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15th Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas

Why in news?

Three day long Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas convention is being organized in Varanasi from 21-23 January, 2019.

About Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas:

- The theme of PBD Convention 2019 is "*Role of Indian Diaspora in building New India*".
- The decision to celebrate Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD) was taken by the former Indian Prime Minister, late Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- The 1st PBD was celebrated on 9th January, 2003 in New Delhi. January 9 was chosen as the day to celebrate PBD as it was on this day in 1915 that Mahatma Gandhi, had returned to India from South Africa.
- PBD now celebrated *once in every two years*, provides a platform to the overseas Indian community to engage with the government and reconnect with their roots.
- During the Convention, Pravasi Bharatiya Samman is conferred on the selected overseas Indians for their significant contributions to various fields both in India and abroad.
- Ministry of External Affairs is the nodal agency.
- 14th PBD held during 7–9 January 2017 at Bengaluru, Karnataka was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The theme for the 14th PBD was "Redefining engagement with the Indian diaspora".

Statehood Day

Why in news?

Recently Manipur, Tripura and Meghalaya celebrated 48th Statehood Day.

Highlights:

- In 1972, the political map of Northeast India underwent a major change.13 Thus, the two Union Territories of Manipur and Tripura and the Sub-State of Meghalaya got statehood and the two union territories of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh (originally known as North-East Frontier Agency—NEFA) came into being.
- With this, the number of states of the Indian Union increased to 21 (Manipur 19th, Tripura 20th and Meghalaya 21st).
- Initially, the 22nd Constitutional Amendment Act (1969) created Meghalaya as an 'autonomous state' or 'substate' within the state of Assam with its own legislature and council of ministers.
- However, this did not satisfy the aspirations of the people of Meghalaya. The union territories of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were also formed out of the territories of Assam.

How new states would create?

Constitutional Procedures:

Parliament has the sole authority to decide rearrangement of India's political map. It can create new states or merge with other states within Indian territory by using Article 3 of the constitution.

Article 3 authorises the Parliament to:

(a) form a new state by separation of territory from any state or by uniting two or more states or parts of states or by uniting any territory to a part of any state,

(b) increase the area of any state,

(c) diminish the area of any state,

(d) alter the boundaries of any state, and

(e) alter the name of any state.

However, Article 3 lays down *two* conditions in this regard:

- one, a bill contemplating the above changes can be introduced in the Parliament only with the prior recommendation of the President; and
- two, before recommending the bill, the President has to refer the same to the state legistature concerned for expressing its views within a specified period.
- Further, the power of Parliament to form new states includes the power to form a new state or union territory by uniting a part of any state or union territory to any other state or union territory.
- The President (or Parliament) is not bound by the views of the state legislature and may either accept or reject them, even if the views are received in time.
- Further, it is not necessary to make a fresh reference to the state legislature every time an amendment to the bill is moved and accepted in Parliament.
- In case of a union territory, no reference need be made to the concerned legislature to ascertain its views and the Parliament can itself take any action as it deems fit.
- It is thus clear that the Constitution authorises the Parliament to form new states or alter the areas, boundaries or names of the existing states without their consent. In other words, the Parliament can redraw the political map of India according to its will. Hence, the territorial integrity or continued existence of any state is not guaranteed by the Constitution.
- Therefore, India is rightly described as 'an indestructible union of destructible states'. The Union government can destroy the states whereas the state governments cannot destroy the Union.
- In USA, on the other hand, the territorial integrity or continued existence of a state is guaranteed by the Constitution.
- The American Federal government cannot form new states or alter

the borders of existing states without the consent of the states concerned. That is why the USA is described as 'an indestructible union of indestructible states.'

Electronic Voting Machine

Why in news?

Recently Election Commission of India in response to EVM Hackton which claims that EVM can be hacked, ECI Firmly Stands by Foolproof Nature of ECI EVMs.

About EVM:

- Electronic Voting Machines ("EVM") are being used in Indian General and State Elections to implement electronic voting in part from 1999 elections and recently in 2018 state elections held in five states across India.
- EVMs have replaced paper ballots in local, state and general (parliamentary) elections in India.

Design and technology

- EVMs are powered by an ordinary 6 volt alkaline battery manufactured by Bharat Electronics Limited, Bangalore and Electronics Corporation of India Limited, Hyderabad.
- This design enables the use of EVMs throughout the country without interruptions because several parts of India do not have the power supply and/or erratic power supply.
- An EVM consists of two units, a control unit, and the balloting unit. The two units are joined by a five-meter cable. Balloting unit facilitates voting by a voter via labeled buttons while the control unit controls the ballot units, stores voting counts and displays the results on 7 segment LED displays.

- The controller used in EVMs has its operating program etched permanently in silicon at the time of manufacturing by the manufacturer. No one (including the manufacturer) can change the program once the controller is manufactured.

Benefits:

- The cost per EVM was Rs. 42,000 at the time the machines were purchased in 1989-90. The cost was estimated to be Rs.10,500 per unit as per an additional order issued in 2014.
- Even though the initial investment was heavy, it has since been expected to save costs of production and printing of crores of ballot papers, their transportation and storage, substantial reduction in the counting staff and the remuneration paid to them.
- For each national election, it is estimated that about 10,000 tonnes of the ballot paper are saved.
- EVMs are easier to transport compared to ballot boxes as they are lighter, more portable, and come with polypropylene carrying cases.
- Vote counting is also faster. In places where illiteracy is a factor, illiterate people find EVMs easier than ballot paper system.
- Bogus voting is greatly reduced as the vote is recorded only once. The unit can store the result in its memory before it is erased manually.
- The battery is required only to activate the EVMs at the time of polling and counting and as soon as the polling is over, the battery can be switched off. The shelf life of Indian EVMs is estimated at 15 years.

VVPAT:

What are VVPAT machines?

- The Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail is a method that provides feedback to voters. It is an independent verification printer machine and is attached to electronic voting machines. It allows voters to verify if their vote has gone to the intended candidate.

How do VVPAT machines work?

- When a voter presses a button in the EVM, a paper slip is printed through the VVPAT. The slip contains the poll symbol and name of the candidate. It allows the voter to verify his/her choice.
- After being visible to the voter from a glass case in the VVPAT for seven seconds, the ballot slip will be cut and dropped into the drop box in the VVPAT machine and a beep will be heard. VVPAT machines can be accessed by polling officers only.

Chhatra Vishwakarma Awards and Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) Awards

Why in news?

Recently The Vice President of India presented the 2nd ChhatraVishwakarma Awards to students and their mentors and Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) Awards to institutions at an event organized by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE).

ChhatraVishwakarma Awards:

- The Chhatra Vishwakarma Awards are inspired by the spirit of engineering and creation patronized by Lord Vishwakarma, the ruling deity of construction practices in India.
- The Awards are aimed for motivating young individuals, inspiring leaders and institutions/ organizations to recognize and applaud the innovations and achievements of individuals as well as institutions.
- This year AICTE in association with Engineering Council of India (ECI) and the Indian Society for Technical Education (ISTE) announced the 2nd AICTE-ECI-ISTE ChhatraVishwakarma Awards 2018 under the theme "*Empowerment of Villages through Technologies*".
- AICTE received 1067 applications from the teams of various institutions under the categories viz.

(i) Water & Irrigation;

(ii) Sanitation & Solid Liquid Waste Management;

(iii) Rural infrastructure;

(iv) Tourism;

(v) Agriculture & Food;

(vi) Education, Skill initiative & Start-ups;

(vii) Rural Craft & Livelihood;

(viii) Any other Rural Appropriate Technologies.

About Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY):

- Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) was launched in October 2014 with the aim to translate the comprehensive vision of Mahatma Gandhi of an ideal Indian village.
- Under the scheme, Member of Parliament adopted Gram Panchayats for its holistic progress.
- AICTE has encouraged institutes located in proximity of villages which can be supported under the scheme. These institutes have been working hard to develop the adopted villages.
- AICTE has instituted the SAGY Award with an aim to motivate, recognize and honor the institutions under the theme *"Developed Village-Developed Nation"* to raise their performance in the specific domains leading to significant contribution for the growth and development of villages and Country as well.

Goal:

The goal is to develop three Adarsh Grams by March 2019, of which one would be achieved by 2016. Thereafter, five such Adarsh Grams (one per year) will be selected and developed by 2024.

Values of Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana:

Far beyond mere infrastructure development, SAGY aims at instilling certain values in the villages and their people so that they get transformed into models for others. These values include:

- Adopting people's participation as an end in itself – ensuring the involvement of all sections of society in all aspects related to the life of village, especially in decision- making related to governance
- Adhering to Antyodaya – enabling the "poorest and the weakest person" in the village to achieve well being
- Affirming gender equality and ensuring respect for women
- Guaranteeing social justice
- Instilling dignity of labour and the spirit of community service and voluntarism
- Promoting a culture of cleanliness
- Living in consonance with nature – ensuring a balance between development and ecology
- Preserving and promoting local cultural heritage
- Inculcating mutual cooperation, self-help and self-reliance
- Fostering peace and harmony in the village community
- Bringing about transparency, accountability and probity in public life
- Nurturing local self-governance
- Adhering to the values enshrined in the Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties of the Indian Constitution.

Objectives:

The main objectives of SAGY are:

- To trigger processes which lead to holistic development of the identified Gram Panchayats
- To substantially improve the standard of living and quality of life of all sections of the population through
- Improved basic amenities
- Higher productivity
- Enhanced human development
- Better livelihood opportunities
- Reduced disparities

- Access to rights and entitlements
- Wider social mobilization
- Enriched social capital
- To generate models of local level development and effective local governance which can motivate and inspire neighbouring Gram Panchayats to learn and adapt
- To nurture the identified Adarsh Grams as schools of local development to train other Gram Panchayats.

Approach:

In order to achieve these objectives, SAGY would be guided by the following approach:

- Leveraging the leadership, capacity, commitment and energy of the Members of Parliament (MP) to develop model Gram Panchayats
- Engaging with and mobilizing the community for participatory local level development.
- Converging different government programmes and private and voluntary initiatives to achieve comprehensive development in tune with people's aspirations and local potential.
- Building partnerships with voluntary organisations, co-operatives and academic and research institutions.
- Focusing on outcomes and sustainability.