

CENTRE DIRECTS STATES TO HOLD CIVIL DEFENCE DRILLS

Overview of Civil Defence

- Civil Defence measures are designed to address emergency situations, protect the public, and help restore critical services and infrastructure damaged by disasters or hostile attacks.
- **Historical Background**
 - Initially, Civil Defence in India focused on awareness and planning under the **Emergency Relief Organization** (ERO).
 - The 1962 China War and 1965 Indo-Pak conflict prompted a policy shift.
 - This led to the enactment of the **Civil Defence Act, 1968**, enabling protective measures across India during hostile attacks.
- **Civil Defence Act, 1968 and Amendments**
 - The Civil Defence Act, 1968 authorizes non-combat measures to protect people and property from hostile attacks via air, land, or sea.
 - It also enables the formation of the Civil Defence Corps and the creation of rules and regulations.
 - The 2009 Amendment expanded its scope to include disaster management as an additional function of Civil Defence, covering both natural and man-made disasters.
- **Geographical Scope and Categorization**
 - Though applicable across India, Civil Defence is operational in tactically and strategically vulnerable areas.
 - Civil Defence activities are currently limited to 259 categorized towns across 36 States and Union Territories.
 - 100 Multi-Hazard Prone Districts have been specifically identified for enhanced preparedness.

Current Affairs - 06 May 2025

- **Organizational Structure**

- Civil Defence is primarily volunteer-based, supported by a small number of paid staff during peacetime and expanded during crises. The current volunteer target is 14.11 lakh, of which 5.38 lakh have already been raised.
- The organisation is managed and trained by Deputy Controllers, Medical Officers, and Civil Defence Instructors.
- Duty and training allowances are provided to volunteers.
- The long-term goal is to have 1 crore Civil Defence volunteers across India within 7 years.

MHA Issues Civil Defence Directives

- The Ministry of Home Affairs instructed states like Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Haryana to conduct **mock drills on May 7**.
- The drills will be conducted down to the village level in 244 vulnerable districts.
- **Key measures include**
 - Operationalising air raid sirens
 - Implementing blackout protocols
 - Training civilians and students on safety measures
 - Evacuation rehearsals
 - Camouflaging critical infrastructure (e.g., power plants, military sites)
- **Mobilisation of Civil Defence volunteers**
 - Civil Defence volunteers under the Directorate General, Civil Defence (DGC), MHA will be mobilised. These steps aim to enhance preparedness against potential aerial or ground attacks.
- **Examples of Measures Already Taken**
 - A 30-minute blackout drill was conducted in Ferozepur, Punjab on May 4, where residents switched off lights from 9:00–9:30 PM.
 - The Ferozepur Cantonment Board issued public advisories for participation.

Current Affairs - 06 May 2025

THE MESSAGING FROM PUTTING THE IWT IN 'ABEYANCE'

- On April 24, India announced the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) of 1960, declaring it would hold the agreement in abeyance until Pakistan ceased its support for cross-border terrorism.
- This decision, following the Pahalgam terror attack of April 22, marked a significant departure from India's traditionally cautious approach to the IWT, a cornerstone of India-Pakistan relations.
- While the term abeyance suggests a temporary suspension with the option of reinstatement, it raises critical legal, diplomatic, and strategic questions, shedding light on India's evolving tactics in addressing its complex relationship with Pakistan.

The Legal Context and Meaning of 'Abeyance'

- The Legal Context
 - The term abeyance, as invoked by India, finds no grounding in the formal language of international law.
 - The IWT itself, as well as the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT) of 1969, does not recognise such a concept.
 - Notably, India is not a party to the VCLT, while Pakistan, though a signatory, has not ratified it.
 - International law, including the principles enshrined in the IWT, emphasises cooperation over unilateral action.
 - Articles XII(3) and (4) of the IWT stipulate that any modification or termination of the treaty requires mutual consent, a scenario that appears unlikely given the current diplomatic stalemate.
 - Moreover, while the VCLT allows for suspension or termination of treaties under specific exceptional circumstances, such as a material breach (Article 60), impossibility of performance (Article 61), or a fundamental change in circumstances (Article 62), India has not formally invoked these provisions.

Current Affairs - 06 May 2025

- **Meaning of ‘Abeyance’**

- Its use of abeyance, therefore, appears **more symbolic than legally enforceable, effectively serving as a political statement** rather than a legitimate suspension of treaty obligations.
- In practical terms, **India’s decision may enable it to halt cooperation on critical operational aspects** of the treaty.
- **This includes withholding data on water resource projects** and flood forecasting, actions that could temporarily jeopardize Pakistan’s water security.
- Additionally, **India might proceed with certain infrastructural activities, such as flushing silt from its reservoirs**, without notifying Pakistan as required under the IWT, further straining bilateral trust.

Strategic Calculations and the ‘Two-Level Game’

- India’s choice of ‘abeyance’ **reflects a strategic balancing act**. Domestically, the decision likely aimed to demonstrate a swift and robust response to terrorism, providing solace to a grieving nation.
- **Internationally, it signals India’s mounting frustration** with Pakistan’s intransigence.
- This **move also appears designed to free India**, at least temporarily, from the procedural constraints that Pakistan has frequently used to delay critical water infrastructure projects, such as the **Kishenganga and Ratle** hydropower initiatives.
- **The strategy, however, is fraught with risks**. Pakistan, heavily reliant on Indus waters, has already characterised India’s actions as an existential threat, **potentially inflaming tensions in an already volatile relationship**.
- The **current political instability in Pakistan**, exacerbated by internal dissent, economic challenges, and efforts to internationalise the Kashmir dispute, **further complicates India’s calculations**.
- Whether **India’s abeyance will exert meaningful pressure on Pakistan** remains an open question.

WHAT IS ECINET?



- It is a **single-point digital platform** being developed by the **Election Commission of India (ECI)**.
- It is a new user-friendly digital interface **for the electors** and other stakeholders such as the **election officials, political parties and civil society**.
- It will **integrate and reorient** over 40 of ECI's existing mobile and web applications.
- ECINET will subsume existing apps like the Voter Helpline App, Voter Turnout App, cVIGIL, Suvidha 2.0, ESMS, Saksham, and KYC App.
- ECINET will have an **aesthetic User Interface (UI) and a simplified User Experience (UX)** by providing a **singular platform for all electoral-related activities**.
- This move is also designed to alleviate the burden of the users for downloading and navigating multiple apps and remembering different logins.
- ECINET will enable users to access relevant electoral data on their desktops or smartphones.
- The **data on ECINET** will be **entered solely by the authorized ECI official**.
 - It would **ensure that the data** made available to the stakeholders **is as accurate as possible**.
- The data provided through ECINET will be **strictly aligned within the legal framework** established by the **Representation of People Act 1950, 1951, Registration of Electoral Rules 1960**, Conduct of Election Rules 1961, and instructions issued by ECI from time to time.
- ECINET is expected to benefit nearly 100 crore electors and the entire electoral machinery comprising over 10.5 lakh Booth Level Officers (BLOs), around 15 Lakh Booth Level Agents (BLAs) appointed by Political Parties, nearly 45 Lakh Polling Officials, 15,597 Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs), 4,123 EROs, and 767 District Election Officers (DEOs) across the country.

CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK

Institute of Research Based Learning & Competition

Current Affairs - 06 May 2025

RULES FOR OBTAINING A VOTER ID IN INDIA

- Article 326 of the Indian Constitution grants the right to vote to every Indian citizen aged 18 years or above in elections to the Lok Sabha and State/UT Assemblies.
- **Disqualification Criteria (Representation of the People (RP) Act, 1950– Section 16)**
 - A person can be disqualified from voter registration if they:
 - Are not a citizen of India.
 - Are of unsound mind, as declared by a competent court.
 - Are disqualified under any law related to corrupt practices or election-related offences.
- **Application Process (Form 6)**
 - Form 6 -the Election Commission of India's (ECI's) form for registering new electors - is used for registering new electors with the ECI.
 - Requires self-attested documents for:
 - Age proof
 - Address proof
 - No separate citizenship proof is needed, but the applicant must sign a citizenship declaration.
- **Penalties for False Declaration (Section 31, RP Act)**
 - If the citizenship declaration is false, the applicant can face:
 - Up to 1 year of imprisonment
 - Or a fine
 - Or both
- **Verification by Electoral Authorities**
 - Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) verifies claims and objections.
 - Booth Level Officers (BLOs) assist EROs by collecting forms and documents.
 - The ERO may also conduct hearings and investigations before finalizing entries.

How Citizenship is Determined for Voter Registration

- **Responsibility of the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO)**
 - The ERO must ensure that no ineligible person, including non-citizens, is added to the electoral roll. The ERO must independently verify the applicant's citizenship status, especially when a claim or objection is raised.
- **Initial Onus of Proof**
 - The applicant bears the initial burden of proof to establish Indian citizenship when applying for the first time.
- **Special Cases**
 - For migrants within India, the ERO cross-checks with the District Election Officer (DEO) of the applicant's previous district.
 - For married women without documentary proof:
 - Previous voter registration as an unmarried woman can be considered.
 - Proof of marriage or certificates from village heads (before and after marriage) may be accepted.
- **Objections to Citizenship**
 - If someone objects to an applicant's citizenship, the burden of proof shifts to the objector. However, the ERO may still require the applicant to provide proof of Indian citizenship in such cases

Cases of Non-Citizens Holding Voter IDs

- **Current Measures**
 - The ECI is working to link Aadhaar with Voter IDs to prevent non-citizens from registering.
- **Limitations of Aadhaar Linkage**
 - Possession of Aadhaar by non-citizens makes detection difficult, as Aadhaar alone cannot confirm citizenship.
 - Thus, Aadhaar linkage is not a foolproof solution for identifying ineligible voters.

CASTE CENSUS IN INDIA: POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS AND PATH TO SOCIAL EQUITY

- Central Government's decision to include caste enumeration in the upcoming national Census marks a pivotal moment in the country's socio-political evolution.
- The move is not just administrative, it is deeply political.
- The breakthrough came with the **Mandal Commission Report (1980)**, which estimated that OBCs comprised 52% of India's population and recommended 27% reservations in public jobs and educational institutions.
- While the report's partial implementation in 1990 changed India's political landscape, it also exposed the limitations of relying on outdated 1931 data. Since then, the demand for a fresh caste census has gained momentum.

Broader Social Implications

- While OBCs have gained political representation over the decades, this has disproportionately benefited intermediary and dominant backward castes.
- Several smaller SC and OBC communities remain invisible in public policy and electoral equations due to lack of data, leadership, and targeted welfare.
- A caste-based census could democratize representation by bringing such groups into focus. It could also shed light on **land ownership, education, and access to government schemes**, revealing the economic underpinnings of caste inequalities.
- The enumeration would not only serve OBCs but also denotified tribes, nomadic communities, and underrepresented minorities.

Conclusion

If implemented transparently and sensitively, the caste census can become a tool for **inclusive development**, rectifying decades of structural inequities and ensuring that no community is left behind in India's democratic journey.

SANJAY GANDHI NATIONAL PARK (SGNP)



- It is a large protected area near Borivali in the **northern part of Mumbai**.
 - It is situated partly in Thane District and in Mumbai Suburban District of **Maharashtra**.
 - **In the early days**, the park was **known as Krishnagiri National Park**. However, in 1974 the name of this park was changed to '**Borivali National Park**' and in 1981 to '**Sanjay Gandhi National Park**' to pay tribute to late Indian leader Sanjay Gandhi.
 - It covers an expansive area of 103 sq.km., making it **one of the largest parks** in the world located **within city limits**.
 - The **Kanheri caves**, which are located within the park, were carved out by **Buddhist monks** between the **1st century CE and 10th century CE**.
 - The caves served as monasteries, temples, schools, and living quarters for the monks.
 - They also contain some of the finest examples of **Buddhist art and architecture** in India.
 - They were **chiseled out of a massive basaltic rock outcropping**.
 - Besides, the park also has **two artificial lakes**, namely **Tulsi Lake and Vihar Lake**. The two lakes together **supply** a significant amount of **water to South Mumbai**.
- Flora:** Kadamba, Teak, Karanj, Shisham, and species of acacia, Ziziphus, euphorbias, etc are found in this National Park.
- Fauna:**
- **Leopard, sambar, chital, barking deer**, rusty spotted cat, hyena, common palm civet, small Indian civet, Indian crested porcupine, Indian hare, Indian flying fox, common langur, and bonnet macaque.
 - The park also boasts 251 species of birds and a large variety of butterflies.