy cooperation between the two countries will likely remain a key issue, with discussions about alternatives to Iranian oil and the broader energy market.
- In addition to energy, broader economic cooperation may include technology, services, and other sectors critical to both economies.

Impact of Domestic Legal Issues

- Legal cases involving Indian businesses, such as investigations into entities like Adani, are unlikely to influence the broader diplomatic relationship.
- The Trump administration is expected to refrain from intervening directly in such cases, ensuring these issues do not derail U.S.-India ties.
- While these investigations may be significant domestically, they are not expected to affect foreign policy.

Diplomatic Strategy

- The appointment of the next U.S. ambassador to India will be crucial for managing relations.
- The ambassador must be well-versed in Trump's diplomatic style to effectively translate Washington's policies to the Indian government.
- Handling any statements or controversies from the U.S. will be a key role for the new envoy.

Conclusion

Daily News Analysis

- Overall, U.S.-India relations under the second Trump administration are expected to strengthen in defense cooperation, trade negotiations, and energy policies.
- Strategic alignment against China will continue to be a cornerstone, while trade issues will likely require delicate negotiation to ensure mutual benefits.

PYQ: Mains 2018

Ques : "The Indo-Pacific region is emerging as the new theatre of great power rivalry. Discuss the implications of this rivalry on India's foreign policy."



ISRO conducted the PSLV C60/SpaDeX mission to demonstrate space docking technology, crucial for future space missions and space station operations.

ISRO to sign off 2024 with space docking experiment mission today

The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle will place two satellites, Chaser and Target, into orbit; the two spacecraft will attempt docking in the first week of January; the exercise is expected to serve as a stepping stone to India's future space missions

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation is set to end the year with the launch of the PSLV C60/SpaDeX mission on Monday. The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle is scheduled to lift off at 9.58 p.m. from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.

The space agency, for the first time, will be attempting the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX), which will demonstrate in-space docking using two small spacecraft.

SpaDeX is designed to demonstrate the technology needed for spacecraft rendezvous, docking, and undocking using two small satellites. "SpaDeX will serve as a milestone in advancing India's capabilities in space docking, a critical technology for future space missions, including satellite servicing, space station operations, and interplanetary missions," IS-

RO said. The demonstration of this technology is essential for futuristic missions such as sending an Indian astronaut on the moon, the building and operation of an Indian space station.

The PSLV-C60 will launch the two small spacecraft, Chaser and Target, also named SDX01 and SDX02, weighing about 220 kg each, into a 470-km circular orbit at a 55-degree inclination separately. The SDX02 spacecraft will be the first to separate 15 minutes after the launch followed by the SDX01 a few seconds later.

Incremental velocity

"The demonstrated precision of the PSLV vehicle will be utilised to give a small relative velocity between the Target and Chaser spacecraft at the time of separation from the launch vehicle. This incremental velocity will allow the Target spacecraft to build a 10-20 km inter-satellite separation with respect to the

Chaser within a day. At this point, the relative velocity between the Target will be compensated using the propulsion system of the Target spacecraft," the ISRO said.

It added that at the end of this drift arrest manoeuvre, Target and Chaser will be in the same orbit with identical velocity but separated by about 20 km, known as Far Rendezvous. "With a similar strategy of introducing and then compensating for a small relative velocity between the two spacecraft, the Chaser will approach the Target with progressively reduced inter-satellite distances, ultimately leading to the docking of the two spacecraft," it added. The docking is expected to take place in the first week of January. Twenty-four PS4-Orbital Experiment Module payloads will be also be flown onboard the PSLV-C60 SpaDeX mission.

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Countdown begins: The launch vehicle being moved to the first launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre. PTI

SpaDeX Mission Overview

Daily News Analysis

- The mission is being launched by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) using the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) C60.
- The launch is scheduled for 9:58 p.m. from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.
- The main aim is to test the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX), which will demonstrate the ability of spacecraft to dock in space.

Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX)

- SpaDeX will show how two small spacecraft can rendezvous, dock, and undock in space.
- This technology is crucial for future space missions, such as satellite servicing, space station operations, and even missions to the moon or other planets.
- It will also help in building and operating an Indian space station in the future.

Spacecraft and Launch Details

- Two small spacecraft, Chaser (SDX01) and Target (SDX02), will be launched into space.
- Both spacecraft will be placed in a 470 km orbit and separated by 15 minutes after launch.
- After separation, they will slowly drift apart by 10-20 km and then align to meet for docking.

Significance and Future Prospects

- This mission is an important step for India to develop docking capabilities in space.
- It will help make future space missions more advanced, including sending astronauts to the moon.

PYQ : Prelims : 2019

Ques : Consider the following statements:

1. The first Indian satellite, Aryabhata, was launched by a Russian launch vehicle.
2. The first satellite built by ISRO was launched from Indian soil.

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

Ans: a)

Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav of the Allahabad High Court delivered a biased speech against the Muslim community at an event organized by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad legal cell on December 8, 2023.

The challenge of holding judges accountable

The review mechanism for judges in India requires 'proved misbehaviour or incapacity' to be decided by a committee set up under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968. This committee functions like a trial court, but is set in motion only after a successful attempt to impeach the judge is moved either in the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha

LETTER & SPIRIT

Kunal Shankar

A speech delivered by Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav of the Allahabad High Court, that made apparent his biases against the Muslim community, at an event organised by the legal cell of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad within the Court precincts on December 8, has once again spotlighted the difficulty in India's review mechanism to hold judges of the higher judiciary accountable.

The review mechanism requires "proved misbehaviour or incapacity" to be decided by a three-member committee set up under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968. This committee functions like a trial court, but is set in motion only after a successful attempt to impeach the concerned judge is moved either in the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha, which must be approved by the presiding officer of the House – the Speaker in the case of the Lok Sabha, or the Vice-President/Chairman in case of the Rajya Sabha. The provisions for this mechanism flows from Articles 124 (4), (5), 217, and 218 of the Constitution of India, and the those of the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968.

Justice V. Ramaswami's trial

Only two judges out of seven so far, aside from Justice Yadav against whom impeachment has been attempted, have been found guilty for their "misbehaviour" by the three-member committee, which must comprise of a Supreme Court judge, a Chief Justice of a High Court and an eminent jurist.

The first was retired Supreme Court Justice V. Ramaswami, who was found guilty of extravagant spending on his official residence such as buying air conditioners, plush furniture and bedding, without following due process, much like the accusations made against Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra by the ruling BJP last year. While such misdeeds by current accounts of corruption seem like an arcane quibble over propriety, they nevertheless animated public discourse on a judge's conduct in the late 80s and early 90s. Such discussions led to the foundation of the "Restatement of Values of Judicial Life" adopted by the Supreme Court on May 7, 1997, as the code of conduct for those holding high offices in judiciary.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, retired Madras High Court Justice K. Chandru, who played a pivotal role in the impeachment proceedings against Justice Ramaswami, recollected how the judge "bought 6+1 = 7 maces, one with a silver head to denote the Chief Justice's arrival and took it on a cargo plane in 1988, and not by rail."

Following his elevation as the Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, which did not have this practice as it was founded in independent India, much to the shock of his "brother judges". In his Tamil book, *I too became a judge*, Justice Chandru recalled a letter dated August 18, 1988, in which then Chief Justice V. Ramaswami's colleagues wrote "You will remember that most of us told you later



GETTY IMAGES

too that we are opposed to the introduction of maces. Maces are but a relic of the imperial past and out of tune with our socialist pattern of society."

The adverse verdict by the three-member panel constituted under the Judges Inquiry Act against V. Ramaswami set the precedent of then CJI Sabyasachi Mukherjee deciding not to allocate any work to him in 1993. The failure of the impeachment motion in the Lok Sabha that year, did not lead to a reversal of the CJ's decision. No cases were listed for hearing before Justice Ramaswami's Bench until his retirement three years later.

Article 124 (4) of the Constitution stipulates that the panel's finding must be voted upon by Parliament. The motion requires either a two-thirds majority of present MPs voting in favour of the motion or an absolute majority in each House, for the judge to be removed. On May 10, 1993, of the 401 members present in the Lok Sabha, 196 voted for Ramaswami's removal. While no one voted against the motion, 205 abstentions by the ruling Congress ensured the defeat of the impeachment.

Resignation before accountability

The second judge to face an impeachment motion was Justice Soumitra Sen of the Calcutta High Court. Justice Sen became the first judge of India's higher judiciary who was voted to be removed by the Rajya Sabha by an

overwhelming majority, but he resigned in September 2011, days before the motion was to be tabled in the Lok Sabha. Justice Sen was found guilty of misappropriating ₹3.22 lakh in a case in 1983, as a court-appointed receiver in his capacity as a lawyer, and misrepresenting facts before a Calcutta court.

Similarly, Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court, P.D. Dinakaran resigned on July 29, 2011, the day of the first sitting of the three-member panel constituted under the Judges Inquiry Act, to look into 16 charges, some of them as grave as appropriating more than 300 acres of lands from farmers in Tamil Nadu's Tiruvallur district, after he became a judge of the Madras High Court.

Such instances highlight that members of India's higher judiciary enjoy a disproportionately greater level of immunity when compared with even elected officials as they "continue to enjoy the perks of being a retired judge, like pension" and other benefits, said jurist Mohan Gopal, who was part of the three-member committee in the Dinakaran case. Such resignations abort the trial and subsequent impeachment, something not afforded to even sitting or former Chief Ministers, like in the case of Jayalalitha in the disproportionate assets petition decided in 2014.

The Forum for Judicial Accountability (FJA) that led the campaign against judicial corruption in the Dinakaran case, wrote to the three-member committee on

August 6 that year, seeking a continuation of the committee's investigations arguing that "the jurisdiction of the Committee is untouched by the factum of removal...". The FJA's contention was that there were two separate parts to the removal process of a justice – one that concerns finding guilt, which is governed by Article 124 (5) and the second, which is impeachment, which is governed by article 124 (4) and is within the jurisdiction of Parliament.

"The purpose of impeachment is not merely removal from office, but a more substantial one about accountability to the people whose trust is alleged to be breached and whose confidence in judiciary needs to be reinforced," the FJA argued.

"Though Article 124(5) of the Constitution uses the words "removed from office" and is silent on the issue of disqualification from holding future office, the finding of guilt by the Committee and the subsequent proceedings in Parliament will have the effect of disqualifying the person from holding public office in future. It may be noted that Justice V Ramasami having been found guilty by the Committee, continued to hold office as a judge of the Supreme Court and retired with all the benefits, taking advantage of the defeat of the impeachment motion. Post retirement he was appointed as Chairperson of the Tamil Nadu Law Commission," said FJA.

The need to complete proceedings

RTI petitions by former *Frontline* legal affairs editor, V. Venkatesan revealed that both jurist Mohan Gopal and the Chairman of the three-member panel retired justice Aftab Alam believed the work of the committee must continue.

The RTI replies made public a set of correspondence between Mohan Gopal and the two members of the committee, and of the committee with the Rajya Sabha Chairperson Hamid Ansari. Mr. Venkatesan has included these letters as annexures to his 2014 book *Constitutional Conundrums: Challenges to India's Democratic Process*. In his August 15, 2011 letter to Justice Aftab Alam and J. S. Kehar, the then Chief Justice of the Karnataka HC, Mr. Gopal writes, "the resignation of Justice P.D. Dinakaran presents our Committee with an unprecedented situation. Any decision we take will have a profound and far-reaching impact on the framework for judicial accountability in our country – both in terms [of the] future implementation of the Judges Inquiry Act, 1968, and in terms of the manner in which the current Constitutional and legal framework for judicial accountability is reformed...While undoubtedly the investigation and the proof stage arises only when there is a prayer for removal from office and is the essential first step or that purpose, it would be an error to ignore the independent role and value of the investigation and proof part of the process in and by itself...A view that the resignation would result in the investigation and proof process being aborted would in effect place in the hands of the judge who is the object of the investigation the power to end the investigation against him by resigning – an absurd situation that the legislature could not have intended. In such circumstances, there would be no incentive arising from this process for any judge to avoid misbehaviour as any judge can end investigation into charges against him at any point by resigning from office."

While the Chair justice Aftab Alam concurred and sought the continuation of the Committee, the request was rejected by Rajya Sabha Chairman Hamid Ansari.

THE GIST

Only two judges so far have been found guilty for their "misbehaviour" by the three-member committee, which must comprise of a Supreme Court judge, a Chief Justice of a High Court and an eminent jurist.

Article 124 (4) of the Constitution stipulates that the panel's finding must be voted upon by Parliament. The motion requires either a two-thirds majority of present MPs voting in favour of the motion or an absolute majority in each House, for the judge to be removed.

Such instances highlight that members of India's higher judiciary enjoy a disproportionately greater level of immunity when compared with even elected officials as they "continue to enjoy the perks of being a retired judge, like pension" and other benefits, said jurist Mohan Gopal.

► This raises concerns about the difficulty in holding higher judiciary members accountable for their actions.

Introduction to Judicial Accountability

- Judicial accountability refers to the obligation of judges to be answerable for their actions, ensuring integrity, transparency, and trust in the judiciary.
- In India, judicial accountability is governed by the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968, and is subject to provisions under Articles 124, 217, and 218 of the Constitution.

The Review Mechanism in India

- The review mechanism involves a three-member committee, comprising a Supreme Court judge, a Chief Justice of a High Court, and an eminent jurist.
- The committee investigates allegations of "misbehavior or incapacity" of judges. However, the process only begins after an impeachment motion is introduced in Parliament.
- The motion requires a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha or an absolute majority in the Rajya Sabha for removal from office.

Case Studies of Impeachment Proceedings

- Justice V. Ramaswami Justice V. Ramaswami, the first judge to face impeachment, was found guilty of extravagant spending on his official residence, including purchasing air conditioners and expensive furniture without due process.
- Despite the committee's verdict, the impeachment motion failed in 1993 due to abstentions by ruling members, allowing him to continue in office. Justice Soumitra Sen Justice Soumitra Sen was found guilty of misappropriating ₹33.23 lakh while serving as a court-appointed receiver in 1983.
- He resigned in 2011 just before the impeachment motion was tabled in the Lok Sabha, avoiding accountability.
- Justice P.D. Dinakaran Justice Dinakaran, facing serious charges of land appropriation, resigned in 2011 before the inquiry panel could complete its investigation, further limiting the scope of accountability.

Challenges in Holding Judges Accountable

- Judges in India enjoy significant immunity and can escape accountability by resigning before formal proceedings.
- This immunity is greater than that afforded to elected officials, highlighting a gap in the system's ability to hold judges to account for misconduct.

Daily News Analysis

- ➡ Resigning before an impeachment process essentially nullifies the possibility of accountability, undermining public trust in the judiciary.

The Role of Judicial Accountability Campaigns

- ➡ The Forum for Judicial Accountability (FJA) has advocated for continued investigations into judicial misconduct, even after a judge's resignation, to ensure that accountability mechanisms are not circumvented.
- ➡ The FJA emphasizes that impeachment is not just about removal but restoring the integrity of the judicial system.

Conclusion

- ➡ Judicial accountability in India remains a challenge due to the existing immunity granted to judges and the limitations of the current review process.
- ➡ Strengthening the judicial review mechanism and ensuring that judges cannot evade scrutiny through resignation is crucial for maintaining public trust in the judicial system.
- ➡ Reforming these processes will help restore confidence in the judiciary and uphold the values of justice and transparency in India.

PYQ : Mains : 2020

Ques : "What are the mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability in the judiciary? Suggest reforms to address the challenges in the Indian judicial system."

—It's about quality—

The logistics sector in India is undergoing transformative changes driven by policy reforms, digitalization, and infrastructure development.

Accelerated movement: logistics sector high on delivery, low on cost

Logistics whether road, rail, air, waterways or warehouses is now a booming sector, given its crucial role in supply chains; while experts remain bullish on the sector's future prospects, industry seeks policy support to cut costs further and focus on upgrading workforce skills

NEWS ANALYSIS

T.E. Raja Simhan

For the logistics sector, the year gone by was marked by efforts to move closer to the goals envisaged by the National Logistic Policy (NLP) in 2022. Following India's elevation to the 38th rank among 139 nations in the World Bank Index in 2023, the focus in 2024 was on reducing logistics cost from the prevailing 10-14%.

The Economic Survey 2023-24 states the Centre launched the NLP and the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan (in 2021) to boost efficiency and lower logistics costs, alongside digital reforms like the Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP) and the Logistics Data Bank.

The electrification of the short railway lines connecting railway yards to inland container depots and container freight stations has facilitated faster movement and release of wagons by the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI); additionally, the NLP Marine policy was launched for port-related logistics.

Since the launch of the NLP, over 614 entities have registered on ULIP, with 106 private companies signing non-disclosure agreements (NDAs); 142 companies cumulatively



Cheaper to move: Logistics cost slid 0.8-0.9 percentage points of GDP between FY14- FY22. THE HINDU

submitted 382 use cases for ULIP, including data exchange, document digitisation and process automation; 57 applications have been made live, as of September 2023, to facilitate logistical requirements such as cross-border trade, last-mile delivery optimisation, and reverse logistics.

Crucial role

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) played a remarkable role in reducing logistics cost. The 'one nation, one tax' regime has cut the waiting time of trucks at State borders, thereby reducing travel time by nearly 30%. This, has reduced logistics cost and increased the average distance covered by trucks to 300-325 km from 225



The sector, valued at \$250 billion and contributing 14% to India GDP, demonstrated resilience as it transitioned from unorganised to a structured industry

km, the survey said.

A report by the National Council of Applied Economic Research in December 2023 shows logistics cost declined by 0.8-0.9 percentage points of GDP between FY14 and FY22. The improvement in logistics performance is reflected at the State-level too.

Logistics is now a booming sector, given its crucial

role in supply chains. Experts remain bullish on the sector's future prospects.

Rampraveen Swaminathan, MD and CEO of Mahindra Logistics Ltd., says the industry underwent transformative changes in 2024, driven by macro trends such as deeper digital adoption, and an intensified focus on risk management.

Government-led initiatives like Gati Shakti, One Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) and ULIP further empowered the sector to meet evolving customer expectations, he said. Combined with the China Plus One strategy (diversifying manufacturing and sourcing operations beyond China), India's position as a critical

player in the global supply chain ecosystem has been reinforced.

"As we enter 2025, the logistics sector is poised for significant growth, supported by rising data transparency and advanced digitisation. Supportive policies in warehousing, including grant of infrastructure status and expanded foreign direct investment, are accelerating the development of multi-client warehousing facilities," he says.

As the logistics landscape evolves, the 11.1% rise in capital expenditure for infrastructure signals significant growth opportunities in the sector, driving India's ambition of becoming a \$5-trillion economy by 2027, he says.

Skilling needs

Maresh Fogla, ED, Patel Integrated Logistics Ltd., the robust growth in the logistics sector in 2024 was driven by a 12% annual expansion rate, increasing domestic consumption, and government-backed initiatives like Gati Shakti and NLP. The sector, valued at \$250 billion and contributing 14% to India's GDP, demonstrated resilience as it transitioned from unorganised to a structured industry.

He calls for more efforts towards streamlining operations and enhancing workforce skills to fully unlock the sector's potential.

E-commerce growth, demand for faster delivery, and export expansion driven by the productivity-linked incentive scheme will amplify goods movement, positioning India to capitalise on global trade opportunities, he says. He also foresees that government initiatives such as UDAN (to promote regional air connectivity) and NLP, will cut logistics cost by 4-5%, enhancing competitiveness in global markets.

Multi-modal strength

Progress in rail and waterway freight movement, alongside extensive highway construction, heralded new era of multi-modal connectivity, strengthening India's position as a rising global economic powerhouse, says Ketan Kulkarni, Deputy MD, Gati Express and Supply Chain.,

What remains to be done, according to Rajesh Menon, a maritime expert, includes technology integration to further reduce logistics cost, measuring the ease of doing business on ground and bringing to fruition the maritime connectivity projects identified in the Union Budget at an outlay of ₹75,000 crore. The Indian Port Bill awaits implementation, while transition from land-based to coastal transportation needs to be hastened.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

National Logistics Policy (NLP):

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- ➡ The Indian government launched the National Logistics Policy (NLP) in 2022 to improve the logistics sector's efficiency and reduce costs.
- ➡ India's logistics performance improved significantly, rising to 38th place out of 139 nations in the World Bank Logistics Performance Index in 2023.
- ➡ The policy aims to reduce logistics costs, which currently stand between 10-14% of the country's GDP.

Key Government Initiatives

- ➡ **PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan:**
 - Launched in 2021, this initiative aims to boost infrastructure and ensure faster, more efficient logistics across the country.
 - It focuses on improving coordination between various ministries for better infrastructure planning and execution.
- ➡ **Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP):**
 - ULIP was introduced as a digital platform to streamline logistics operations by enabling real-time data exchange.
 - As of 2023, over 600 entities have registered on ULIP, and 57 applications have gone live for logistics operations like cross-border trade and last-mile delivery optimization.
- ➡ **Electrification and Port Policy:**
 - Short railway lines connecting container depots and freight stations have been electrified to speed up goods movement.
 - A new Marine Policy under the NLP was launched to improve port-related logistics.

Impact of Goods and Services Tax (GST)

- ➡ **GST's Role in Reducing Logistics Costs:**
 - The implementation of GST has helped reduce logistics costs by minimizing waiting times at state borders.
 - Trucks now travel an average distance of 300-325 km, up from 225 km, thanks to reduced delays, lowering transportation costs.
- ➡ **Logistics Cost Reduction:**
 - Between FY14 and FY22, logistics costs in India declined by 0.8-0.9 percentage points of GDP, according to a report by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER).

Digitalization and Infrastructure Development

- ➡ **Digitalization of the Logistics Sector:**
 - Over 600 entities registered on ULIP, with 57 live applications enhancing the digital infrastructure of the logistics sector.

Daily News Analysis

- These applications help in various logistics functions, including process automation, document digitization, and data exchange.

➡ **Infrastructure Investments:**

- Increased capital expenditure in 2024 supports growth in the sector, including improvements in rail, road, and waterways.
- Multi-modal connectivity is being emphasized, with an expansion in the use of rail and waterway freight alongside highway construction.

Future Outlook and Growth

➡ **Sector Expansion:**

- ➡ The logistics sector grew at a rate of 12% in 2024, driven by e-commerce, increased domestic consumption, and government-backed initiatives like Gati Shakti and NLP.
- ➡ The sector, valued at \$250 billion, contributes 14% to India's GDP and is expected to continue its growth trajectory.

- ➡ **Focus on Skilling:** There is a need for better workforce training to handle the growing demands of the logistics sector and to ensure efficient operations.

Conclusion

- ➡ The logistics sector in India is evolving rapidly due to government reforms, digitalization, and infrastructure improvements.
- ➡ With continued investments and policy support, the sector is well-positioned for significant growth in the coming years.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Analyze the role of the National Logistics Policy in enhancing India's logistics sector and reducing costs. **(150 Words /10 marks)**

One Nation One Election and representative democracy

The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill, 2024, that was tabled in the Lok Sabha, proposes simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and State/Union Territory Legislative Assemblies with the insertion of Article 82(A). This ambitious reform seeks to synchronise elections, fix the tenure of the Lok Sabha, and simultaneously align elections to the State Assemblies. If the Lok Sabha or a State Assembly is dissolved before its five-year term, mid-term elections will only cover the remainder of the original tenure.

The Bill also amends Articles 83, 172, and 327, with changes effective from an 'appointed date', post-2029 general elections, thereby initiating simultaneous elections in 2034. A second Bill, the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, aligns the tenure of Union Territories' legislative Assemblies with the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.

While the proposal seeks administrative efficiency and reduced election fatigue, critical questions arise: has the 'One Nation, One Election (ONOE)' process been truly inclusive and representative? Are there limits to our understanding of the representative spirit of Indian democracy?

Understanding representative democracy

Representative democracy is a system wherein citizens elect representatives to make decisions on their behalf. Rooted in the principles of free and fair elections, political accountability, and the protection of individual rights, it balances majority rule with the protection of minority interests. This form of governance becomes especially critical in diverse and populous countries such as India.

The theoretical underpinnings emphasise that elected representatives act as intermediaries, ensuring stable governance while accommodating competing interests. Citizens, being too numerous and diverse to participate directly in governance, delegate authority to their elected representatives. The system thrives on periodic elections, informed citizen participation, and institutional checks and balances.

Despite its theoretical merits, representative democracy faces growing challenges in practice. A 2024 Pew Research Center study across 24 nations, including Brazil, India, Nigeria, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States, revealed widespread disillusionment with



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The process adopted for the One Nation One Election Bill had lapses that affect India's democratic fabric

the system. Citizens increasingly questioned its effectiveness, with some exploring alternatives such as direct democracy, expert rule, or even authoritarian regimes.

In 13 countries, significant segments supported strong leaders bypassing parliamentary checks, reflecting frustration with institutional inefficiencies. Alarmingly, military rule garnered between 15% to 17% support in nations such as Greece, Japan, the U.K., and the U.S. Such trends underscore growing distrust in representative systems, driven by perceived inefficiencies, corruption, and unfulfilled promises.

Jayaprakash Narayan's critique

In India, debates about representative democracy are not new. Jayaprakash Narayan, in his seminal work, *A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity* (1959), offered a deep critique of parliamentary democracy. JP argued that the reliance on individual voting created an 'atomized society', where fragmented, partisan politics overshadowed the collective national interest.

JP highlighted the following defects – risks of minority governments: In a multi-party system like India, he warned that parliamentary democracy risks unstable and unrepresentative governments.

First, demagoguery and populism: JP highlighted how political parties manipulate public opinion through half-truths, empty promises, and divisive rhetoric.

Second, centralisation of power: Parliamentary democracy, according to JP, concentrates power in the state, weakening intermediary institutions between citizens and the national government.

Third, financial costs of elections: JP critiqued the exorbitant cost of elections, tethering democracy to moneyed interests and large organisations.

While critical, JP's analysis aimed to reform and strengthen democracy. His concerns resonate today as India debates ONOE and its implications for democratic representation.

For a reform as significant as ONOE, an inclusive and representative process is crucial. In representative democracies, public opinion shapes policy, holding governments accountable to citizens' aspirations and concerns. To achieve this, pre-legislative consultation becomes indispensable, enabling policymakers to gather diverse views, address challenges, and enhance transparency.

The Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy, 2014,

mandates a minimum 30-day period for public feedback on proposed legislation. It requires draft Bills to be accompanied by explanatory notes that clarify key provisions in accessible terms.

However, the process adopted for ONOE fell short. First, inadequate consultation period: The high-level committee issued a public notice on January 5, 2024, inviting suggestions on ONOE. Citizens were given just 10 days – until January 15 – to respond, undermining the spirit of the 2014 policy. Second, lack of explanatory material: Despite the high-level committee being established in September 2023, no explanatory notes or background papers were provided, limiting citizens' understanding of the proposal's scope and challenges. Third, framing of questions: The high-level committee's approach, seeking 'yes/no' responses on supporting ONOE, appeared perfunctory, giving the impression the matter was already settled.

Such procedural lapses risk alienating citizens and stakeholders, undermining trust in the reform process. In a diverse democracy like India, meaningful public engagement is vital to ensure that policy reflects varied perspectives and fosters consensus.

Implications for representative democracy

The ONOE Bill raises critical questions about the representative nature of Indian democracy. First, centralisation versus federalism: synchronising elections risks a further centralising of power, potentially undermining the federal spirit of the Constitution. State-specific issues may be overshadowed by national narratives. Second, inclusivity and participation: by curtailing consultation and rushing reforms, the government risks sidelining citizens' voices, weakening democratic inclusivity. Third, electoral accountability: frequent elections, while resource-intensive, enhance accountability by enabling voters to evaluate governments regularly. Simultaneous elections could dilute this accountability.

India's democratic fabric thrives on citizen participation, inclusivity, and accountability. Reforms such as ONOE, while aimed at efficiency, must not compromise these principles. A rushed process undermines trust and risks centralisation. Only by adhering to the principles above can our democracy remain truly representative in letter and spirit.

The views expressed are personal

GS Paper 02 : Indian Polity

PYQ: (UPSC CSE (M) GS-2 2017) : 'Simultaneous election to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies will limit the amount of time and money spent in electioneering but it will reduce the government's accountability to the people' Discuss. (250 words/15m)

UPSC Mains Practice Question: Evaluate the impact of simultaneous elections on electoral accountability, federalism, and inclusivity within India's representative democratic framework. (250 Words /15 marks)

Context :

- The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024, tabled on December 17, 2024, proposes simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha and Assemblies.

Key Features of The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024:

- A new Article 82(A) will be inserted to synchronize elections and fix the tenure of the Lok Sabha.
- In case of dissolution of the Lok Sabha or a State Assembly before the five-year term, mid-term elections will cover only the remainder of the original tenure.
- Articles 83, 172, and 327 are amended, with changes effective after the 2029 general elections, enabling simultaneous elections in 2034.
- A second Bill, the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, aligns the tenure of Union Territories' Assemblies with that of the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.

Benefits of ONOE

- Administrative efficiency and reduced election fatigue are cited as primary benefits.
- Simultaneous elections aim to streamline governance and reduce the disruptions caused by frequent elections.

Challenges to Representative Democracy

- Defining Representative Democracy: Representative democracy relies on elected representatives making decisions on behalf of citizens, balancing majority rule with minority rights, and ensuring stable governance.
- The system depends on periodic elections, informed participation, and institutional checks and balances, which face growing challenges globally.

Findings from Pew Research Center Study (2024)

Daily News Analysis

- Across 24 nations, including India, citizens expressed disillusionment with representative democracy.
- Many citizens explored alternatives like direct democracy, expert rule, or authoritarian systems.
- Support for military rule ranged from 15% to 17% in some nations, reflecting frustration with inefficiencies and unfulfilled promises.

Concerns with the ONOE Process

- **Inadequate Public Consultation:** A 10-day period for public feedback (January 5-15, 2024) was insufficient.
- **Lack of Explanatory Notes:** The absence of background materials limited citizens' understanding.
- **Framing of Questions:** The public was asked for simple 'yes/no' responses, appearing to pre-determine the outcome.

Implications of ONOE on Representative Democracy

- **Centralization vs Federalism:** Synchronizing elections risks centralizing power, overshadowing state-specific issues.
- **Inclusivity and Participation:** Rushed reforms and curtailed consultations weaken democratic inclusivity.
- **Electoral Accountability:** Simultaneous elections might reduce frequent evaluations of governments, diluting accountability.

Conclusion

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- India's democratic fabric thrives on inclusivity, participation, and accountability.
- While ONOE aims for efficiency, it must adhere to the principles of representative democracy to maintain trust and reflect diverse perspectives.