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CENTRE-STATE CLASHES ON VICE CHANCELLOR APPOINTMENTS

New Regulations for Appointing VCs in Universities:

- **Name:** The draft UGC (Minimum Qualifications for Appointment and Promotion of Teachers and Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education) Regulations, 2025.
- **Objective:** It aims to standardize appointment processes but has drawn criticism for allegedly undermining state rights and federalism.

How VCs are Appointed?

- **Central universities:**
 - Central universities are established under parliamentary Acts and administered by the Centre, with the President of India acting as Visitor.
 - VC appointment committees include two nominees from the university's Executive Council and one from the Visitor.
- **State universities:**
 - State-specific laws often determine the composition of search committees.
 - Typically, the Chancellor (usually the Governor) selects the VC based on committee recommendations.
 - For instance, Kerala's law includes nominees from the university Senate, UGC Chairman, and Chancellor.
- **Private universities:** Private institutions follow similar procedures, with UGC playing a limited role through its nominee in the search committee.

Key Provisions of the Draft Regulations 2025:

- **Committee composition changes:**
 - The new rules specify that the **search-cum-selection committee** will have three members, including one each nominated by the Chancellor/Visitor, the UGC Chairman, and the university's apex body (e.g., Senate or Syndicate).

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- This grants a majority to Centre-aligned nominees in the committee.
- **Eligibility expansion:** Besides professors, individuals from senior roles in industries, public policy, administration, or public sector undertakings may now qualify as VCs.
- **Chancellor's role:** The Chancellor or Visitor will directly constitute the search committee, a departure from the 2018 guidelines.

Federalism Concerns over VCs Appointments:

- State governments have raised alarms over the draft regulations, citing:
 - **Erosion of State autonomy:** States argue that these rules centralize power in the hands of Governors, undermining federal principles.
 - **Democratic concerns:** Critics see it as a move to weaken democratically elected state governments.
- **State leaders' reactions:**
 - **Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan:** Described the draft as “anti-federal” and an overreach into state rights.
 - **Tamil Nadu CM M K Stalin:** Called it a “direct assault on federalism.”
- **UGC's stance:** UGC Chairman M Jagadesh Kumar defended the regulations as necessary for aligning with the **National Education Policy 2020** and ensuring transparent, high-quality leadership in higher education.

Conclusion:

The proposed UGC regulations have intensified ongoing Centre-state tensions, particularly over Governors' roles in university administration. While the Centre justifies these reforms as quality-driven, state governments view them as a threat to federalism and their autonomy in education governance.

The resolution of these disputes will significantly shape higher education and federal-state dynamics in India.

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SHOULD VOTER IDS BE LINKED WITH AADHAAR?

- The debate over linking Election Photo Identity Card (EPIC) with Aadhaar has been reignited amidst allegations of electoral roll manipulation.
- Prominent political parties have accused each other of tampering with voter lists, especially ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections.
- This issue draws attention to the potential benefits and challenges of such a linkage.

Advantages of Linking Aadhaar with Voter IDs:

- **Elimination of Duplicates:**
 - Linking Aadhaar can help remove duplicate or fraudulent entries, ensuring cleaner electoral rolls. Currently, over 650 million Aadhaar numbers have been linked.
- **Improved Electoral Integrity:**
 - Accurate voter data can strengthen the electoral process by reducing instances of impersonation and ensuring fair elections.
- **Administrative Efficiency:**
 - A streamlined voter database can reduce administrative overhead during elections, making the process more efficient.

Challenges and Concerns:

- **Errors in Aadhaar Database:**
 - Even minor inaccuracies in Aadhaar data can lead to wrongful deletion or rejection of legitimate voter entries.
- **Proof of Citizenship:**
 - Aadhaar is a proof of residence, not citizenship. Linking Aadhaar will not address the issue of non-citizens being on electoral rolls, requiring separate measures by the EC.
- **Privacy Risks:**

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- Electoral rolls are widely circulated among political parties, and linking Aadhaar may risk misuse of personal data, even if Aadhaar numbers are only linked in the backend.
- **Public Misconceptions:**
 - Many voters fear that linking Aadhaar with voter IDs might compromise the secrecy of their votes, leading to reduced confidence in the system.

The Way Forward:

- **Transparent Communication:**
 - Public awareness campaigns are necessary to educate voters about the benefits of Aadhaar linkage and address misconceptions regarding data security and voter secrecy.
- **Updating Forms:**
 - The EC must urgently update forms to explicitly state that providing Aadhaar is voluntary, as clarified in the 2023 Supreme Court submission.
- **Data Security Measures:**
 - Strong safeguards must be implemented to prevent misuse of Aadhaar-linked electoral data, ensuring voter confidence.
- **Separate Citizenship Verification:**
 - To ensure only citizens are on electoral rolls, the EC should develop independent methods of verifying citizenship, apart from Aadhaar linkage.

Conclusion:

The right to vote is a fundamental component of free and fair elections, integral to India's democratic framework.

While linking voter IDs with Aadhaar can enhance the integrity of the electoral process, it must be implemented with caution to address privacy concerns, data errors, and misconceptions.

A balanced approach, combining transparency, data security, and improved administrative measures, will be key to gaining public trust and strengthening the democratic process.

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KUMBH MELA EXPLAINED

- **Origin**
 - The Sanskrit word "kumbh" means pitcher or pot.
 - According to mythology, during the ocean churning by Devas (gods) and Asuras (demons), Dhanvantri emerged with a pitcher of amrita (elixir of immortality).
 - To prevent Asuras from getting it, Jayant, Indra's son, fled with the pot, protected by the Sun, Shani, Brihaspati (Jupiter), and the Moon.
 - As Jayant ran for 12 divine days (equal to 12 human years), amrita spilled at four locations: **Haridwar, Prayagraj, Ujjain, and Nashik-Trimbakeshwar.**
- **Frequency**
 - **Maha Kumbh (Poorna Kumbh):** Held every 12 years.
 - **Ardh-Kumbh:** Held in Prayagraj and Haridwar every 6 years.
- **Significance of the Rivers**
 - The festivals occur on the banks of sacred rivers:
 - **Haridwar:** Ganga
 - **Prayagraj:** Confluence of Ganga, Yamuna, and mythical Saraswati
 - **Ujjain:** Kshipra (believed to emerge from Vishnu's heart in his Varah avatar)
 - **Nashik-Trimbakeshwar:** Godavari (known as the Ganga of the south)
 - Bathing in these rivers during Kumbh, under specific celestial alignments, is believed to cleanse sins and provide spiritual merit (punya).
- **Gathering of Sadhus and Spiritual Learning**
 - Kumbh Melas attract Sadhus and holy men, especially from the akhadas, providing opportunities for devotees to meet and learn from them.

Astrological Basis of Kumbh Mela

- The site of a Kumbh Mela is determined by astrological calculations based on the positions of Jupiter, the Sun, and the Moon.

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- Jupiter's 12-year revolution around the Sun also explains the 12-year gap between Kumbh Melas.
- Astrological alignments unique to each site guide the timing and location of the Kumbh Mela.

Historical References to Kumbh Mela

- **Ancient References to Kumbh Mela**
 - The Skanda Purana is often cited as proof of Kumbh Mela's antiquity, but no extant version explicitly describes the festival as we know it.
 - The Samudra Manthan story, though mentioned in various scriptures, lacks references to the spilling of amrita at four places.
 - Some claim the Rig Veda includes shlokas highlighting the benefits of participating in the Kumbh Mela.
 - **Xuanzang's Account**
 - The **Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang** described a seventh-century fair in Prayag, but it is unclear whether it was the Kumbh Mela.
 - Kama Maclean suggests that an ancient bathing festival, Magh Mela, held at Prayag was rebranded as the "timeless" Kumbh after 1857 to avoid British interference.
 - **Adi Shankaracharya's Role**
 - The 8th-century philosopher Adi Shankaracharya is believed to have formalized the four periodic fairs, creating opportunities for Hindu ascetics and scholars to gather and guide the public.
 - **Evolution of Kumbh Mela**
 - According to some experts, the Kumbh Mela likely began at Haridwar, as Brihaspati (Jupiter) in Kumbh rashi corresponds to this site.
 - The tradition possibly took shape after the 12th century CE during the Bhakti movement, as fairs on sacred riverbanks are an ancient Hindu tradition.
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NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR ORGANIC PRODUCTION



- Launched in **2001**, it is a key government programme that laid the **foundation of systematic development of organic agriculture sector** in India, through promoting sustainable farming practices and opening new opportunities for farmers and exporters.
- By setting high standards for organic products, NPOP **enhances India's competitiveness in the global organic market**, while helping farmers adopt **eco-friendly and economically viable practices**.
- **Implementing agency:** The **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)**, Ministry of Commerce & Industries, is implementing this programme.

Highlights of the 8th Edition of NPOP:

- It introduced key amendments aimed at **promoting ease of operations and enhancing transparency for stakeholders**, including farmers.
- Certification requirements for organic grower groups have been **simplified**, and these groups are **now granted legal status** in place of the **Internal Control System (ICS)**.
- **Many portals launched in this edition:**
 - **NPOP portal:** The dedicated portal for the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) will provide more visibility and ease of operations for Organic stakeholders.
 - **Organic Promotion Portal:** Farmers, FPOs and exporters can showcase their certified organic products, generate Trade Leads and connect with global buyers. This will also include online Training and capacity building sessions for operators on Organic production and also information on Organic Trade events.



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WHAT IS UNIVERSAL ACCOUNT NUMBER (UAN)?



UAN
Universal Account Number

- UAN is a number allotted to **all salaried employees, who contribute a part of their income towards the Employee Provident Fund (EPF).**
- It is a **12-digit number** that each member of the EPF is allotted against his/her name.
- It is generated and **allotted by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and authenticated by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India.**
- This number is the **same throughout an employee's professional life.**
- **When an employee changes his job, his EPF account number and Member Identification Number (Member Id) change, but UAN remains the same.**
- If a member has already been allotted a UAN, then s/he may provide the same to the new establishment/employer, which in turn will mark the new allotted Member Id to the UAN.
- The UAN will act as an **umbrella for the multiple Member Ids allotted to an individual by different establishments.**
- This will help the member to view details of all the Member Ids linked to it.
- It is **useful for EPFO to track multiple job switches** of the employee.

About Employee Provident Fund (EPF):

- EPF is the fund established under the **Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Act, 1952.**
- It is **administered by the Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO).**
- **Every establishment with 20 or more employees is covered, and some organisations that employ fewer than 20 people are also covered, subject to certain constraints and exemptions.**



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INDRAVATI NATIONAL PARK



- It is located in the Bijapur district of **Chhattisgarh**.
- It was established in 1981 and declared as a tiger reserve in 1983 under the Project Tiger of India.
- The park derives its name from the **Indravati River**, which flows from east to west and forms the northern boundary of the reserve with **Maharashtra**.
- It mainly comprises undulating hilly terrain with altitudes ranging between 177 to 599 m above sea level.
- Three major forest types are recognized in Indravati are **Moist Mixed Deciduous Forest with Teak**, **Moist Mixed Deciduous Forest without Teak**, and **Southern Dry Mixed Deciduous Forest**.
- Some common species include **teak**, **achar**, **karra**, **kullu**, shisham, semal, haldu, arjun, bel, and Jamun.

Fauna:

- It is home to one of the **last populations of rare wild buffalo**.
 - Other animals include **Nilgai**, **Black Buck**, **Sambar**, **Gaur**, **Tiger**, Leopard, Chital, Sloth bears, etc.
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