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TATHASTU

Institute of Civil Services



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Criminalization of Politics

News: Recently, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) wrote to the Election Commission (ECI), seeking action against political parties that failed to publish details of criminal records of their candidates as per orders of the Supreme Court and the ECI.

Background:

- Activists and independent electoral watchdogs like ADR have been raising concerns over criminalisation of politics for a long time.
- The increasing trend of criminalisation of politics poses a significant threat to the democratic system.

What is Criminalization of Politics?

- The criminalisation of politics refers to the phenomenon where individuals with criminal backgrounds or pending criminal cases actively participate in politics and hold positions of power. It signifies the infiltration of criminal elements into the political system, compromising the integrity and functioning of democratic institutions.

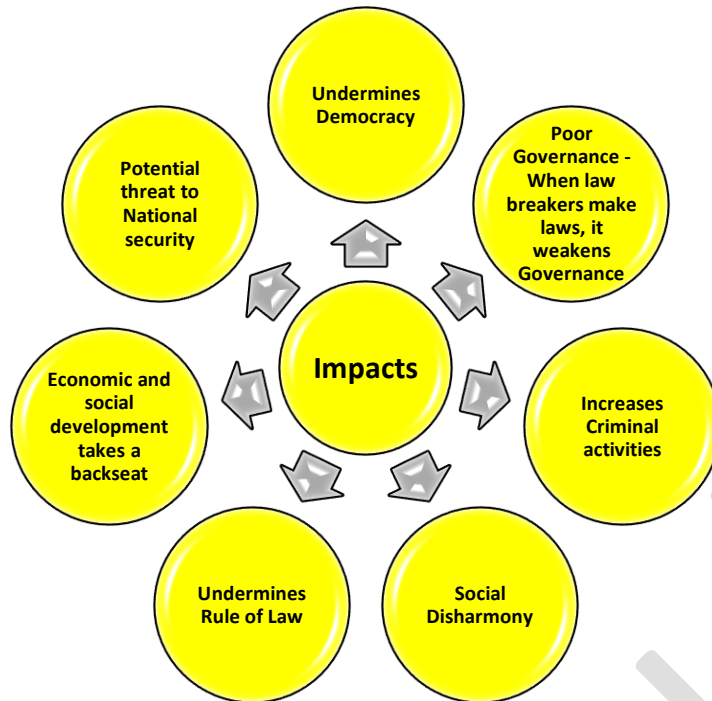
Status of Criminalization Politics:

- Increase in the number of **MPs with criminal charges**: In 2004, 24% of parliamentarians had pending criminal cases, which rose to 43% in 2019.
- As per media reports of February 2022, the **number of pending criminal cases** against sitting and former MLAs and MPs had risen close to **5,000** towards the end of December 2021.
- In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, **159 MPs** had declared serious criminal cases against them.

What are the causes of Criminalization of Politics?

- **Vote Bank politics** – The money and muscle power of criminals help political parties gain votes. Factors such as caste, and religion take the central stage while criminal antecedents of candidates take the back seat giving an edge to criminals.
- **Black money and money power** - Electoral politics is largely dependent on the money and the funding that it receives. Since candidates with criminal records often possess greater wealth, they ensure a greater inflow of money, labour and other advantages that may help a party in a successful campaign, and also possess greater 'winnability'.
- **Lack of Intra-party democracy** - Political parties in India largely lack intra-party democracy and the decisions on candidature are largely taken by the elite leadership of the party. Thus, politicians with criminal records often escape scrutiny by local workers and organisations of the party.
- The government often are **attracted towards strongmen** (criminals) to address their failure in ensuring socio-economic development. These strongmen with money, resources and connections are expected to fulfil the needs of people.
- Factors such as **lack of intra-party democracy**, and **centralization of powers** in political parties ensure that candidates with criminal antecedents escape the scrutiny of local-level workers.
- **Poor implementation of laws** – For example, it is mandatory for political parties to publish criminal records of any of the candidates on their websites, social media accounts, newspaper etc for voter awareness but it isn't implemented in letter and spirit and political parties get away with it many times.

What are the impacts of Criminalization of Politics?



What are the measures taken to curb Criminalization of Politics in India?

Basis	Suggestions
Union Government	It set up 12 special courts for a year to fast-track the trial of criminal cases against MPs and MLAs (2017)
Supreme Court	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It ruled that every candidate contesting the election has to declare his criminal and financial records along with educational qualifications (2002) 2. In Lily Thomas vs Union of India – MPs or MLAs convicted of a crime and sentenced to a prison term of 2 years or more are disqualified from holding office. 3. Public Interest Foundation vs Union of India case, 2018 had also directed political parties to publish online the pending criminal cases of their candidates.
ADS	It recommends permanent disqualification of candidates convicted of serious criminal offences from contesting elections.
Legal Aspects	Section 8 of the Representation of Peoples Act 1951 disqualifies individuals punished with a jail term of more than two years from standing in elections for six years after the jail term has ended.

What else can be done?

- Pressure on political parties to follow the rule of law and not let criminals take centre stage. Active citizen participation and awareness on their side are equally important.
- Implement the recommendations of committees such as the **Vohra Committee** (1993) and **Goswami Committee** and the law commission report (170 and 244th), which have raised alarm bells long ago.
- **2nd ARC** recommended **amending section 8 of RPA to disqualify all persons** facing charges related to grave and heinous offences and corruption, where charges have been framed six months before the election.

Conclusion

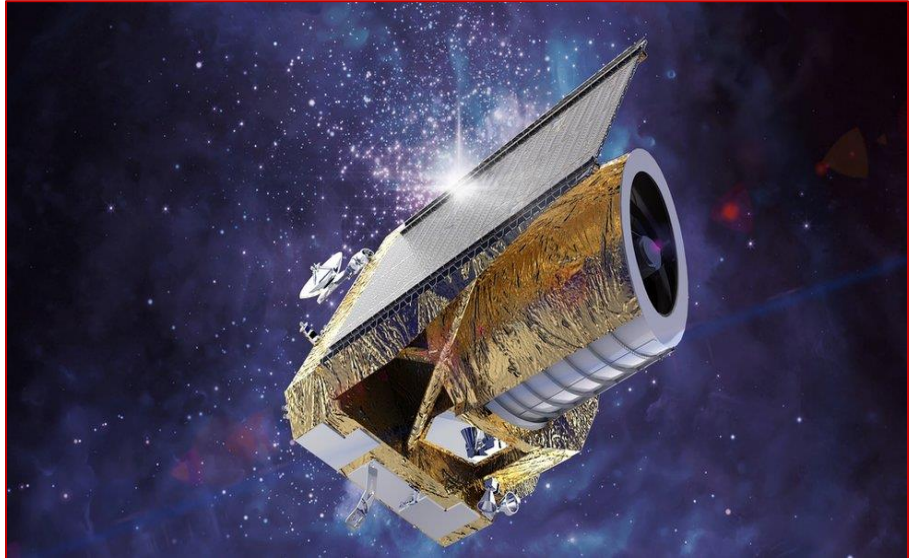
- It is not enough for India to be the world's largest democracy – it must evolve into an ideal one.

Euclid Mission

News: The **European Space Agency** launched its Euclid spacecraft on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket to chart the history of the universe as far back as 10 billion years ago.

What is Euclid's mission?

- Euclid is a spacecraft carrying a wide-angle space telescope with a 600-megapixel camera **to record visible light** and a **near-infrared spectrometer** and **photometer** to determine the **redshift of the detected galaxies**.
- The objective of the Euclid mission is to better understand **dark energy** and **dark matter** by accurately measuring the accelerating expansion of the universe. To achieve this, the telescope will measure the shapes of galaxies at varying distances from Earth and investigate the relationship between distance and redshift.
- Euclid will create the **most accurate three-dimensional map** of the cosmos to date, covering more than a third of the extragalactic sky over six years.
- Euclid is named after the ancient Greek mathematician Euclid.
- Euclid is a medium-class mission and is part of the Cosmic Vision campaign of ESA's Science Programme.



LCA TEJAS

News: Indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas completed **seven years of service in the Indian Air Force (IAF) on July 1.**

Background of LCA Tejas programme:

- The LCA programme was started by the Government of India in 1984 to replace ageing Mig 21 fighter planes. The government established the **Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA)** (under the Department of Defence Research and Development) to manage the LCA programme.
- It is designed by ADA and **manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).**
- After more than a decade of trials, the first jet was finally inducted by the IAF in 2016 in the **No. 45 squadron 'Flying Daggers'**.
- In 2020, the **No.18 squadron 'Flying Bullets'** became the second squadron to start operating the jet.



What is Tejas MK-I?

- The Tejas Mk-1 is a **light supersonic multirole jet**, capable of doing **multiple missions** including - air-defence (air-to-air), intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), air-interdiction (striking enemy targets deep into enemy territory) and maritime strike and reconnaissance missions.
- It is a **fourth-generation fighter** with critical operational capabilities such as an **active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar, electronic warfare (EW) suite, and air-to-air refuelling (AAR)**
- It can carry a range of modern weapons, including **beyond-visual-range (BVR) missiles, precision-guided and standoff weapons, and air-to-ground munitions.**
- Air-to-air refuelling capability, carefree handling, enhanced manoeuvrability, multi-mode airborne radar, and self-protection suite.
- Maximum payload capacity of 4000 kg, Maximum speed of Mach 1.8 and the range of the aircraft is 3,000 km.

Key Variants:

- Tejas Trainer: 2-seater operational conversion trainer for training air force pilots.
- LCA Navy: Twin- and single-seat carrier-capable for the Indian Navy.
- LCA Tejas Navy MK2: Phase 2 of the LCA Navy variant.
- LCA Tejas Mk-1A: Improvement over the LCA Tejas Mk1 with a higher thrust engine.
- **LCA Mk2** is an upgraded version of the LCA Tejas Mk1. It will replace Jaguars, MiG-29s, and Mirage 2000s. **The General Electric GE-414 engine** (from the USA) will power the LCA Mk2.

What is the importance of LCA Tejas for India?

- The LCA Tejas has been praised for its **agility, manoeuvrability, low maintenance cost, and high survivability.**
- It has also been tested in various scenarios, such as high-altitude operations, hot weather trials, weapon firing trials, and maritime trials.

- The LCA Tejas programme is also expected to have a positive impact on the **Indian economy**, as it involves more than 500 Indian companies, including public sector units, private sector firms, and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)
- The LCA Tejas programme is not only a matter of pride for India, but also a **strategic asset for its defence and security**. The recent approval of the purchase of 73 Tejas Mk-1A fighter jets and 10 trainer aircraft by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) for Rs 48,000 crore is a testament to the importance of LCA Tejas for India.
- Countries such as Egypt, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Argentina, UAE, and Indonesia have shown interest in buying LCA Tejas thus reflecting its **Export potential**.

Do we have enough fighter jets?

- The IAF presently has 32 squadrons (16-18 planes each) of fighter jets against the 42 needed to tackle a collusive two-front threat against Pakistan and China.
- Over the next two-three years, all four squadrons (each one has 16-18 planes) of the Soviet-era MiG-21 fighter jets will retire.
- The IAF's Jaguar, MiG-29 and Mirage 2000 jet fleets — all inducted in phases during the 1980s — are slated to retire in batches beyond 2029-30.
- These four types of jets are about 250 in number and are operating on an extended lifecycle.

Source – Indian Express, Outlook India, The Print

Places in News

Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary

News: Debrigarh, a wildlife sanctuary in Odisha's Bargarh district, has been made completely free from any human settlement.

About Debrigarh WS:

- It is a protected area in the Bargarh district of Odisha. It is situated near the city of Sambalpur's Hirakud Dam and reservoir.
- Some of the notable wildlife found in the sanctuary are tigers, leopards, elephants, sloth bears, chitals, sambars, nilgais, gaurs, wild dogs, pythons, crocodiles and many migratory waterfowl.
- **Mahanadi River** passes through the WS.
- The sanctuary also has a **historical connection with Odisha's freedom fighter - Veer Surendra Sai**, who took refuge in the dense jungle of Debrigarh during his revolt against the British.



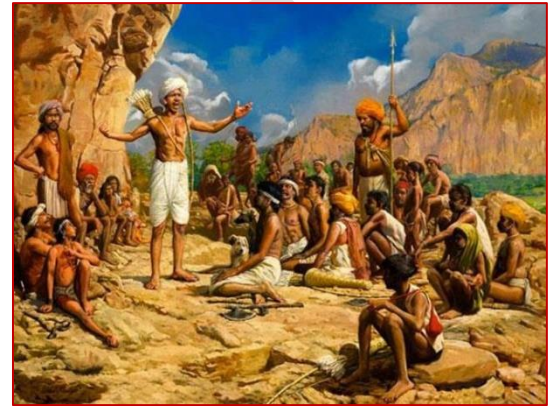
Facts for Prelims

Hul Diwas

News: The Prime Minister has commemorated Hul Diwas, honouring the sacrifice of Santhals in their fight against British colonial authorities.

What is Hul Diwas?

- Hul Diwas is a day to commemorate the Santhal rebellion against British colonial rule in 1855-571. It is celebrated on June 30 every year by the Santhal people and other tribal communities in Jharkhand, West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha.
- The rebellion was led by two brothers, **Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu**, who mobilized thousands of Santhals to fight against the oppression and exploitation of the British and their collaborators.
- It also includes women who played an important role. **Phulo Murmu** and **Jhalo Murmu**, sisters from the same family, participated in the Hul, inspiring women to join the rebellion.
- The rebellion was **one of the earliest and largest uprisings against colonialism** in India and is considered a precursor to the 1857 revolt.



Diversity for Restoration (D4R) Tool

News: Researchers have developed a tool called Diversity for Restoration (D4R) to aid in agroforestry and ecosystem restoration efforts.

What is the D4R tool?

- The Diversity for Restoration (D4R) tool has been developed by **Biodiversity International**. The tool has been modified to adapt to the Indian context by researchers from Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE).
- The tool aims to support ecosystem restoration programs in India by improving decision-making and promoting sustainable development.

What services does the tool provide?

- Help the user in identifying species that match their restoration objectives, Identify species that can resist local stresses and adapt to evolving environmental conditions. It Can pinpoint areas and regions to procure the seeds for the required species.
- Informs the user whether the tree species offers timber, fruit, manure, or other commercial benefits.
- It also informs if the tree is resilient to physiological stresses such as extremely high or low temperatures, salinity, or acidity tolerance in the soil among others.
- Identify windbreakers – the trees can act as a barrier against high winds.
- The user can also know if the species offers better nitrogen fixing and whether it serves as a good pollinator for birds and bees.