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CURRENT AFFAIRS

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RIGHT OF THE VOTERS

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "RIGHT OF THE VOTERS". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "POLITY AND GOVERNANCE" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

On Tuesday, the Supreme Court (SC) said that candidates contesting elections need not disclose every moveable property owned by them or their dependents. The apex court said that candidates need to disclose property information that is of substantial value or reflects a luxurious lifestyle. Moreover, the SC said a voter had no absolute right to know about each and every candidate's assets and that a candidate had the right to privacy regarding matters irrelevant to his/her candidature.

BACKGROUND OF THE JUDGEMENT:

- This observation came after the Supreme Court upheld the election of Karikho Kri from Tezu, an independent MLA, in the 2019 Arunachal Pradesh Assembly Elections.
- The apex court's decision overturned the Gauhati High Court's decision, which declared Karikho Kri's election null and void.
- The top court set aside the Gauhati High Court order that declared Karikho Kri's election from the Tezu assembly constituency in the Lohit district in 2019 as void.
- In the petition, Karikho Kri's opponent claimed that the MLA "exercised undue influence" by not disclosing three vehicles his wife and son owned while filing his nomination.
- The Gauhati High Court court gave the verdict in response to an election petition filed by Congress candidate Nuney Tayang, challenging the declaration of the 2019 Assembly election result. Tayang alleged that Kri made false declarations for not disclosing in Form 26 of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, that he occupied a government-allotted MLA cottage in Itanagar.
- SC ruled that defects were "insubstantial" in character.
- SC said that balancing the right of voters to know with the right to privacy of a candidate. Candidate's right to privacy will still survive in matters that are of no concern to voters or are irrelevant to his candidature for public office.

CERTAIN RIGHTS OF THE VOTERS IN INDIA:

In India, the Constitution and electoral laws protect several rights of voters. These rights ensure the integrity of the electoral process and empower citizens to participate freely and fairly. **Some of the key rights of voters in India include:**

- **Right to Vote:** Every Indian citizen who is 18 years of age or older has the right to vote in elections, Subject to certain conditions such as registration in the electoral roll.
- **Right to Know:** Voters have the right to access information about candidates for office, including their criminal background, educational qualifications, and financial assets.
- **Right to Secret Ballot:** Voters can cast their votes secretly without fear of coercion or intimidation. The secrecy of the ballot is maintained to ensure voters' freedom of expression.
- **Right to Recourse:** Voters have the right to recourse if they believe their rights have been violated or encounter any irregularities during the electoral process. They can file complaints with the Election Commission or approach the judiciary for redressal.
- **Right to Non-Discrimination:** Every voter has the right to exercise their franchise without facing any discrimination based on caste, religion, gender, or any other factor. The principle of universal adult suffrage ensures that every citizen's vote carries equal weight.
- **Voting Rights of Prisoners:** The Indian constitution and the guidelines of the ECI do not permit an imprisoned person to vote in the country's upcoming elections.
- **Voting rights of NRIs:** Voting rights for NRIs were introduced in 2011 after an amendment to the Representation of People Act 1950. Therefore, NRIs can now cast their vote in their place of residence, as mentioned in their passport. They can also opt for the postal ballot option.

The right to vote is vital for raising one's voice in a democracy. Voting ensures the spirit of democracy, as citizens shape the country's future and, thereby, their own.

WHO CAN VOTE IN INDIA?

The Indian Constitution grants the right to vote to all citizens of India irrespective of their race, caste, religion, gender and colour. **Some eligibility criteria are:**

1. The individual must be a citizen of India.
2. The minimum age of the individual should be 18 years old.
3. Citizens must register as voters in the electoral rolls of their respective constituencies to exercise their voting rights.
4. Individuals should not be convicted of certain offences and serve a sentence in prison or should not be declared disqualified by the Election Commission for electoral malpractices.

The right to vote is guaranteed under Article 326 of the Constitution of India. This article states that "the elections to the House of the People and the Legislative Assembly of every State shall be based on adult suffrage." Voting is a constitutional right and civic duty that is essential for democracy's functioning.

PRELIMS PRACTISE QUESTIONS

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. Prisoners can participate in voting because the right to vote is the fundamental right.
2. The 61st Constitutional Amendment Act reduced the voting age from 21 years to 18 years.
3. The Election Commission of India is authorized to conduct the State Assembly Elections.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three

D. None

ANSWER: B

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION:

Q. People's participation in the election process in India plays a critical role in ensuring a healthy democracy in the country. Critically examine.

Amit Pradhan

EARTHQUAKE IN TAIWAN

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "EARTHQUAKE IN TAIWAN". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "ENVIRONMENT" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Taiwan experienced its most powerful earthquake in the past 25 years, registering a magnitude of 7.2. The epicentre of the seismic activity was pinpointed a mere 18 kilometres south-southwest of Hualien County, located in eastern Taiwan. This occurrence underscores Taiwan's vulnerability to earthquakes due to its location along the Pacific "Ring of Fire."

REASONS BEHIND EARTHQUAKES IN TAIWAN

- Earthquakes are a frequent occurrence in Taiwan due to its location along the Pacific "Ring of Fire," which accounts for around 90% of the world's seismic activity.
- This ring comprises a network of seismic faults encircling the Pacific Ocean, where the majority of earthquakes globally take place. Taiwan's vulnerability to earthquakes is exacerbated by the dynamic interaction of the Philippine Sea Plate and the Eurasian Plate, which accumulate tension and periodically release it through seismic events.
- The **mountainous terrain of Taiwan can intensify ground shaking**, leading to landslides. Recent incidents in Taiwan's eastern coast, close to the epicentre, saw landslides triggered by falling debris, resulting in the destruction of tunnels and highways, along with casualties from crushed vehicles.

ABOUT THE PACIFIC RING OF FIRE

- Alternatively referred to as the Pacific Rim or the Circum-Pacific Belt, denotes a region encircling the Pacific Ocean distinguished by active volcanoes and recurrent seismic activity.

BOUNDARIES OF PACIFIC RING OF FIRE

- This area encompasses **approximately 40,000 kilometres** and delineates the boundaries between several tectonic plates, including the Pacific, Juan de Fuca, Cocos, Indian-Australian, Nazca, American, and Philippine Plates.
- Its trajectory spans along the western coast of South and North America, traverses the Aleutian Islands in Alaska, extends down the eastern coast of Asia, passes New Zealand, and culminates at the northern coast of Antarctica. The Ring of Fire hosts roughly **75% of the world's volcanoes, with approximately 90% of global earthquakes occurring within its confines.**

VOLCANIC ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION

- The volcanic activity within the Ring of Fire arises from the movement of tectonic plates converging, leading to the creation of subduction zones where one plate is forced beneath another.
- This process occurs gradually, with plates shifting merely one or two inches per year. As subduction transpires, rocks undergo melting, transforming into magma that ascends to the Earth's surface, instigating volcanic eruptions.
- The Ring of Fire harbours a significant concentration of volcanoes primarily because the majority of the planet's subduction zones are situated within its bounds. Particularly noteworthy are the volcanoes in Indonesia, renowned for their high activity levels within the Pacific Ring of Fire. These volcanic formations stem from the interaction of three principal active tectonic plates: the Eurasian Plate, Pacific Plate, and Indo-Australian Plate, which undergo subduction processes in this region.

COOLING PATTERNS IN THE PACIFIC PLATE

- Recent scientific studies have illuminated the cooling trend observed in the Pacific Plate, which significantly influences the tectonic dynamics within the Ring of Fire. This cooling phenomenon may impact plate boundaries and subduction zones, potentially altering mountain-building processes.
- Researchers have discerned that the younger segments of the Pacific Plate, approximately 2 million years old, are cooling at an accelerated pace compared to older sections, around 100 million years old. This cooling process could heighten stress accumulation along plate boundaries, potentially leading to increased frequency and intensity of earthquakes.
- Notably, the most active regions within the Ring of Fire coincide with the northern and western extents of the Pacific Plate, where the younger portions are predominant.

ABOUT VOLCANISM

- Volcanism encompasses the eruption of molten rock, ash, and gases from beneath the Earth's crust onto its surface or into the atmosphere.
- It occurs in various types of volcanoes, including stratovolcanoes, shield volcanoes, and cinder cone volcanoes, each with distinct characteristics and eruption styles.

Causes of Volcanism

- **Tectonic Activity:** Volcanic eruptions often result from the movement and interaction of tectonic plates. Subduction zones are the regions where one tectonic plate is forced beneath another. It is the common sites of volcanic activity.

- **Hotspots:** Some volcanic eruptions are caused by hotspots, areas where magma from the mantle rises to the surface, creating volcanic features such as islands or volcanic chains.

Types of Volcanoes

- **Stratovolcanoes:** Tall, steep-sided volcanoes characterised by explosive eruptions of viscous magma.
- **Shield Volcanoes:** Broad, gently sloping volcanoes formed by the eruption of low-viscosity lava flows.
- **Cinder Cone Volcanoes:** Small, steep-sided cones composed of volcanic fragments ejected during explosive eruptions.

PRELIMS PRACTISE QUESTIONS

Q1. Which of the following best describes a stratovolcano?

- (a) A broad, gently sloping volcano formed by the eruption of low-viscosity lava flows.
- (b) A small, steep-sided cone composed of volcanic fragments ejected during explosive eruptions.
- (c) A tall, steep-sided volcano characterised by explosive eruptions of viscous magma.
- (d) A volcano formed by the accumulation of volcanic ash and debris around a central vent.

Answer: C

Q2. Consider the following statements:

- (a) Basic lava tends to have a lower content of Acidic lava
- (b) Tephra is the term used for the solidified remains of lava flows and other volcanic material
- (c) The San Andreas Fault in California is an example of a Subduction zone

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Answer: A

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

Q1. Analyse the role of hotspot volcanoes in the creation of island chains, such as the Hawaiian-Emperor seamount chain. How does the movement of tectonic plates over stationary hotspots lead to the sequential formation of volcanic islands?

Himanshu Mishra