



Current Affairs of the Day

GS Paper - II

- Law Ministry nod sought on postal ballots for NRIs
- British PM to be the chief guest at Republic Day celebration
- U.S. imposes CAATSA sanctions on Turkey over S-400 purchase

Prelims

- Netaji museum planned in Kolkata for the 125th anniversary



Law Ministry nod sought on postal ballots for NRIs

Highlights:

1. The proposal of the Election Commission of India (ECI) to extend the postal ballot option to overseas electors is pending with the Law Ministry.
2. The ECI had written to the Ministry proposing to extend the facility to non-resident Indians (NRIs).
3. The ECI letter stated the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, would need to be amended to send postal ballots to NRIs electronically and then have them sent back via post.
4. The amendments should be made at the earliest to facilitate the right of overseas electors and boost “the image of the country internationally.
5. The Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS), used to send ballots to Service electors, would be extended to overseas Indians if the proposal is adopted.

Additional Resources:

Postal voting

A restricted set of voters can exercise postal voting. Through this facility, a voter can cast her vote remotely by recording her preference on the ballot paper and sending it back to the election officer before counting.

Who can avail of this facility currently?

Members of the armed forces like the Army, Navy and Air Force, members of the armed police force of a state (serving outside the state), government employees posted outside India and their spouses are entitled to vote only by post. In other words, they can't vote in person. Voters under preventive detention can also vote only by post.

Special voters such as the President of India, Vice President, Governors, Union Cabinet ministers, Speaker of the House and government officers on poll duty have the option to vote by post. But they have to apply through a prescribed form to avail this facility.



What is the current strength of NRI voters?

According to a UN report of 2015, India's diaspora population is the largest in the world at 16 million people. Registration of NRI voters, in comparison, has been very low: a little over 1 lakh overseas Indians registered as voters in India, according to the EC. In last year's Lok Sabha elections, roughly 25,000 of them flew to India to vote.

British PM to be the chief guest at Republic Day celebration

Agenda: "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership", to be signed in the post-Brexit scene. The focus will be on Indo-pacific, Afghanistan peace process and "Rule-based global order".

The Opportunity and Deliverables

1. India and the United Kingdom enjoy a *strategic partnership since 2004*
2. India and the U.K. will discuss the framework of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, which will include defence and strategic relationship, Indo-Pacific policy, trade, and cooperation on renewable energy
3. India and the U.K. would begin talks for Free Trade Agreement (FTA)
4. A mutual defence logistics support agreement and government-to-government (G2G) mechanism for defence deals are also in the works.
5. In addition, the two sides may conclude a defence technology and industrial capability cooperation (DTICC) agreement
6. The two countries are close to signing a G2G agreement on jet engine technology development and for joint technology development of sixth-generation fighter technologies
7. Countries are committed to building a stronger defence and security partnership with Indian friends. That will help to tackle shared issues of concern like terrorism, maritime security, including things like piracy in the western Indian Ocean. It will also help us to respond to new and emerging challenges like space and cybersecurity.



U.S. imposes CAATSA sanctions on Turkey over S-400 purchase

Highlights:

1. The U.S. has imposed sanctions on NATO-ally Turkey for its purchase of Russia's S-400 missile defence system
2. The issue of sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) for purchase of Russian arms is of particular interest to New Delhi, which is also in the process of buying the S-400 from Moscow.
3. These sanctions comprise a ban on granting specific U.S. export licences and authorisations for any goods or technology, a ban on loans or credits by U.S. financial institutions.

Additional resources:

CAATSA

1. Enacted in 2017, it is a US federal law that imposed sanctions on Iran, North Korea and Russia.
2. Includes sanctions against countries that engage in significant transactions with Russia's defence and intelligence sectors.
3. The Act empowers the US President to impose at least five of the 12 listed sanctions on persons engaged in a "significant transaction" with Russian defence and intelligence sectors.

Why does India need the S-400 air defence missile system?

The S-400 Triumf is a mobile, surface-to-air missile system (SAM) and it is seen as the world's most dangerous operationally deployed modern long-range SAM (MLR SAM). Experts maintain that the S-400 is much better than the US-developed Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system (THAAD). The system is capable of tracking 100 airborne targets and engaging six of them simultaneously. This advanced air defence system is crucial for India because China is also buying the system.



Netaji museum planned in Kolkata for the 125th anniversary

Highlights:

As a part of the commemoration of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's 125th birth anniversary in 2022, the Union Culture Ministry is planning a museum in Kolkata. Historical documents, photos and other materials would be brought together at one place for display.