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Current Affairs - 20 August 2025

CONSTITUTION (130th AMENDMENT) BILL, 2025 - REMOVAL OF MINISTERS FACING SERIOUS CRIMINAL CHARGES

Key Provisions of the Constitution (130th Amendment) Bill, 2025:

- **Constitutional amendments:**
 - The Bill will amend **Articles 75, 164 and 239AA**.
 - **Article 75** of the Constitution primarily deals with the appointment and responsibilities of the Council of Ministers, including the Prime Minister.
 - **Article 164** of the Constitution outlines the provisions related to the CoMs in a state.
 - **Article 239AA** of the Constitution outlines special provisions for the NCT of Delhi.
- **Removal clause:** If a Minister (PM/CM/Minister) is arrested and detained for 30 consecutive days on charges punishable with five years or more imprisonment, then:
 - President (on advice of PM/directly) removes Union Ministers/PM.
 - Governor (on CM's advice) removes State Ministers.
 - Governor (directly) removes Chief Minister of State.
 - UT-specific amendments cover CMs/Ministers in UTs and J&K.
- **Reappointment:** Ministers can be reappointed upon release.

Justification and Rationale Behind the Constitution (130th Amendment) Bill, 2025:

- **Good governance and constitutional morality:** Ministers facing criminal charges undermine public trust and principles of responsible government.
- **Character beyond suspicion:** Elected representatives must rise above political interests to uphold the welfare of people.
- **Constitutional gap:** No explicit removal provision existed earlier; courts interpreted "pleasure of Governor/President" but bound by aid and advice doctrine.



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Constitutional and Administrative Implications:

- **Strengthens executive accountability:** Explicit mechanism for removal of tainted Ministers.
- **Centre–State–UT differentiation:** Separate but aligned amendments to maintain federal balance.
- **Checks criminalisation of politics:** Legislative attempt to safeguard public trust in governance.
- **Risk of political misuse:**
 - Analysts criticized the Bill as a **tool to destabilize opposition-ruled states**.
 - **Warning of misuse by central agencies** to arrest opposition leaders, while ruling party leaders remain untouched.
 - There have been recent cases when incumbent CMs — such as Arvind Kejriwal in **Delhi** and Hemant Soren in **Jharkhand** — spent several weeks in jail on corruption allegations.

NAVYA INITIATIVE



- The NAVYA (Nurturing Aspirations through Vocational training for Young Adolescent Girls) **aims to empower adolescent girls (AGs) aged 16–18 years in aspirational districts** by equipping them with **relevant skills for socio-economic independence**.
- It is a joint initiative of the **Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship** and the **Ministry of Women & Child Development**.
- **Objective of NAVYA Initiative**
 - Provide **demand-driven vocational training** aligned with traditional and non-traditional sectors.
 - Facilitate **holistic development through modules** on health, nutrition, hygiene, financial literacy, life skills, and legal awareness.



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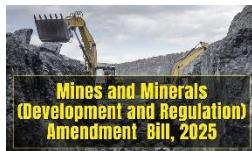


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- **Promote employability**, self-employment, and forward linkages such as internships, apprenticeships, and job opportunities.
- **Strengthen gender-inclusive skilling** and create a safe, supportive training environment.
- Bridge the gap between education and livelihood, particularly for girls in underserved and remote areas.
- Under the NAVYA initiative, it has been decided to train 3850 adolescent girls under **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0 (PMKVY 4.0)** in **non-traditional and modern job roles** such as digital marketing, cybersecurity, AI-enabled services, green jobs, and other emerging sectors.
- Further, **training in life skills, financial literacy**, and digital competence is to be provided to equip them for both current and future workforce demands.
- Under the NAVYA initiative, 19 States and 27 districts have been covered.

MINES AND MINERALS (DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATION) AMENDMENT



BILL, 2025

- The bill will **amend the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957**.
- The Bill provides that leaseholders may apply to the state government for adding **other minerals to an existing lease**.
 - For inclusion of **critical and strategic minerals** and other specified minerals, **no additional amount** needs to be paid.
 - These include minerals such as **lithium, graphite, nickel, cobalt, gold, and silver**.
- The Act establishes the **National Mineral Exploration Trust** to fund mineral exploration in the country. The **Bill widens the scope of the Trust** to also fund the development of mines and minerals.



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- Under the Act, captive mines are allowed to sell up to 50 percent of minerals produced in a year, after meeting end-use requirements. The Bill removes the limit on the sale of minerals.
 - The Bill allows for a one-time extension of the area under a mining or composite lease.
 - This will be applicable for deep-seated minerals. Deep-seated minerals are minerals which occur at a depth of more than 200 metres from the surface of land.
 - The Bill provides for establishing an authority to register and regulate mineral exchanges.
 - The Bill defines mineral exchange as a registered electronic trading platform or marketplace for trading minerals and metals.
 - The central government will frame rules regarding mineral exchanges on matters including:
 - manner of registration
 - levy of fees and other charges
 - prevention of insider trading and market manipulation
 - grievance redressal.
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CONTROL OF ELECTION OFFICIALS: EC VS STATES

1988 Amendments: Strengthening ECI's Authority over Election Officials

- In 1988, Parliament gave legal backing to the Constituent Assembly's vision by amending both the Representation of the People Acts of 1950 and 1951.
- These changes placed election officials formally under the Election Commission's control.
- Under Section 13CC of the 1950 Act, officials such as Chief Electoral Officers, District Election Officers, and Electoral Registration Officers were deemed to be on deputation to the Commission while handling electoral rolls, making them subject to its supervision and discipline.



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- Similarly, **Section 28A of the 1951 Act** extended this authority to returning officers, presiding and polling officers, and even police personnel on election duty.
- Their accountability to the Commission lasted from the notification of elections until the final declaration of results.

The Continuing Tussle: T N Seshan vs. the Government

- Even after the 1988 amendments gave the Election Commission clear authority over election officials, disputes with governments persisted.
- The fiercest clash came during the tenure of **T N Seshan (1990–96)**, the combative Chief Election Commissioner known for his strict enforcement of electoral discipline.
 - He declared that once drafted, these officials would answer solely to the ECI.
 - He also claimed powers to discipline, suspend, or transfer errant officers — a stance the government refused to accept.

The 2000 Agreement: Formalising ECI's Disciplinary Powers

- The tussle over the ECI's authority was finally settled in **2000 through a negotiated agreement** recorded by the Supreme Court.
 - For the first time, the Commission's disciplinary powers over officials on election duty were formally spelt out.
 - **Scope of Powers**
 - The ECI was empowered to:
 - **Suspend officers** for dereliction of duty.
 - **Replace errant officials** and send them back to their original cadres with a detailed conduct report.
 - **Recommend disciplinary action** to the competent authority, which was bound to act within **six months** and report back to the Commission.
 - This settlement marked a turning point: for the first time, the **ECI's disciplinary authority was codified on paper**, strengthening its ability to act against officials who compromised free and fair elections. It also established a clear chain of accountability between the ECI, the Centre, and the states.
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GST REFORMS TO UNLOCK LONG-TERM REVENUE GAINS FOR INDIA

- The central government plans to move from the current four-rate GST structure to two slabs of **5% and 18%**, with an additional **40% rate for sin and demerit goods**.
 - Currently, there are **4 slabs under GST** (5, 12, 18 and 28%) and the taxation system has been an important component of the government's revenues.
- This reform is expected by the end of 2025 and aims to simplify compliance while reducing distortions in the indirect tax regime.
- The changes will reduce classification disputes, scope for litigation and evasion as well as remove duty inversion.
- **Declining Effective GST Rates**
 - Since its launch in 2017, GST rates have been gradually reduced.
 - An RBI study in 2019 found that the weighted average GST rate had dropped from **14.4% to 11.6%**, achieved through base broadening and removing distortions.
 - This trend is expected to continue under the new structure.

S&P's Position on GST Reform

- S&P Global Ratings has dismissed concerns that the Centre's proposal to reform the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime will harm fiscal revenues.
- Director of the organisation explained that while tax rates may appear lower under the proposed **two-slab system**, simplified implementation and transparent accounting could actually improve revenue collection in the long run.
- It highlighted that GST has been a key driver of fiscal revenues over the past five to six years.
- S&P believes reforms will continue strengthening government finances rather than weakening them, even if short-term adjustments create some pressure.



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Debt and Fiscal Targets

- S&P forecasts the combined central and state fiscal deficit at **7.3% of GDP in 2025–26**, narrowing to **6.6% by 2028–29**.
- Interest servicing remains a heavy burden but should ease gradually due to stronger revenues and cheaper financing.
- India's debt-to-GDP ratio is projected to fall from **83% in 2024–25 to 78% by 2028–29**, with the Centre targeting **49–51% by 2030–31**.
- **Rating Upgrade and Long-Term Outlook**
 - S&P upgraded India's rating to **BBB from BBB-**, citing its robust economic performance.
 - The agency stressed that India's reforms, including GST rationalisation, support long-term fiscal sustainability despite short-term uncertainties.
 - It upgraded India's rating to BBB from BBB- citing:
 - Strong and resilient economic expansion.
 - Political commitment to fiscal discipline.
 - Improved quality of government spending through higher capital expenditure.
 - A credible monetary policy framework ensuring controlled inflation.

UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES



- It is a **UN Refugee Agency** which **protects refugees worldwide** and facilitates their return home or resettlement.
- It **was established** by the General Assembly of the **United Nations in 1950** in the aftermath of the Second World War to help the millions of people who had lost their homes.
- It is a **global organization dedicated to saving lives**, protecting rights and building a better future for people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution.



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Governance structure

- It is governed by the **UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**.
- The UNHCR Executive Committee approves the agency's biennial programmes and the corresponding budget.
- These are presented by the **High Commissioner**, who is appointed by the UN General Assembly.

Funding: It is funded voluntarily, contributed by governments, private donors, and organisations.

- It was awarded **Nobel Peace Prizes in 1954 and 1981**.
- It started the **Nansen Refugee Award in 1954** for recognition of outstanding service to the cause of refugees, displaced or stateless people.

Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland.

ANNA-CHAKRA



- It is a **supply chain optimisation tool** under the Public Distribution System (PDS).
- It is developed in collaboration with the **World Food Programme (WFP)** and **Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer (FITT)**, IIT-Delhi.
- It is spearheaded by the **Department of Food Public Distribution**.

Working of Anna Chakra

- The project leverages **advanced algorithms** to identify **optimal routes** and ensure seamless movement of food grains across supply chain nodes.



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- An operation of this magnitude involves a complex supply chain, relying on multiple stakeholders starting from farmers to Fair Price Shops.
- This exercise has covered 4.37 Lakhs Fair Price Shops and approx. 6700 warehouses involved in the PDS supply chain.
- The interstate route optimization tool has been developed for optimization of the PDS movement between the states and **it is integrated with the FOIS (Freight Operations Information System) portal of the Railways through Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP).**
- A significant milestone in this effort is the integration of the optimization tool with the **PM Gati Shakti platform** which now houses geo -locations of FPSs and warehouses across the states.

Advantages of Anna Chakra

- It is unique initiative which **helps improve the speed and efficiency** of the world's largest food security program providing food safety net to 81 Crore beneficiaries.
 - **Reduces fuel consumption**, time, and logistics costs, it also provides environmental benefits of lower carbon footprint due to **reduced transportation-related emissions.**
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