



Daily Current Affairs

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Election Commissioner (EC) of India

Why in news?

Shri Sushil Chandra has assumed charge as the new Election Commissioner (EC) of India today on 15th of February 2019 and joins the Commission with Chief Election Commissioner Shri Sunil Arora and Election Commissioner Shri Ashok Lavasa.

About Election Commission:

- The Election Commission is a permanent and an independent body established by the Constitution of India directly to ensure free and fair elections in the country.
- Article 324 of the Constitution provides that the power of superintendence, direction and control of elections to parliament, state legislatures, the office of president of India and the office of vice president of India shall be vested in the election commission.
- Thus, the Election Commission is an all-India body in the sense that it is common to both the Central government and the state governments.

COMPOSITION

Article 324 of the Constitution has made the following provisions with regard

to the composition of election commission:

1. The Election Commission shall consist of the chief election commissioner and such number of other election commissioners, if any, as the president may from time to time fix.
2. The appointment of the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners shall be made by the president.
3. When any other election commissioner is so appointed, the chief election commissioner shall act as the chairman of the election commission.
4. The president may also appoint after consultation with the election commission such regional commissioners as he may consider necessary to assist the election commission.
5. The conditions of service and tenure of office of the election commissioners and the regional commissioners shall be determined by the president.

- *The chief election commissioner and the two other election commissioners*
- *have equal powers and receive equal salary, allowances and other perquisites which are similar to those of a judge of the Supreme Court.*
- In case of difference of opinion amongst the Chief election commissioner and/or two other election commissioners, the matter is decided by the Commission by majority.
- They hold office for a term of six years or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier. They can resign at any time or can also be removed before the expiry of their term.

POWERS AND FUNCTIONS

The powers and functions of the Election Commission with regard to elections to the Parliament, state legislatures and offices of President and Vice-President can be classified into three categories, viz,

1. Administrative
2. Advisory
3. Quasi-Judicial

In detail, these powers and functions are:

1. To determine the territorial areas of the electoral constituencies throughout the country on the basis of the Delimitation Commission Act of Parliament.
 2. To prepare and periodically revise electoral rolls and to register all eligible voters.
 3. To notify the dates and schedules of elections and to scrutinize nomination papers.
 4. To grant recognition to political parties and allot election symbols to them.
 5. To act as a court for settling disputes related to granting of recognition to political parties and allotment of election symbols to them.
 6. To appoint officers for inquiring into disputes relating to electoral arrangements.
 7. To determine the code of conduct to be observed by the parties and the candidates at the time of elections.
 8. To prepare a roster for publicity of the policies of the political parties on radio and TV in times of elections.
 9. To advise the president on matters relating to the disqualifications of the members of Parliament.
 10. To advise the governor on matters relating to the disqualifications of the members of state legislature.
 11. To cancel polls in the event of rigging, booth capturing, violence and other irregularities.
 12. To request the president or the governor for requisitioning the staff necessary for conducting elections.
 13. To supervise the machinery of elections throughout the country to ensure free and fair elections.
 14. To advise the president whether elections can be held in a state under president's rule in order to extend the period of emergency after one year.
 15. To register political parties for the purpose of elections and grant them the status of national or state parties on the basis of their poll performance.
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Swachhata Pakhwada

Why in news?

Recently The Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution administered the Swachhta pledge to all the officials and employees of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution in New Delhi.

About Swachhata Pakhwada:

- Swachhata Pakhwada started in April 2016 with the objective of bringing a fortnight of intense focus on the issues and practices of Swachhata by engaging GOI Ministries/Departments in their jurisdictions.
 - The Pakhwada is being organized to create awareness amongst officials as well as the general public on the importance of the need for sustained maintenance of cleanliness and hygiene.
 - It is in support of the larger effort of the Government of India and the States to bring about behavioural change in the public towards eradication of unhygienic practices related to personal and environmental hygiene.
 - An annual calendar is pre-circulated among the Ministries to help them plan for the Pakhwada activities.
 - The Ministries observing Swachhata Pakhwada are monitored closely using online monitoring system of Swachhata Samiksha where action plans, images, videos related to Swachhata activities are uploaded and shared.
 - After observing Swachhata Pakhwada, Ministries/ Departments announce their achievements through a press conference and other communication tools.
 - For the Pakhwada fortnight, observing ministries are considered as Swachhata Ministries and are expected to bring qualitative Swachhata improvements in their jurisdictions.
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Vande Bharat Express

Why in news?

Recently Prime Minister inaugurated Vande Mataram Express in New Delhi.

- Vande Bharat Express is a flagship train set; the first prototype has been built by the Integral Coach Factory, Chennai, in a record time of 20 months.
- The train is a 100% 'Make in India' project and is claimed to be built at half the cost of a similar train set that is imported.
- Vande Bharat Express is an Indian semi-high speed intercity electric multiple unit. It was designed and built by Integral Coach Factory (ICF) Chennai under the Indian government's Make in India initiative over a span of 18 months.
- The unit cost of the first rake was given as Rs.100 crore though the unit cost is expected to go down with subsequent production.
- At the original price, it is estimated to be 40% less costly than a similar train imported from Europe.
- Since the launch of Rajdhani trains, Vande Bharat Express is the next major leap for Indian Railways in terms of speed and convenience. It is India's first semi-high speed train equipped with world class passenger amenities.
- It can achieve high speeds (max speed of 160 kmph) due to faster acceleration & deceleration and will reduced journey time by 25% to 45%. Scheduled commute between New Delhi & Varanasi will take approximately 8 hours making it 40-50% faster than the fastest train currently connecting these two cities.
- Vande Bharat Express incorporates many modern features which debut for the very first time on Indian Railways.
- It has been provided with 'State of the Art' passenger amenities like On-board wifi entertainment, GPS based passenger information system, CCTVs, bio-vacuum toilets, rotating chairs in executive class, etc. at par with global standards.
- It also has provision of Divyang-friendly facilities. It will have 16 coaches with Chair Car type configuration with 2 Executive Class

Chair Cars and 14 Chair Cars.

- Further, it has intelligent braking system with power regeneration for better energy efficiency thereby making it cost, energy and environment efficient.
 - T-18 is a self-propelled engine-less train (similar to the Metro trains) and is energy-efficient as its coaches will be fitted with LED lights. Coaches will have automatic doors and retractable footsteps.
 - It will be inter-connected with fully sealed gangways along with a GPS-based Passenger Information System. It is provided with of Bio toilets.
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