

ECI'S CRACKDOWN ON UNRECOGNISED POLITICAL PARTIES: DELISTING 345 DEFAULTERS FROM POLITICAL REGISTRY

- **Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs)** are associations registered with the Election Commission of India (ECI) under **Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951**.
- These parties are distinct from recognised national or state parties as they have not secured a sufficient vote share or seats in previous elections.
- Despite not having official recognition, RUPPs enjoy certain benefits:
 - **Tax exemption** under Section 13A of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
 - Eligibility for **common poll symbols** during elections.
 - Permission to nominate up to **20 'star campaigners'** for canvassing.
- They are, however, required to:
 - Contest elections periodically.
 - File annual audit accounts and contribution reports.
 - Disclose donations exceeding Rs. 20,000, and ensure that no donations above Rs. 2,000 are accepted in cash.

Reasons Behind the Election Commission Delisting 345 RUPPs

- The Election Commission has initiated the process of delisting **345 RUPPs** that have:
 - **Not contested** even a single election in the last six years.
 - **Failed to maintain physical offices** at their registered addresses.
 - **Ignored statutory filing requirements**, including financial disclosures.
- This is part of a broader clean-up initiated by the ECI, which began identifying and acting against “non-functional” parties as early as 2022.
- Since then, **284 RUPPs have been delisted** and **253 declared inactive** for failing to comply.
- The latest batch of 345 brings this drive to a sharper focus, particularly with upcoming elections in view.

Legal Framework and Loopholes

- The right to form a political association is protected under **Article 19(1)(c)** of the Constitution.
- Registration is governed by **Section 29A of the RP Act, 1951**, which does not grant ECI explicit power to **de-register** a political party once registered, except in cases of fraud or violation of constitutional allegiance.
- This legal vacuum means that while the ECI can **delist** or **declare parties inactive** (affecting their privileges), it **cannot de-register** them outright.
- The **Supreme Court**, in **Indian National Congress vs Institute of Social Welfare** (2002), affirmed this interpretation.
- Thus, ECI's current action is limited to **delisting RUPPs from the list of parties eligible for benefits**, not erasing them as legal entities.

Financial Implications and Risks

- Many of these parties were found to be:
 - Availing **100% tax exemptions** despite non-compliance.
 - Operating as **shell entities** or even engaging in **money laundering** activities.
 - **Selling nominations** by fielding dummy candidates to extract withdrawal payments from major parties.
- By delisting such entities, the ECI aims to block misuse of public trust and state-sanctioned benefits.

Reforms Needed and Way Forward

- The **Law Commission**, in its **255th report (2015)**, recommended empowering the ECI to **de-register parties** that fail to contest elections for 10 consecutive years.
- The ECI echoed this in its **2016 electoral reform memorandum**.
- Additionally, the **lack of inner-party democracy** remains an unresolved concern. Many RUPPs, and even some recognised parties, operate without periodic internal elections or transparency in leadership appointments.

GPS INTERFERENCE



- GPS interference refers to **deliberate cyber-attacks** that disrupt or deceive Global Positioning System (GPS) signals, affecting navigation for aircraft, ships, and other vehicles.

- **Types of GPS Interference**

- **GPS Jamming**

Involves the use of a **jammer device** that emits strong radio signals on GPS frequencies. These signals **overpower the weaker satellite signals**, causing GPS receivers to **lose location and time data**.

- **GPS Spoofing**

Uses a device to **transmit false signals** that mimic those from GPS satellites. It **deceives receivers** into accepting incorrect location or time data.

- Unlike jamming, spoofing doesn't block signals—it **manipulates them**.

Dangers Associated with GPS Interference

- GPS interference poses a serious threat to both civilian and military operations, enabling remote disruption without physical confrontation.
- In 2024, there were reports of up to 700 GPS spoofing incidents daily worldwide, underlining the scale and urgency of the threat.
- **Risks to Aviation and Maritime Safety**
 - Spoofing can mislead pilots, causing incorrect position judgments and increasing the risk of collisions with terrain or other aircraft.
 - For ships, loss of GPS accuracy can lead to groundings, collisions, and disruption of maritime operations, including port functions.

Impact on Critical Infrastructure

- Air traffic control, port operations, and vessel traffic systems (VTS) are highly dependent on GPS. Interference can cause systemic failures in these sectors, with wide-ranging safety and operational consequences.

Conclusion

- Mitigating GPS interference involves a multi-layered approach:
 - Redundant systems in aircraft
 - Manual navigation and GNSS diversification in ships
 - National autonomy through indigenous systems like NavIC
- This strategy ensures continuity, safety, and sovereignty in navigation and critical operations.

GoIStats APP



- The GoIStats mobile application represents NSO's vision of creating an **all-encompassing data ecosystem** where every stakeholder can seamlessly access official data on the go.
- **Features of GoIStats App**
 - It has an interactive "**Key Trends**" **dashboard** showcasing important socio-economic indicators with dynamic visualizations of **critical metrics including GDP, inflation, employment data**.
 - Users gain direct access to NSO's database through the "Products" section, featuring one-click CSV downloads.
 - It also has advanced filtering and search capabilities with **comprehensive metadata, and mobile-optimized data tables** are also available for seamless viewing.
 - It contains **visual data storytelling capabilities** including a **curated infographics section** that transforms complex statistics into digestible insights, interactive charts and graphs with contextual explanations, social sharing features to promote data literacy across communities.
 - It provides users with the access to **NSO reports and publications** with instant download functionality. Regular updates aligned with NSO's publication calendar are provided to the user with app notification facility.

TRACHOMA



- It is a **bacterial infection** caused by the **bacterium Chlamydia Trachomatis** which affects the eyes.
- **How does it spread?**
 - It is **contagious**; spreading through **contact with the eyes, eyelids, nose** or throat secretions of infected people, if left untreated it causes irreversible blindness.
 - It is found in communities who are living in poor environmental conditions.
 - The World Health Organisation (WHO) has termed Trachoma as a **neglected tropical disease** and its estimation suggests that 150 million people worldwide are affected by Trachoma.
- **Initiatives of Government of India**
 - The Government of India launched the **National Trachoma Control Program** in 1963 and later on Trachoma control efforts were integrated into India's **National Program for Control of Blindness (NPCB)**.
 - As a result, in 2017, India was declared free from infectious.
 - The **National Trachomatous Trichiasis (TT only) Survey** was also carried out in 200 endemic districts of the country under National Programme for Control of Blindness & Visual Impairment (NPCBVI) from 2021-24, which was a mandate set by WHO in order to declare that India has eliminated Trachoma as a public health problem.
 - To eliminate trachoma as a public health problem, **WHO recommends the SAFE strategy**.
 - **The SAFE strategy includes:** Surgery to treat the blinding stage (trachomatous trichiasis); Antibiotics to clear the infection, particularly the antibiotic azithromycin; Facial cleanliness and Environmental improvement, particularly improving access to water and sanitation.



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FOOTBALL FOR SCHOOLS (F4S) PROGRAMME



- It is an ambitious programme run by **Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)** in collaboration with **UNESCO**,
- It aims to contribute to the **education, development and empowerment** of people.
- It seeks to make **football more accessible to both boys and girls** around the world by incorporating football activities into the education system, in partnership with relevant authorities and stakeholders.
- It has been designed to promote **targeted life skills and competencies** through football and contribute to the **United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and other priorities.
- The F4S Programme is aligned with global sport, education and health policies, including **UNESCO's Kazan Action Plan**, the Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework of Action, and the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Action Plan on Physical Activity (GAPPA).
- **Objectives of the Football for Schools Programme:**
 - **Empower learners** (boys and girls) with valuable life skills and competencies
 - Empower and **provide coach-educators** with the training to deliver sport and life-skills activities
 - Build the **capacity of stakeholders** (schools, MAs and public authorities) to deliver training in life skills through football
 - **Strengthen the cooperation** between governments, MAs and participating schools to enable partnerships, alliances and intersectoral collaboration
- It was **launched in mid-2019** with pilot projects in Puerto Rico and Lebanon.
- In India, the programme is **implemented by the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education (DoSEL)**, with support from the **All India Football Federation (AIFF)** and the **Sports Authority of India (SAI)**.

REVISIT DIGITAL SEARCH POWERS UNDER THE I-T BILL 2025

- India's current tax law, under Section 132 of the Income-Tax Act, 1961, allows for search and seizure in physical spaces like homes, offices, and lockers.
- These powers are justified by a direct link between the location and the suspected undisclosed income or assets.

Expansion to Digital Space

- The new Income-Tax Bill, 2025, proposes to expand search powers to include an individual's "virtual digital space"—such as emails, cloud drives, social media accounts, and digital platforms.
- The inclusion of "any other space of similar nature" makes this scope open-ended and undefined.

- **Concerns Over Privacy and Overreach**

- Digital spaces often hold far more information than required for a tax investigation, including data involving friends, family, and colleagues.
- This significantly increases the risk of disproportionate intrusion and the violation of privacy.

- **Implications for Confidential Professions**

- The move is particularly worrying for professionals like journalists, whose devices may hold confidential sources and unpublished materials.
- Seizures based on vague suspicion could impair press freedom and violate protected communication.

- **Operational Challenges**

- The Bill also allows tax authorities to override access codes to digital devices.
- However, it remains unclear how this will work in practice—especially for encrypted apps like WhatsApp, which were specifically mentioned by the Finance Minister.

Violation of the Proportionality Principle

- The proposed provision grants sweeping access to personal digital data without requiring warrants, relevance checks, or distinctions between financial and non-financial data.
- This violates the proportionality test laid down in the **Justice K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India** judgment.
- **Supreme Court's Four-Fold Test**
 - The Supreme Court mandates that **restrictions on privacy** must:
 - Serve a legitimate aim
 - Be necessary
 - Use the least intrusive means
 - Be proportionate
 - The proposed provision **fails to meet these criteria**, particularly on necessity and intrusiveness.

SIMILIPAL TIGER RESERVE (STR)



- It is located within the Mayurbhanj District, in the **northernmost part of Odisha**.
- Situated in the **Deccan Peninsular Bio-geographic Zone**, it harbours a unique **blend of Western Ghats, Eastern Ghats, and eastern Himalayan biodiversity**.
- It is spread over 2750 sq.km. and has some beautiful **waterfalls like Joranda and Barehipani**.
- It comes **under the Mayurbhanj Elephant Reserve** that includes the adjacent **Hadgarh and Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuaries**.
- It is surrounded by high plateaus and hills, the **highest peak** being the **twin peaks of Khairiburu and Meghashini** (1515 m above mean sea level).
- The **terrain** is mostly **undulating and hilly**, interspersed with **open grasslands and wooded areas**.

- **History and Current Status:**
 - Declared a Tiger Reserve in 1956 and included under Project Tiger in 1973.
 - Recognised as part of the **World Network of Biosphere Reserves** by UNESCO in 2009.
- **Drainage:**
 - At least **twelve rivers** cut across the plain area, all of which **drain into the Bay of Bengal**.
 - The prominent among them are **Burhabalanga, Palpala Bandan, Salandi, Kahairi, and Deo**.
- It is also home to various **tribes**, including **Kolha, Santhala, Bhumija, Bhatudi, Gondas, Khadia, Mankadia, and Sahara**.
- **Vegetation:** The vegetation is a **mix** of different forest types and habitats, with **Northern tropical moist deciduous dominating some semi-evergreen patches**.
- **Flora:**
 - The floristic composition indicates a **connecting link between South Indian and North Eastern Sub-Himalayan Species**.
 - **Sal** is the **dominant tree species**
 - The park also has **extensive grasslands** that are grazing grounds for many of the herbivores.
 - These forests boast of **many plants** that have **medicinal and aromatic properties**.
- **Fauna:**
 - It is known for the **tiger, elephant, and hill mynah**.
 - It holds the **highest tiger population in Odisha**.
 - Apart from the tiger, the major mammals are the **leopard, sambar, barking deer, gaur, jungle cat, wild boar, four-horned antelope, giant squirrel, and common langur**.