

Current Affairs - 13 February 2025

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE (PAC)

Public
Accounts
Committee



- It is a committee of selected members of parliament, **constituted by the Parliament of India**, for the purpose of **auditing the revenue and expenditure of the Government of India**.
- It serves as a **check on the government**, especially **with respect to its expenditure bill**, and its primary function is to **examine the audit report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG)** after it is laid in Parliament.
- **C&AG assists the committee** during the course of the investigation.
- The main function of the committee is to **ascertain whether the money granted by parliament has been spent by the government within the scope of the demand**.
- **Genesis of the Committee:**
 - It is one of the **oldest Parliamentary Committees** in India.
 - From its **inception in the year 1921** till early 1950, the Finance Member was appointed as the Chairperson of the Committee, and its secretarial functions were looked after by the Finance Department (later Ministry of Finance).
 - With the coming into force of the Constitution of India on 26 January 1950, the Committee became a Parliamentary Committee under the control of the Speaker.
- **Membership:**
 - PAC consists of **not more than twenty-two members**, **fifteen elected by Lok Sabha**, and not more than **seven members of Rajya Sabha**.
 - The **members are elected every year** from amongst its members of respective houses according to the **principle of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote**.
 - The **term** of office of the members is **one year**.
 - The **Chairperson** of the Committee is **appointed by the Speaker** from amongst the members of the Committee from Lok Sabha.

Current Affairs - 13 February 2025

- **Functions:**

- The functions of the Committee include **examination of accounts showing the appropriation of sums granted by Parliament** for the expenditure of the Government of India, the **annual finance accounts** of the Government, and such other accounts laid before the House as the Committee may think fit.
- In scrutinising the appropriation accounts of the Government of India and the report of the C&AG thereon, the **Committee has to satisfy:**
 - that the **moneys** shown in the accounts as having been **disbursed** were **legally available** for, and **applicable to, the service or purpose to which they have been applied or charged;**
 - that the **expenditure conforms to the authority which governs it;** and
 - that every re-appropriation has been made in accordance with the provisions made in this behalf under rules framed by competent authority.

ENSURING INTEGRITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION - ADDRESSING CORRUPTION IN ACCREDITATION

- Recent arrests of senior officials, including a vice-chancellor and members of the National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC), highlight the **deep-seated corruption in the education accreditation system.**
- This raises concerns about the **credibility of educational institutions** and the **effectiveness of past reforms** in ensuring transparency.

Corruption Beyond Government Institutions:

- Corruption is not confined to government agencies; **private educational institutions also indulge in unethical practices.**
- Institutions **seek higher rankings** to attract students and justify higher fees, making them willing to **manipulate the system.**
- The government must lead the way in ensuring transparency and good governance.

Current Affairs - 13 February 2025

Need for Further Reforms:

- **Technological interventions** such as digital verification and third-party audits can enhance credibility.
- **The proposed binary accreditation** by NAAC may simplify the process but risks ignoring qualitative aspects of education.
- **Mandatory document uploads** through secure platforms like **DigiLocker** can enhance transparency and accountability.

Cultural and Systemic Changes Needed:

- Experts emphasized that **integrity and transparency must be ingrained as fundamental values**.
- Individual actions alone are insufficient; **collective action and systemic shifts** are required.
- As corruption may be as old as human history, eliminating corruption completely may be unrealistic. However, stringent measures can significantly reduce its impact.
- **Regulatory heads and vice-chancellors must lead by example**. This could be the precursor to systemic change.

Conclusion:

- The cost of corruption in education is ultimately borne by students and taxpayers.
- Regulatory bodies and institutional heads must lead by example to ensure a fair and transparent accreditation system.
- A corruption-free education sector is crucial for fulfilling the aspirations of a growing and **knowledge-driven society**.

UNDERSTANDING INDIA'S OBSCENITY LAWS

Ranveer Allahbadia, founder of Beer Biceps, and comedian Samay Raina are under investigation by Mumbai police for allegedly obscene comments made on the YouTube show **India's Got Latent**. Various complaints have been filed under Section 296 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, which deals with "obscene acts."

Current Affairs - 13 February 2025

Obscenity Under Indian Law

- **Section 294: Punishment for Obscene Material**
 - Covers the sale, import, export, advertisement, or profit from obscene content, including books, paintings, figures, and electronic content.
 - Defines obscene material as content that is lascivious, excessively sexual, or corrupting to viewers.
 - **Punishment:** Up to 2 years imprisonment and a fine of up to ₹5,000 for first-time offenders.
- **Obscenity in Digital Spaces: Section 67 of the Information Technology Act, 2000**
 - Punishes publishing or transmitting obscene material online.
 - Uses the same definition of obscenity as Section 294 of BNS (previously IPC Section 292).
 - Punishment: Up to 3 years imprisonment and a fine of up to ₹5 lakh for a first-time offence

Ranveer Allahbadia controversy

- Mumbai Police have filed an FIR against YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia, comedian Samay Raina, and YouTuber Apoorva Makhija over controversial remarks made on the show India's Got Latent.
- Allahbadia's comments allegedly demeaned the Indian family system and offended religious sentiments.
- The episode featured inappropriate questions about sex and parents, sparking public outrage.
- Sections under which Allahbadia and others have been booked
 - The YouTubers present on the show were charged under Sections 79, 196, 296, and 3(5) of the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.
 - **Section 79** – Any word or gestures intended to insult the modesty of a woman. Punishment- up to 3 years and fine.

Current Affairs - 13 February 2025

- **Section 196** – addresses the promotion of enmity between different groups based on factors such as religion, race, or place of birth, carrying a penalty of up to three years of imprisonment, a fine, or both.
- **Section 296** – deals with the public performance of obscene acts, songs, or words, with offenders facing up to three months in jail, a fine, or both.
- **Section 3(5)** - If more than one person carries out an act to further a common intention, all involved are liable for punishment.

SCIENTISTS DISCOVER EINSTEIN RING AROUND NEARBY GALAXY

The European Space Agency's (ESA) Euclid space telescope has discovered a rare Einstein ring around the galaxy NGC 6505, located 590 million light-years from Earth.

Captured in September 2023 and released recently, the images show a bright central galaxy encircled by a luminous ring.

NGC 6505

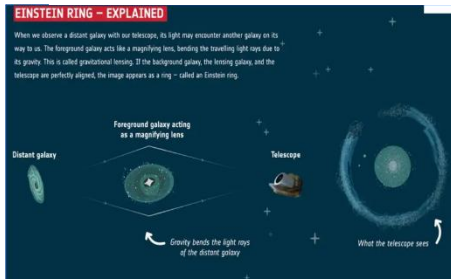
- NGC 6505 is an **elliptical galaxy** classified as E/S0, located in the **Draco constellation** in the northern celestial hemisphere.
 - Draco is a constellation in the northern sky that looks like a dragon.
 - It's the ninth largest constellation and is visible for most of the year from the Northern Hemisphere.
- It lies about 608 million light-years from the Milky Way and has a diameter of 190,000 light-years.
- Discovered by Lewis A. Swift in 1884, it gained significance in 2025 when the Euclid Space Telescope detected a complete Einstein ring surrounding it.

Einstein Ring

- An Einstein ring is a circular ring of light formed around a galaxy, dark matter, or a cluster of galaxies due to gravitational lensing.

Current Affairs - 13 February 2025

- Gravitational lensing occurs when a massive celestial object, like a galaxy or galaxy cluster, bends and amplifies the light from a more distant object behind it but along the same line of sight.
- The object causing the light to bend is called a gravitational lens.



• The Recently Discovered Einstein Ring

- In the case of the Einstein ring found by ESA's Euclid telescope, the galaxy NGC 6505 acted as the gravitational lens, distorting and magnifying the light from a distant unnamed galaxy located 4.42 billion light-years away.

• Rarity and Discovery of Einstein Rings

- Einstein rings were predicted by Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity.
- The first one was discovered in 1987, and while several more have been found, their total number remains unknown.
- They are **extremely rare**, with less than **1% of galaxies** having an Einstein ring.
- These rings are not visible to the naked eye and can only be observed through space telescopes like **Euclid**.

Need to Study Einstein Rings

- **Understanding Dark Matter** – Einstein rings help study **dark matter**, which makes up **85% of the universe** but cannot be directly detected. Gravitational lensing allows scientists to observe its effects.
- **Studying Distant Galaxies** – These rings magnify galaxies that would otherwise be invisible, providing insights into their structure and composition.
- **Exploring Universe Expansion** – By analyzing light from both foreground and background galaxies, Einstein rings help scientists understand how the **universe is expanding** over time.

Current Affairs - 13 February 2025

SHOULD CONVICTED PERSONS BE ALLOWED TO CONTEST ELECTIONS?

Arguments in Favour of Allowing Convicted Persons to Contest Elections:

- **Presumption of Innocence:**
 - The legal principle "innocent until proven guilty" is fundamental to democracy. Some argue that disqualification should apply only after all appeals are exhausted.
- **Political Vendetta:**
 - In a politically charged country like India, opponents may misuse legal provisions to frame and convict rival leaders unfairly.
- **Right to Representation:**
 - Preventing convicted persons from contesting elections could limit voters' choices, especially in cases where the individual enjoys strong public support.
- **Judicial Delays:**
 - Many cases take years, even decades, for final resolution. Banning individuals based on lower court rulings could be unfair if they are eventually acquitted.

Arguments Against Allowing Convicted Persons to Contest Elections:

- **Moral and Ethical Standards:**
 - Leaders must be held to higher moral and ethical standards. Allowing convicted criminals to contest elections weakens democratic integrity.
- **Decriminalization of Politics:**
 - India has a high number of legislators with criminal records. Barring convicted persons would reduce corruption and criminal influence in governance.
- **Erosion of Public Trust:**
 - Voters lose faith in the political system when individuals with serious criminal records hold public office.
- **Global Democratic Norms:**
 - Many democracies impose stricter eligibility criteria for political candidates to maintain public confidence in governance.

Current Affairs - 13 February 2025

Challenges in Implementation:

- **Misuse of Laws:**
 - Political parties may weaponize the judicial process to eliminate rivals through fabricated cases.
- **Delay in Electoral Reforms:**
 - Despite recommendations from the Election Commission and Law Commission, Parliament has not enacted comprehensive electoral reforms.
- **Need for Fast-Track Courts:**
 - Speedy trials for politicians facing serious charges would ensure justice while preserving electoral rights.

Significance of the Debate:

- The issue of whether convicted persons should be allowed to contest elections is crucial for India's democracy.
- On one hand, it involves safeguarding the constitutional right to participate in elections; on the other, it raises concerns about criminalization in politics.
- While the Supreme Court has taken steps to prevent criminal elements from entering politics, the onus remains on Parliament to enact laws that balance fairness with accountability.
- Electoral reforms, stricter scrutiny of candidates, and fast-tracking cases against politicians could be key solutions.

Conclusion:

- The question of whether convicted individuals should be allowed to contest elections remains a contentious issue in Indian democracy.
 - While the legal framework disqualifies those convicted of serious crimes, gaps remain regarding candidates with pending cases.
 - The need for electoral reforms, judicial efficiency, and stricter eligibility criteria is essential to uphold democratic integrity.
-

Current Affairs - 13 February 2025

DOKRA ARTWORK



- Dokra art which is also **known as bell metal craft** traces its origins back more than 4,000 years.
- It is a form of folk art practiced by the **Dhokra Damar tribes**, who are traditionally metalsmiths.
- These artisans are primarily found in eastern India, including **West Bengal, Odisha, and Jharkhand**, with a notable presence in **Chhattisgarh** as well.

Features of Dokra Artwork:

- No two pieces are ever the same.
- Each sculpture is **painstakingly handcrafted**, drawing inspiration from mythology, nature, and daily rituals.

Process of Dokra Artwork:

- The method of making Dokra is done by combining the metallurgical skills with that of the **lost wax technique**.
- Artisans begin by sculpting a **basic clay model** of the desired object.
- This model is **then coated in wax**, where fine details are meticulously etched. Another clay layer is added to form a mold, into which molten metal—typically **brass or copper**—is poured.
- The heat melts the beeswax, allowing the liquid metal to take the shape of the original model. Once cooled and hardened, the outer clay mold is broken away, revealing the finished sculpture.