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16th February, 2024

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S.NO.	TOPIC
1.	THE ELECORAL BONDS SCHEME DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL
2.	LEGAL EDUCATION REFORM RECOMMENDATIONS
3.	PRELIMS POINTERS

THE ELECORAL BONDS SCHEME DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL

SOURCE: [THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

TAG: GS Paper II- *Amendments in Indian Constitution, Indian Constitution, Judiciary.*

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Mains

Q. Analyze the recent Supreme Court verdict declaring the Electoral Bonds Scheme unconstitutional and its implications on transparency in political funding.

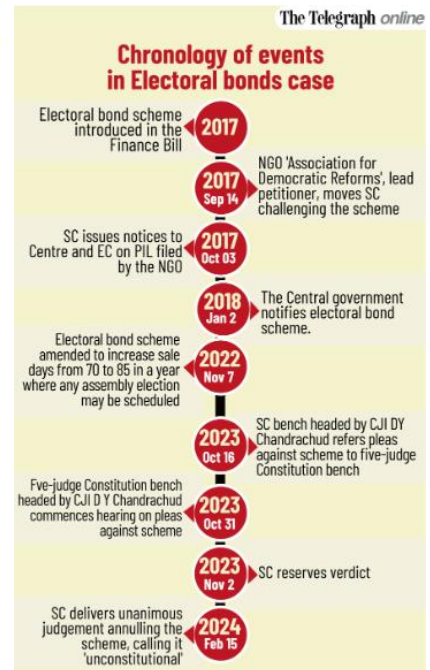
(150 words)

WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ *The Electoral Bonds Scheme being declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court is making headlines due to its significant impact on transparency in political funding and the judiciary's role in safeguarding democratic principles.*

SUPREME COURT'S VERDICT ON ELECTORAL BONDS:

- ❖ **Unconstitutional and Arbitrary:**
 - ☛ The Supreme Court unanimously declared the electoral bonds scheme as "**unconstitutional and manifestly arbitrary,**" citing **violations of the Constitution and voters' right to information.**
- ❖ **Violation of Right to Information:**
 - ☛ The Court found that the scheme, along with preceding legal amendments, infringed upon voters' fundamental right to information about political funding under **Article 19(1)(a)** of the Constitution, emphasizing the importance of transparency in electoral processes.
- ❖ **Promotion of Corruption:**
 - ☛ Chief Justice Chandrachud's opinion highlighted that the scheme's **absolute non-disclosure of the source of political funding promoted corruption** and a culture of quid pro quo with the ruling party.
- ❖ **Rejection of Black money Argument:**
 - ☛ The Court dismissed the government's claim that the scheme aimed to curb black money, stating that restricting information on political funding was not a reasonable restriction on voters' fundamental right to information.
- ❖ **Disclosure Mandate:**





- Additionally, the Court deemed the amendment to the Companies Act, which removed the cap on corporate donations, as violative of transparency principles. It **mandated the disclosure of donation details since 2019.**

WHAT IS ELECTORAL BOND SCHEME?

- ❖ **Nature of Electoral Bond:**
 - Electoral Bonds are bearer instruments similar to Promissory Notes and serve as **interest-free banking instruments** aimed at facilitating political funding reform in India.
- ❖ **Eligibility and Purchase:**
 - Citizens of India and Indian incorporated bodies are **eligible to purchase Electoral Bonds.**
 - These bonds can be purchased in denominations of ₹1,000, ₹10,000, ₹1,00,000, ₹10,00,000, and ₹1,00,00,000 from **specified branches of the State Bank of India (SBI).**
- ❖ **KYC Compliance:**
 - Purchasers must comply with Know Your Customer (KYC) norms and make payments from a bank account.
 - Electoral Bonds do not bear the name of the payee to maintain **anonymity.**
 - These bonds have a **validity of 15 days** and can only be used for making donations to political parties registered under **section 29A of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951**, which secured **at least one percent of the votes in the last general election.**
- ❖ **Availability Period:**
 - **Electoral Bonds** are available for purchase during specified periods of **10 days each in the months of January, April, July, and October**, as determined by the Central Government.
 - During the year of a General election to the House of People, an additional period of 30 days is specified.
- ❖ **Encashment Process:**
 - Eligible political parties can encash Electoral Bonds only through designated bank accounts with authorized banks, ensuring **transparency and accountability** in the political funding process.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE JUDGMENT:

- ❖ **Nexus Between Money and Politics:**
 - The verdict exposed the deep nexus between money and politics, stating that contributions made by companies are purely business transactions aiming to secure benefits in return.
- ❖ **Rejection of Government Arguments:**
 - The Court's dismissal of almost every argument presented by the government's lawyers underscores its commitment to upholding constitutional principles over potential misuse.
- ❖ **Preservation of Voter Rights:**
 - The judgment aligns with the Court's commitment to preserving voter rights and maintaining the purity of elections, as evidenced by past interventions such as the inclusion of the 'None of the above' option and mandatory disclosure of candidate assets and criminal arbitrary actions.
- ❖ **Promotion of Corruption:**
 - Chief Justice Chandrachud's opinion **emphasized the scheme's role in promoting corruption and a culture of quid pro quo**, highlighting the imperative of transparency in preventing undue influence in policy decisions.
- ❖ **Leveling the Playing Field:**
 - The judgment is poised to level the playing field in electoral contests by **curbing the disproportionate influence of corporations** and promoting fair competition among political parties.

CONCERNS & OBSERVATIONS:

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- ❖ **Opaque Nature of the Scheme:**
 - Critics have long raised concerns about the Electoral Bonds Scheme's lack of transparency and its potential to facilitate undisclosed corporate influence in political affairs.
- ❖ **Elimination of Limits:**
 - The elimination of caps on corporate donations raised apprehensions about the legitimization of crony capitalism and the distortion of democratic processes through unchecked financial contributions.
- ❖ **Concerns from Independent Institutions:**
 - Institutions like the RBI and ECI had previously voiced concerns about the scheme, highlighting risks such as money laundering and the proliferation of illegal donations, underscoring the need for regulatory scrutiny.
- ❖ **Potential Impact on Policy Decisions:**
 - The judgment's exposure of the nexus between money and politics raises questions about the extent to which past policy decisions may have been influenced by undisclosed corporate donations, warranting a reevaluation of governance practices.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

- ❖ **Elimination of Private Funding:**
 - Advocates suggest eliminating private funding altogether and **transitioning to a system of public funding for political parties** to mitigate the influence of wealthy donors.
- ❖ **Establishment of a National Election Fund:**
 - Another proposed solution involves creating a National Election Fund where donors can contribute, with funds **allocated based on electoral performance to ensure fairness and accountability.**
- ❖ **Enhanced Oversight Mechanisms:**
 - Strengthening oversight mechanisms to monitor the **end-use of political funds is essential to prevent misuse** for illegal activities like funding terrorism or violent protests, ensuring funds serve legitimate democratic purposes.
- ❖ **Restoration of Transparency:**
 - Restoring transparency and accountability in political financing through comprehensive reforms is **crucial to rebuilding public trust in the electoral process** and **safeguarding the integrity of democratic institutions.**



LEGAL EDUCATION REFORM RECOMMENDATIONS

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

TAG: GS Paper II- *Issues arising out of Design & Implementation of Policies.*

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Mains

Q. Evaluate the proposed establishment of the National Council for Legal Education and Research (NCLER) and how can India ensure a balanced approach between embracing global influences and preserving foundational values in its legal education system?

(250 words)

WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ *The recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law, and Justice regarding legal education reform in India have garnered significant attention.*
- ❖ *This report proposes crucial changes to enhance the quality of legal education, including the establishment of an independent regulatory body and prioritizing research in law schools.*

HIISTORICAL CONTEXT:

- ❖ Legal education in **ancient India** based on the **concept of 'Dharma' with self-acquired training.**
- ❖ Evolution of **formal legal education during the British period**, focusing on assisting lower and high courts in justice administration.
- ❖ Transformation **post-independence**, with increased emphasis on legal education's societal role.

LEGAL EDUCATION REFORM RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ❖ **Introduction of National Council for Legal Education and Research (NCLER):**
 - ☛ Limiting the **Bar Council of India's (BCI) powers to regulate legal education.**
 - ☛ Proposing the establishment of an **independent body, NCLER**, to regulate non-litigation aspects of legal education.
 - ☛ NCLER to develop **qualitative benchmarks and include eminent legal academicians** for effective regulation.
- ❖ **Emphasis on Research in Legal Education:**
 - ☛ Recognition of India's predominantly teaching-focused law schools with inadequate research.
 - ☛ Urgent need to prioritize and promote research in legal education to **enhance teaching outcomes and critical thinking.**
 - ☛ Recommendation to **recruit global faculty** to bolster research capabilities.
- ❖ **Globalization of Legal Education:**
 - ☛ Acknowledgment of India's status as a consumer rather than a producer of legal knowledge.
 - ☛ Proposal to adopt and deliver a global curriculum, enhance international exchange programs, and incorporate more international law courses.
 - ☛ Increased exposure to diverse legal systems to **equip students for the globalized legal landscape.**

ROLE OF REGULATORIES BODIES:

- ❖ **Current Landscape:**



- Regulation by central and state governments, Universities Grant Commission, Bar Council of India (BCI), and universities.
- Quality and standards remain unsatisfactory despite reform attempts.
- ❖ **BCI's Function:**
 - **Advocates Act 1981** empowers BCI to promote and set standards for legal education in consultation with universities and state bar councils.
 - Efforts to improve quality through guidelines and establishment of national law schools, but results remain subpar.
- ❖ **Proposed Reforms:**
 - Need for a new regulatory body with government sanction and expertise to address domestic and international challenges in legal education.
 - Focus on imparting quality and global legal education using advances in technology.
 - Consideration of local socio-economic conditions to make global legal education accessible to the majority.
 - Recognition of vernacular languages in legal education to enhance accessibility and understanding.
- ❖ **Judicial Perspective:**
 - Supreme Court emphasizes the importance of convincing and well-organized legal education to meet evolving societal demands.
 - Regulatory bodies' efforts crucial in maintaining faith in the judiciary.
- ❖ **Future Directions:**
 - **Integration of law with technology** through initiatives like law-related courses at institutions like IIT, IISC, and ISI.
 - Preparation for global challenges while upholding values of justice, democracy, rule of law, and equality.
 - **Balance between openness to global influences and firmness in preserving foundational values, echoing Mahatma Gandhi's vision.**

CHALLENGES AND REFORMS IN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP:

- ❖ **Leadership in Law Faculties and Universities:**
 - Call for **passionate, visionary academic** leaders to inspire and support faculty members.
 - Criticism of current academic leaders for their failure to provide professional guidance and foster excellence.
- ❖ **Academic Freedom and Autonomy:**
 - Advocacy for complete academic freedom and autonomy to foster a culture of legal research.
 - **Quoting Jawaharlal Nehru's vision 'universities as bastions of humanism and tolerance, emphasizing the importance of free expression and exploration of ideas'.**


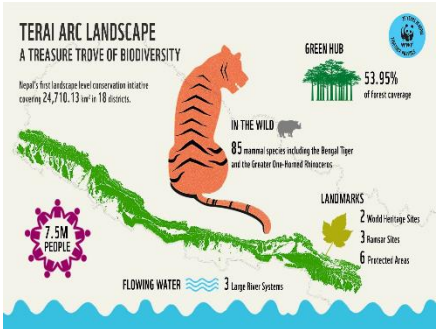
CONCLUSION:

- ❖ Reforming legal education requires energy, imagination, and dedication from regulatory bodies.
- ❖ **Integration of technology and adherence to foundational values** essential for navigating global challenges.
- ❖ Upholding Gandhi's principle of openness to change while staying rooted in core values will guide India's legal education reform journey.



PRELIMS POINTERS:

16th February, 2024

TOPIC	DESCRIPTION
<p>LAUNCH OF 'SANGAM: DIGITAL TWIN' INITIATIVE</p>	<p>WHY IN NEWS?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has introduced the 'Sangam: Digital Twin' initiative, aiming to revolutionize infrastructure planning and design.</i> <p>INITIATION OF 'SANGAM: DIGITAL TWIN' PROJECT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>DoT launches the 'Sangam':</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ Digital Twin' project, utilizing AI, ML, and IoT for infrastructure planning enhancement. ☛ Digital twin technology creates virtual replicas for real-time monitoring, simulation, and analysis. ❖ Stages of 'Sangam: Digital Twin': <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ Unfolds in two stages in a major Indian city: exploration and practical demonstrations of specific use cases. ☛ Integrates 5G, IoT, AI, and next-gen computational technologies for infrastructure planning.  <p>OBJECTIVE AND SIGNIFICANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Aims to reshape infrastructure planning through collaborative efforts and technological advancements. ❖ Serves as a platform to transform innovative concepts into tangible solutions for efficient, effective, and sustainable development. <p>KEY GOALS OF THE INITIATIVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Showcase practical implementations of innovative infrastructure planning solutions. ❖ Develop a model framework for faster and more effective collaboration. ❖ Provide a blueprint for scaling and replicating successful strategies in future infrastructure projects.
<p>TERAI ARC LANDSCAPE (TAL)</p>	<p>WHY IN NEWS?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) has been recognized as one of the seven UN World Restoration Flagships, marking a significant conservation achievement under the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.</i> <p>ABOUT TERAJ ARC LANDSCAPE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Recognition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ TAL's acknowledgment as a UN World Restoration Flagship underscores its successful conservation achievements, driven by collaborative efforts involving the Government, communities, and civil society. ❖ Restoration Success: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ Since its establishment in 2001, TAL has restored 66,800 hectares of forest, witnessed notable increases in rhino and tiger populations. ❖ Geographic Coverage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ Extending over 900 km from the Bagmati River in Nepal to the Yamuna River in India. 



- ☛ TAL spans 51,002 km², encompassing **protected areas, forest conservation zones, Ramsar sites**, and vital corridors.
- ❖ **Conservation Vision:**
 - ☛ TAL aims to conserve biodiversity, preserve ecological integrity, and promote socio-economic well-being, prioritizing **indigenous rights and community engagement**.

ABOUT UN WORLD RESTORATION FLAGSHIPS:

- ❖ **Initiative:**
 - ☛ Part of the UN Decade on **Ecosystem Restoration led by UNEP and FAO to counter ecosystem degradation**.
- ❖ **Duration:**
 - ☛ **Declared for 2021–2030** by the UN General Assembly.
- ❖ **Recognition:**
 - ☛ Awarded through the **World Restoration Flagship Award**.
- ❖ **Purpose:**
 - ☛ Recognizes and supports notable restoration initiatives globally.
 - ☛ Eligible for technical and **financial aid from the UNO**.
 - ☛ Aligns with global efforts to **restore one billion hectares of ecosystems**.

SIGNIFICANCE OF UN WORLD RESTORATION FLAGSHIPS:

- ❖ **Global Recognition:**
 - ☛ Celebrates successful **restoration endeavours worldwide**.
- ❖ **Support:**
 - ☛ **Provides up to USD 500,000** assistance for selected initiatives in developing countries.
- ❖ **Investment Attraction:**
 - ☛ Draws global attention and **investments to restoration projects**.
 - ☛ Featured in **UN Decade publications**, campaigns, and advocacy efforts.
 - ☛ Listed in the **UN Secretary-General’s Report to the General Assembly**.

7 RECOGNIZED WORLD RESTORATION FLAGSHIPS ARE-

1. *Restoring Mediterranean Forests Initiative*
2. *Living Indus Initiative*
3. *Acción Andina Social Movement*
4. *Sri Lanka Mangrove Regeneration Initiative*
5. *Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) Initiative*
6. *Regreening Africa’s Agriculture*
7. *Growing Forests in Africa’s Drylands Initiative*

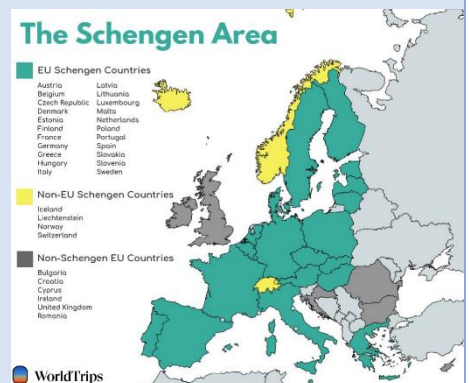
THE SCHENGEN ZONE

WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ *Kosovo’s recent attainment of visa-free access to the Schengen zone, making it the final Western Balkan non-EU nation to receive this privilege, underscores ongoing geopolitical dynamics.*

BACKGROUND

- ❖ **Kosovo gains visa-free access to Schengen zone, becoming last Western Balkan non-EU nation to do so.**
- ❖ Signifies **regional dynamics and importance of border-free policies in European integration.**





PM DEDICATES NOKHRA SOLAR PROJECT

SCHENGEN AREA

- ❖ **Group of 27 European nations** abolishing internal borders.
- ❖ Includes 23 EU states and members of the **European Free Trade Association**.
- ❖ **Switzerland, Iceland, and Norway** are part of the Schengen Area.
- ❖ **No internal border checks**; harmonized controls at external borders.

WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ **Inauguration of 300 MW Nokhra Solar Project** by PM Modi marks significant progress towards sustainable energy, carbon reduction, and self-reliance.

NTPC'S NOKHRA SOLAR PROJECT

- ❖ Prime Minister Modi inaugurated NTPC's 300 MW Nokhra Solar Project via video conference.
- ❖ Located in Rajasthan, it powers **1.3 lakh households**, curbing **6 lakh tons of CO² emissions annually**.
- ❖ Make in India initiative reinforced with **13 lakh solar PV modules**.
- ❖ NTPC prioritizes clean energy, aiming for **45-50% non-fossil-based capacity by 2032**, contributing to Net Zero efforts.



NTPC'S RENEWABLE ENERGY JOURNEY

- ❖ NTPC Green Energy Ltd aims to lead NTPC's renewable energy journey, with an operational capacity of over **3.4 GW** and **26 GW** in the pipeline, including 7 GW under implementation.
- ❖ NTPC Limited, **India's largest integrated power utility**, is committed to expanding its **non-fossil-based power capacity to 45%-50% of its portfolio by 2032**, with a focus on renewable energy.
- ❖ NTPC has **partnered with NITI Aayog** to strengthen India's Net Zero efforts, aligning with the country's sustainable development goals.

RENEWABLE ENERGY IN INDIA

- ❖ India stands **4th globally** in Renewable Energy Installed Capacity (including Large Hydro), **4th in Wind Power capacity & 4th in Solar Power capacity** (as per REN21 Renewables 2022 Global Status Report).
- ❖ The country has set an enhanced target at the **COP26 of 500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based energy by 2030**.

NEW DRUG TO TREAT CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE GETS APPROVAL

WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ **The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)** has garnered attention by approving **Jardiance (empagliflozin) 10mg tablets** for reducing the risk of sustained decline in patients with end-stage kidney disease

ABOUT THE DRUG

- ❖ **Approval:**
 - ☛ **Boehringer Ingelheim's Jardiance (empagliflozin)** has received approval from the **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)** in India.
- ❖ **Indication:**
 - ☛ Approved for treating **chronic kidney disease (CKD)** as an additional indication, in addition to its **original approval for Type 2 diabetes**.



CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE (CKD)

- ❖ Kidneys perform vital functions like **filtering waste, maintaining blood pressure,** and producing red blood cells.
- ❖ CKD occurs when **kidneys sustain long-term damage, impacting their functions** gradually over at least **3 months.**



SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- ❖ Symptoms may not appear until advanced stages, **including foamy urine, fatigue, and itchy skin.**
- ❖ Advanced stages may manifest as **trouble concentrating, swelling, muscle cramps, and breathing difficulties.**

CAUSES AND RISK FACTORS

- ❖ Common causes **include diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and obesity.**
- ❖ Risk factors include **age, family history, smoking, and past kidney injuries.**

UK & JAPAN SLIP INTO RECESSION

WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ *Recent developments reveal Japan's fall to the fourth-largest economy and the UK's entry into a recession, marked by economic contractions in key sectors, posing challenges for policymakers amidst ongoing stagnation.*

ABOUT RECESSION

- ❖ **Definition:**
 - ☛ A recession occurs **when there's a notable drop in economic activity** across various sectors, lasting for **several months or more.**
 - ☛ It's typically marked by **decreases in real GDP, income, employment, industrial production, and wholesale-retail sales,** as defined by the Reserve Bank of India.



RECESSION TYPES

- ❖ **Boom and Bust:** Economy exceeds expected growth, leading to **inflation, then contraction due to fiscal policies.**
- ❖ **Balance-sheet:** Overburdened with debt, causing **consumer and business spending slowdown.**
- ❖ **Depression:** Severe and prolonged **downturn with high unemployment, poverty, and economic decline.**
- ❖ **Supply Side Shocks:** Disruptions like wars or health crises disrupt supply chains, causing economic decline.

JAPAN'S RECESSION

- ❖ Slips to **fourth-largest economy,** behind Germany.



- ❖ Annual **GDP grew by 1.9% in 2023**, but 0.4% quarterly contraction signals recession.
- ❖ Challenges: **Aging population, low productivity, global competition.**
- ❖ Factors: **Declining population, immigration policies, productivity issues.**

UK'S RECESSION

- ❖ Enters **recession in late 2023**, impacting PM Rishi Sunak's growth plans.
- ❖ **GDP declines by 0.3% in Q4**, affecting manufacturing, construction, and wholesale sectors.
- ❖ **Stagnant economy** for nearly two years.
- ❖ Reasons: **Weaknesses in key sectors, Brexit uncertainty**, global economic conditions.

TYPES OF RECOVERIES

- ❖ **V-shaped:** Sharp decline followed by **quick recovery due to temporary shocks.**
- ❖ **U-shaped:** **Prolonged decline before gradual recovery**, taking longer than V-shaped.
- ❖ **W-shaped:** Temporary recovery followed by a **second dip, impacting consumer confidence.**
- ❖ **L-shaped:** Long-term decline with **slow recovery, high unemployment**, and low investment.
- ❖ **K-shaped:** Different sectors experience **different outcomes during recession and recovery phases.**

