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Current Affairs - 13 July 2026

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA (CITES)



- CITES was adopted in 1973 and **entered into force in 1975**.
- It is a global agreement **between 185 Parties** (184 countries and the European Union) that regulates international trade in wild animals and plants.
- It aims to **ensure that international trade** in wild animals and plants is legal, sustainable and traceable, and **does not threaten the survival of the species in the wild**.
- **Functions:**
 - CITES regulates **international trade in specimens of species** of wild animals and plants based on a system of permits and certificates issued under certain conditions.
 - It covers **export, re-export, import** and landing from the **high seas of live and dead animals and plants and their parts and derivatives**, including **any processed products**.
 - Although **CITES is legally binding** on the Parties – in other words, they have to implement the Convention—it **does not take the place of national laws**.
- **CITES Secretariat:** Geneva, Switzerland
- Representatives of **CITES nations meet every two** to three years to review progress and adjust the lists of protected species, which are grouped into **three categories with different levels of protection**:
- **Appendix I:**
 - It includes **species threatened with extinction** and provides the **greatest level of protection**, including a prohibition on commercial trade.
- **Appendix II:**
 - It includes species that are **not currently threatened** with extinction **but may become so without trade controls**.

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- Regulated trade is allowed if the exporting country issues a permit based on findings that the specimens were legally acquired and the trade will not be detrimental to the survival of the species or its role in the ecosystem.
- **Appendix III:**
 - It includes species for which a **country has asked other CITES parties to help control international trade.**
 - Trade in Appendix III species is regulated **using CITES export permits** (issued by the country that listed the species in Appendix III) and certificates of origin (issued by all other countries).

SPECIAL ASSISTANCE TO STATES FOR CAPITAL INVESTMENT SCHEME



- It is an important scheme of the Central government under which states and Union Territories receive **interest-free financial aid for infrastructure projects.**
- It is managed by the **Ministry of Finance.**
- SASCI was **launched in 2020-21** amid the financial stress caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Salient features of SASCI Scheme:**
 - Under this, the Centre **provides long-term, 50-year interest-free loans** to states and union territories to boost capital spending.
 - It also provides incentives tied to reforms and capital investment by states.
 - It has an endeavor of **developing end to end tourist experience, funding support to the shortlisted proposals**, strengthening all points of the tourist value chain, harnessing quality expertise for design and development, sustainable operations and maintenance etc.
 - Under this scheme projects have been identified based on the project proposals submitted by **the concerned State Governments.**

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REGULATING AI IN THE JUDICIARY: INSIDE THE SUPREME COURT'S DRAFT FRAMEWORK

- The Supreme Court, in June 2026, released the **draft Regulations for Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Courts, 2026**, aimed at creating a governance framework for AI adoption in the judiciary.

Applicability: Is It Binding?

- The Draft Regulations are **not** automatically or uniformly binding.
- They will come into force for the Supreme Court on a date notified by the Chief Justice of India, and separately for each High Court (and courts/tribunals under its jurisdiction) on dates notified by that High Court's Chief Justice.
- Different provisions can also be implemented on different dates, allowing **phased AI adoption** suited to each court's needs.

What Role Has Been Carved Out for AI?

- Courts are required to "actively seek opportunities" to deploy AI systems that demonstrably improve **access to justice, reduce delays, or enhance efficiency**.
- AI use is explicitly permitted for administrative and assistive functions such as case management, transcription, translation, legal research, document summarisation, accessibility, and court administration.
- All such use requires written approval from the SC's Apex Body or the concerned High Court/tribunal's AI Committee, along with supervision by nominated court officers.

Can AI Decide a Case?

- The Draft Regulations categorically state that **no judicial outcome can be reached** through algorithmic decision-making alone or solely on AI-generated information.
- Human judicial authority remains determinative in all adjudicative decisions; AI's role in decision-making, if any, is purely **advisory** and subject to **independent human evaluation**.

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What Is Absolutely Barred?

- Certain uses are prohibited in "absolute and non-derogable" terms, meaning no authority can permit them under any circumstances:
 - Risk scoring to assess flight risk;
 - Predicting recidivism (the process of using historical, behavioral, and demographic data to estimate the likelihood that a previously convicted individual will commit a new crime or return to prison);
 - Evaluating bail eligibility;
 - Determining witness credibility;
 - Predicting, profiling, or inferring future conduct of parties, accused persons, witnesses, or legal representatives;
 - Submitting AI-generated output as independent evidence without full disclosure of its AI origin;
 - Using "black-box" (unexplainable) AI systems in matters affecting personal liberty.

Grievance Redressal for Litigants

- Where harm results from a prohibited use of AI, an affected party can file an application with the court where the AI system was used.
- The court must provide a hearing and pass appropriate orders.
- High Courts may design simplified procedures and complaint formats for accessibility, and this remedy exists alongside other legal remedies already available under ordinary law.

Conclusion

- The SC's draft regulations strike a calibrated balance, embracing AI for efficiency and access to justice while firmly safeguarding judicial independence, personal liberty, and due process.
- By barring algorithmic decision-making in sensitive matters and ensuring layered oversight, India moves toward responsible, human-centric AI governance in courts.

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ECINET'S NEW FORM 6 REQUIREMENT: PROCEDURAL QUESTIONS OVER VOTER REGISTRATION

The Election Commission of India's (ECI) online voter registration portal, ECINET, now requires new applicants to furnish **details of their parents' status** in the last Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, down to the polling booth number and serial number.

This change has been introduced even though **Form 6**, the statutory enrolment form, has not been formally amended through the procedure established by law, raising questions about due process.

What Is the New Procedure?

- The ECINET portal allows users to submit forms for new electoral registrations, changes to existing rolls, and deletions.
- Form 6, the electors' enrolment form under the Representation of the People Act, 1950, and the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, now includes a new section online called the "declaration form."
- Applicants must state whether their parents were included in the last SIR:

If yes: They must provide the Assembly constituency number, polling booth (part) number, and the serial number at which their father or mother was registered.

If no: They must select that option and provide their parents' names and Electors Photo Identity Card (EPIC) numbers, if available.

Status of the SIR Exercise

- The EC has completed the SIR in 13 states/UTs since June 2025, using the early 2000s intensive revision as the reference point ("last SIR").
- The exercise is currently underway in 19 other states/UTs.
 - The EC has yet to announce the SIR for Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, and Jammu and Kashmir.
 - In Assam, the SIR has been deferred until the National Register of Citizens (NRC) exercise is completed.

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- So far, the SIR has led to the **deletion of 5.58 crore names** nationally, mostly due to electors being found deceased, shifted, absent, or enrolled at multiple places.
- In West Bengal alone, 27 lakh electors who had submitted documents were deleted through a judicial adjudication process, with appeals now pending before appellate tribunals.

The Legal Question: Was Due Process Followed?

- **Article 326** of the Constitution guarantees the right to enrol as an elector to all adult citizens ordinarily resident in a constituency, unless disqualified by law.
- The **Representation of the People Act, 1950** empowers the Union government to frame election and registration rules.
- **Section 28 (RPA)** requires the Central Government, after consulting the EC, to notify rules in the Official Gazette, which must then be laid before Parliament.
- Since Form 6 is part of the **Registration of Electors Rules, 1960**, any change to it requires formal amendment and gazette notification by the Law and Justice Ministry.
- However, no such amendment has been notified. E-Gazette records from June 2025 (when the SIR was announced) show no change to Form 6.
- Notably, the downloadable/printable version of Form 6 on ECINET does not even contain the new SIR declaration section, confirming that the form has not been formally amended.

Implications for New Electors

- New applicants, largely those who have recently turned 18, must now trace themselves or their parents to the last SIR record.
- Since the EC has not clarified this change, it remains unclear whether applicants unable to provide such details will face additional scrutiny.
- This assumes greater significance because the ongoing SIR is unprecedented: rolls are being prepared afresh rather than revised annually, and for the first time, electors must submit documents to prove eligibility, including citizenship.

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INDIA-US EXTRADITION LAW AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

- The US Department of Justice (DoJ) has indicted jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, Punjab Police SHO Gurinderjit Singh Nagra, and others for racketeering conspiracy, murder, extortion, and transnational organised crime spanning India, Canada, and the US.
- If the US formally seeks their extradition, the process will be governed by the India-US Extradition Treaty (1997) and India's Extradition Act, 1962.

Legal Framework Governing Extradition:

- **India-US Extradition Treaty (1997):**
 - The treaty regulates extradition between the two countries and is founded on the principle of dual criminality.
 - Under **dual criminality**, an offence is extraditable only if it is punishable by more than one year of imprisonment in both jurisdictions.
- **Key provisions:**
 - **Dual criminality:** The underlying conduct, not the exact legal terminology, must constitute a serious offence in both countries.
 - **Political offence exception:** Political offences are exempt, but murder, terrorism, hostage-taking, drug trafficking, etc., are specifically excluded from this protection.
 - **Nationality not a bar:** Indian citizenship alone cannot prevent extradition.
 - **Rule of speciality:** An extradited person can ordinarily be tried only for the offences for which extradition was granted.

Extradition Procedure in India: (If the US submits a formal extradition request)

- **Executive process:**
 - The US Department of Justice forwards the request through the US State Department to India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
 - MEA, in consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and agencies such as the CBI, examines compliance with the treaty and the Extradition Act.

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- **Judicial scrutiny:**
 - If accepted for consideration, an Indian court examines whether treaty conditions are fulfilled, and the evidence would justify prosecution if the offence had occurred in India.
 - If satisfied, the court certifies the person as extraditable.
- **Final executive decision:**
 - The Union Government has the final authority to approve or refuse surrender.
 - It may impose conditions, seek diplomatic assurances, and delay extradition where legally justified.
 - Orders are subject to judicial review before the High Court and the Supreme Court, making extradition proceedings time-consuming.

Can India Refuse or Delay Extradition?

- Extradition is not automatic, even if treaty requirements are fulfilled.
- **Case of Lawrence Bishnoi:**
 - He is already in judicial custody with numerous criminal cases pending in India.
 - Section 31 of the Extradition Act, 1962 allows India to postpone surrender while domestic criminal proceedings are pending.
 - Article 14 of the Treaty permits temporary surrender but leaves discretion to the requested State.
 - Hence, India may legally require Bishnoi to face domestic trials first, and serve any sentence before extradition.
- **Case of Gurinderjit Singh Nagra:**
 - Not facing comparable prosecutions in India.
 - However, Section 34 treats certain offences committed abroad as if committed in India.
 - Section 34A empowers the Centre to prosecute an accused domestically instead of extraditing him.

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DUDHWA TIGER RESERVE



- **Location:** It is located on the **Indo-Nepal border** in the district of Lakhimpur-Kheri in **Uttar Pradesh**.
 - It includes the **Dudhwa National Park** and two nearby sanctuaries, viz. **Kishanpur and Katarniaghat**.

Topography: It is a typical **Tarai-Bhabar habitat** of the upper Gangetic plains biogeographic province.

Rivers: The **Sharda River** flows by the Kishanpur WL Sanctuary, the **Geruwa River** flows through the **Katarniaghat WL Sanctuary**, and the Suheli and Mohana streams flow in the Dudhwa National Park, all of which are tributaries of the mighty **Ghagra River**.

Vegetation: The vegetation is of the **North Indian Moist Deciduous type**, containing some of the finest examples of Sal forests in India.

Flora: It mainly consists of Sal Forest along with its associate tree species like Terminalia alata (Asna), Lagerstroemia parviflora (Asidha), Adina cordifolia (Haldu), etc.

Fauna: Tiger, leopard, Swamp deer, Rhinoceros, chital, hog deer, barking deer, Sambhar, wild boar, and Ratel.

There are about 400 species of birds in the park, such as the Florican and black-necked storks.