



EC invites parties for talks to strengthen poll process

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Amid a raging controversy over duplicate voter ID card numbers, the Election Commission on Tuesday invited the heads and senior leaders of all political parties for an interaction to “further strengthen electoral processes”. The EC has also invited all national and State political parties to submit suggestions by April 30, regarding any unresolved issues at the local level.

About the Election Commission of India (ECI):

Constitutional foundation:

- **Permanent and independent body:** The Election Commission of India is a permanent and independent constitutional authority, established under Article 324 of the Indian Constitution.
- **Primary role:** ECI is responsible for conducting elections to the Parliament, state legislatures, and the offices of the President and Vice President of India.
 - It does not oversee elections for urban local bodies like municipalities and panchayats, which the State Election Commissions manage.

Constitutional provisions:

- Article 324 empowers the ECI to supervise, direct, and control the preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of all elections to Parliament and state legislatures.

- **Article 325** ensures no one is excluded from the electoral rolls based on religion, race, caste, or sex.
- **Article 326** establishes adult suffrage (voting rights for all citizens aged 18 and above) as the basis for elections.
- **Article 327** allows Parliament to make laws regarding elections to Parliament and state legislatures.
- **Article 328** empowers state legislatures to make provisions related to elections within the state.
- **Article 329** prohibits judicial interference in electoral matters.

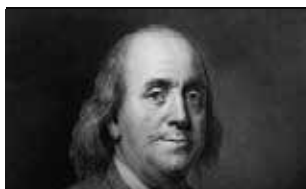
Functions and jurisdiction:

- **Advisory role:** ECI advises the President or Governor on matters related to the disqualification of members of Parliament and state legislatures, especially in cases involving corrupt electoral practices.
- **Quasi-Judicial role:** ECI can disqualify candidates for failing to submit election expense accounts and resolve disputes regarding the recognition of political parties and the allocation of election symbols.
- **Administrative role:** ECI handles the delimitation of electoral constituencies, voter registration, updating of electoral rolls, and scheduling of election dates.
 - It also ensures adherence to the Model Code of Conduct during elections and monitors political campaign expenditures.

Composition:

- **Structure:** Initially, ECI had only one member, the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC). In 1989, due to the reduction of the voting age from 21 to 18, two additional Election Commissioners were appointed, making it a three-member body.
- **Appointments:** The President of India appoints the Chief Election Commissioner and the two Election Commissioners. They serve for a term not exceeding six years or until the age of 65, whichever is earlier.

Removal process: The Chief Election Commissioner can only be removed from office like that of a Supreme Court judge, requiring a special majority in both Houses of Parliament.



“If you invest more in your education, then you are likely to get more interest in it.”

–Benjamin Franklin

Greenland goes to polls as Trump seeks control

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Polls opened in Greenland for parliamentary elections on Tuesday as U.S. President Donald Trump seeks control of the Arctic island. The self-governing Danish region, home to 56,000 people, occupies a strategic North Atlantic location.



About Greenland

- It is the world's largest (non-continent) island located between the continents of North America and Europe in the North Atlantic Ocean.
- It is geographically considered a part of the North American continent.
- It is surrounded by the Arctic Ocean to the north; by the Greenland Sea to the east; by the North Atlantic Ocean to the southeast; Davis Strait to the southwest and Baffin Bay to the west.
- Greenland was once a Danish colony and is now an autonomous province of Denmark.

- **Climate:** Greenland is in the polar zone, where winter temperatures reach as low as -50°C and summer temperatures rarely exceed $10-15^{\circ}\text{C}$. Due its size, however, temperatures can vary considerably from one part of the country to another.
- **Highest Point:** Gunnbjorn's Fjeld
- **Capital:** Nuuk

U.S. aspirations in Greenland:

Historic:

- During the Second World War, the U.S. briefly occupied the region and defended it, when Denmark was under siege by Nazi Germany.
- Noting the region's geopolitical importance, the U.S. in 1946, after the War, had offered to buy it from Denmark.
- Denmark rejected the offer and ever since Greenland has been a part of the Danish realm with home rule granted to the island in 1979.

Contemporary:

- Greenland is important for the U.S. security. The U.S. runs and operates an air base on the island.
- With the threat of Russia-China cooperation in the region, annexing Greenland could give the U.S. significant control over the area, letting it decide who gets to run and operate in these strategic waters.

Concerns:

- Trump's calls to buy/annex Greenland breaks the first and fundamental rule of the UN Charter: recognising the sovereignty of nations.
- With respect to Greenland, the U.S. is going against the NATO agreement as well.
- Further, Arctic waters are a global common under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).


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Centre begins talks with Kuki-Zo groups; highways stay blocked

INTERNAL SECURITY

Union Home Ministry officials arrived in Churachandpur on Tuesday, as the Kuki-Zo-dominated district was reopened for economic activities, three days after the violent clashes of March 8. The Ministry team is in the hill district to hold a dialogue with the Kuki-Zo Council to find a solution to the impasse.



Violence in Manipur About

Violence between Manipur's Kuki tribe and the majority Meitei community continued to rage in several parts of Manipur for many days.

The Imphal valley, which comprises about 10% of Manipur's landmass, is dominated by the non-tribal Meitei who account for more than 64% of the population of the State. This area yields 40 of the State's 60 MLAs.

The hills comprising 90% of the geographical area are inhabited by more than 35% recognised tribes. This area sends

only 20 MLAs to the Assembly.

Manipur has been restive since February 2023 when the state government launched an eviction drive seen as targeting a specific tribal group.

The drive led to protests but not on the scale of the one seen recently.

Reasons behind the violence in Manipur

High Court's order as a trigger point

The recent protests were triggered by the Manipur HC's direction to the State to pursue a 10-year-old recommendation to grant Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to the non-tribal Meitei community.

The Court's order has brought the historical tensions between the valley-dwelling Meitei community and the state's hill tribes to a boil.

Violence started

A 'tribal solidarity march' was organised by the All-Tribal Students' Union of Manipur (ATSUM) against the order of the High Court.

Violent clashes broke out at various places in Manipur during the course of this march.

Muslim Law Board fails to garner support from allies of BJP on Waqf Bill changes

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board's (AIMPLB) bid to rally the allies of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in its attempts to foil the proposed changes to the Waqf Bill has borne limited results. The board's large scale public meetings in Vijayawada and Patna earlier this week failed to get encouraging response from the regional parties ruling the States there. Both the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the Janata Dal (United) decided to have "no truck" with the AIMPLB meetings.

Waqf Amendment Bill 2024 Provisions, Key Changes

The Waqf Amendment (Bill) 2024 proposes changing the name of the parent Act from the Waqf Act of 1995 to the Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency, and Development Act of 1995:

- **Waqf Formation:** Waqfs can be formed by (i) declaration, (ii) recognition of long-term use, or (iii) endowment when succession ends.
 - Only practicing Muslims for at least five years can declare waqfs, with ownership of the property being mandatory.
- **Government Property:** Government properties identified as waqf will revert to state ownership. The District Collector will determine ownership in disputed cases.

- **Waqf Property Determination:** The Waqf Board's power to determine waqf properties is removed.
- **Waqf Survey:** Collectors will conduct waqf surveys under state revenue laws.
- **Central Waqf Council:** Two non-Muslim members are added. MPs, judges, and eminent persons need not be Muslims. However, Muslim members must include two women.
- **Waqf Boards:** State governments will appoint representatives, including two non-Muslims and members from Shia, Sunni, and backward Muslim communities. Women representation remains mandatory.
- **Tribunal Composition:** Muslim law experts are removed. Tribunals will include a District Court judge and a state officer of joint secretary rank.
- **Appeals:** Tribunal decisions can be appealed to the High Court within 90 days.
- **Central Government Powers:** The central government can set rules on registration, waqf accounts, and Board proceedings. Audits can be conducted by the CAG.
- **Separate Waqf Boards:** Separate Waqf Boards are allowed for Bohra and Agakhani sects

India emerges as top source of foreign direct investment into Dubai

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

The relentless flight of Indian entrepreneurs, consultants, and businesses to Dubai over the last decade amid a favourable tax regime and business friendly environment is now showing its impact on the ground.



What is Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)?

- FDI means investment through capital instruments by a person resident outside India in an unlisted Indian company; or in 10% or more of the post issue paid-up equity capital on a fully diluted basis of a listed Indian company.
- It is usually a long-term investment and is largely a non-debt creating capital flow.

Routes of FDI

- **Automatic Route:** Under the automatic route, an overseas investor is only required to inform the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) after the investment is made.
- **Government Approval Route:** Under the government approval route, a foreign investor has to get a prior nod from the Ministry or department concerned.

Regulation

- Currently, FDI in India is governed by FDI Policy 2020 and FEMA (Non-debt Instrument) Rules, 2019.
- DPIIT is the primary regulator of FDI in India.
- The RBI, which has the authority to implement the FDI Rules, is the other major regulator.

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