06/05/2024

TOPICS COVERED

1. **Percussion maestro Aravindakshan Marar passes away (6 may)   (State PCS)**
2. **The PM's speeches fall foul of the Model Code of Conduct (6 May)   (GS Paper II: Election)**
3. **Indian Defence University (6 May)   (GS Paper III: Internal Security)**

Campaigning ends in 94 Lok Sabha constituencies for third phase of election (6 May)   (GS Paper II: Election)

- The **48-hour silence period before voting commenced at 6 p.m.** on Sunday for 94 Lok Sabha constituencies across 12 States and Union Territories.
- Voting for more than half of the total constituencies will take place during this phase on May 7.
- Prominent candidates in this phase include Union Ministers Amit Shah, Pralhad Joshi, and Jyotiraditya Scindia, former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Congress leader Digvijaya Singh, Samajwadi Party's Dimple Yadav, and NCP MP Supriya Sule.
- Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 prohibits election campaign activities during the silence period.
- Campaign activities include public meetings, processions, and displaying election matter on television or similar platforms.
- During the silence period, no direct or indirect references soliciting support for parties or candidates are allowed in the constituencies observing the silence period.
- Star campaigners and political leaders are prohibited from addressing the media through press conferences or giving interviews on election matters.
- The nomination process for the 94 constituencies in the third phase began on April 12 and ended on April 19.
- This phase includes 25 constituencies in Gujarat, 2 in Goa, and 14 in Karnataka.
- Election for the Betul seat was shifted from the second to the third phase due to the death of the BSP candidate.
- Other constituencies voting in this phase include those in Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and the Union Territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu.

- Voting in Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag-Rajouri constituency has been rescheduled for May 25 in the sixth phase.

People with disabilities to get quotas on all trains irrespective of concessions (6 May)   (GS Paper II: Vulnerable Section of Society)

- The **Ministry of Railways has approved quotas for people with disabilities on all trains, regardless of whether concessional fare facilities are available or not.**
- **The quota will include four berths in Sleeper Class, four berths in three-tier AC, and four berths in specially designed second class luggage-cum-guard coaches of Garib Rath trains.**
- Additionally, **four seats will be allocated in reserved Second Class sitting and AC Chair Car on trains with more than two coaches of these classes, and four seats on Vande Bharat trains.**
- Specifically designed seats, such as **seat no. 40, will be available for travelers with disabilities in certain coaches of eight-car and 16-car trains, along with an extra seat for an escort or attender on Vande Bharat Express trains.**
- **To prevent misuse**, online booking under the disability quota will be restricted to those with **unique identity cards issued by Railways.** For counter bookings, the card or a copy of the concessional certificate must be produced.
- The railway's IT arm, Centre for Railway Information Systems, will modify reservation software to verify these cards even on trains without concessional fare facilities.
- If specially designated seats for people with disabilities in Vande Bharat express trains are booked but seats for their accompanying escorts remain vacant, those vacant seats will be allotted to passengers with disabilities.
- Previously, accommodation for people with disabilities and their escorts was provided only on trains allowing booking with fare concessions.
- No decision has been made on restoring rail travel concessions for senior citizens and other categories of passengers who previously received concessional fares before the pandemic.

Percussion maestro Aravindakshan Marar passes away (6 may)   (State PCS)

- **Membranophones:** These instruments have a stretched membrane, or drumhead, that vibrates to produce sound. Examples of membranophones include drums, timpani, bongos, and djembes.

Ofanda, Jezreel
10-Tranquility

Idiophone - an instrument the whole of which vibrates to produce a sound when struck, shaken, or scraped, such as a bell, gong, or rattle.

Examples of idiophones

- **Xylophone** is a musical instrument in the percussion family that consists of wooden bars struck by mallets.

- **Rattle** a type of percussion instrument which produces a sound when shaken. Rattles are described in the Hornbostel–Sachs system as Shaken Idiophones

- **Jew's harp** is a lamellophone instrument, which is in the category of plucked idiophones.

- **Wood block** is a small slit drum made from a single piece of wood and used as a percussion instrument.

- **Bell** is a directly struck idiophone percussion instrument. Most bells have the shape of a hollow cup that when struck vibrates in a single strong strike tone, with its sides forming an efficient resonator.

Membranophone- is any musical instrument which produces sound primarily by way of a vibrating stretched membrane. It is one of the four main divisions of instruments in the original Hornbostel-Sachs scheme of musical instrument classification.

Examples of Membranophone

- **Djembe** is a rope-tuned skin-covered goblet drum played with bare hands, originally from West Africa.

- **Idiophones:**These instruments produce sound when their entire body vibrates. Examples of idiophones include cymbals, bells, gongs, woodblocks, and triangles.
  Percussion instruments can be played in a variety of ways, including with sticks, mallets, hands, or even feet. They are used in a wide range of musical styles, from classical and jazz to rock and pop. Here are some other interesting facts about percussion instruments:
- The word "percussion" comes from the Latin word "percutere," which means "to strike."
- The oldest known percussion instruments are drums, which have been found in archaeological sites dating back to around 6,000 BCE.
- Percussion instruments play an important role in many cultures, and are often used in religious ceremonies and rituals.
- The percussion section of a symphony orchestra typically includes timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, and triangle.
- A percussionist is a musician who plays percussion instruments.
- Kelath Aravindakshan Marar, a prominent percussionist, passed away in Thrissur at the age of 82.
- He was known for his significant contribution to the percussion ensembles of the Thrissur Pooram for over four and a half decades.
- Marar was particularly known for his involvement in the Ilanjithara melam of the Thrissur Pooram festival and other famous poorams.

- He initially served as part of the percussion team of the **Paramekkavu Devaswom** for 13 years.
- Later, he joined the **Thiruvambadi Devaswom** for nine years before returning to Paramekkavu, where he continued for 23 more years.
- Marar's expertise and dedication made him an integral presence in the vibrant cultural landscape of **Thrissur Pooram** and other festivals in Kerala.

Basic specifications of the Type 214 submarine:

- Length: 65 meters (213 ft)
- Beam: 6.3 meters (20 ft 8 in)
- Draught: 6 meters (19 ft 8 in)
- Surface displacement: 1,400 tonnes (1,540 short tons)
- Submerged displacement: 1,850 tonnes (2,040 short tons)
- Diesel-electric propulsion with an air-independent propulsion (AIP) system using Siemens polymer electrolyte membrane (PEM) hydrogen fuel cells
- Armament: 8 × 533 mm (21.0 in) torpedo tubes; up to 12 torpedoes or Sub-Harpoon missiles
- Complement: 27 (5 officers + 22 crew)
- Endurance: 21 days (on batteries alone), 84 days (with AIP)

The Type 214 submarine is a diesel-electric submarine with an air-independent propulsion (AIP) system. The AIP system allows the submarine to remain underwater for longer periods of time without surfacing to recharge its batteries. This makes the Type 214 submarine a very stealthy and effective submarine.

Some of the navies that operate the Type 214 submarine include the Hellenic Navy (Greece), the Republic of Korea Navy (South Korea), the Portuguese Navy, and the Turkish Navy.

- **ThyssenKrupp AG** is a German conglomerate that specializes in industrial engineering and steel production.
- It was formed in 1999 through the merger of Thyssen AG and Krupp.
- The company's operational headquarters are located in Duisburg and Essen, Germany.
- ThyssenKrupp claims to be one of the world's largest steel producers and was ranked as the tenth-largest worldwide by revenue in 2015.
- It operates through **670 subsidiaries worldwide**.
- The largest shareholders of ThyssenKrupp are the Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Foundation and Cevian Capital.
- ThyssenKrupp's product portfolio includes machines, industrial services, high-speed trains, elevators, and shipbuilding.
- Its subsidiary, ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems, manufactures frigates, corvettes, and submarines for both German and foreign navies.
- In 2018, ThyssenKrupp announced plans to split into two companies, ThyssenKrupp Industrials and ThyssenKrupp Materials, but this plan was later cancelled in May 2019.

SC sets aside bail to officer accused of raping minor (6 May)   (GS Paper II: Relations between State and Citizen)

- The Supreme Court overturned bail granted by the Allahabad High Court to a police officer accused of raping a 13-year-old girl.
- The incident took place when the girl went to the police station to report a gang rape complaint in Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh in 2022.
- The accused, Tilakdhari Saroj, was the Station House Officer (SHO) at that time.

- Justices A.S. Bopanna and Sanjay Kumar directed Saroj to surrender immediately and ordered the State of Uttar Pradesh to apprehend him if he didn't cooperate.
- Saroj was to be sent to judicial custody as per the Supreme Court's decision.
- The order was issued on May 3.

Where does 'us versus them' bias in the brain come from? (6 May)

- The quote "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others" from George Orwell's Animal Farm reflects how bias operates in human societies.
- A study published in May last year examined how people subconsciously evaluate different racial groups.
- The study involved over 60,000 participants categorized into four groups: 'white', 'blacks', 'Hispanics', and 'Asians', with a majority living in the U.S.
- Using an Implicit Association Test (IAT), psychologists found significant differences between participants' explicit statements and their implicit beliefs.
- While participants professed belief in racial equality, they also harbored implicit biases favoring socially advantaged groups.
- This bias was found to be universal across all racial identities of the participants.
- The IAT operates on the principle that if two things frequently co-occur in our experiences, we quickly associate them.
- The test involves sorting words related to concepts (like "thin", "fat", "white", "black", etc.) and assessments ("good" or "bad") into categories.
- Participants' scores are based on how quickly they sort words when concepts and assessments are combined.
- For example, if participants associate "white" with "good" faster than "white" with "bad", it suggests an implicit bias favoring white people.

The brain's shifting criteria

- Despite the scientific fact that all humans are equal according to modern genetics, history shows a pattern of people from one cultural or social group treating others as inferior, known as pseudo-speciation.
- This phenomenon continues to be the subject of intense research efforts in psychology and neuroscience.
- Recent studies have shown that our brains process information about in-groups ("us") and out-groups ("them") differently.
- A study published on March 18, 2024, in Frontiers in Psychology revealed that the criteria our brains use to categorize others as "us" or "them" constantly change.
- In the study, half of the participants were asked to describe differences between themselves as white individuals and black individuals, while the other half were asked to describe differences between themselves and old individuals.

- By directing participants' attention to different aspects of their own social identity (e.g., race or age) and perceived differences from out-groups, researchers found that this influenced participants' intergroup bias.
- The study demonstrated that participants' preferences changed based on whether their brains used age or race to classify others, highlighting the malleability of intergroup biases.

Bias is learned

- Neuroimaging studies have supported findings from psychology research, showing that information processing in the brain differs depending on whether it pertains to "us" or "them".
- Brain regions like the anterior cingulate cortex and insula activate in response to experiencing pain or empathy for others' pain.
- A study over a decade ago showed lower activation in these brain regions when individuals saw images of others in distress from racial groups different from their own.
- Other studies have confirmed these findings, suggesting that differential processing based on racial groups could lead to harmless outcomes, subtle in-group favoritism, or even intergroup violence depending on the context.
- Bias is not innate but learned, stemming from cultural associations and the brain's biology.
- Preferential bias towards in-group members does not necessarily translate to hostility towards out-group members.
- Factors contributing to hostility include associating the out-group with a threat, and uncertain circumstances, like those during the pandemic, can heighten mistrust towards the out-group.

The biology behind 'facts of life

- Neuroimaging studies have identified the amygdala, an almond-shaped brain region, as central to detecting threats and fear-based learning.
- The amygdala activates more in response to threats from out-group members, indicating a heightened response to perceived danger.
- A 2020 study involving white, non-Muslim participants showed that watching videos of Muslim males making threats activated the amygdala, while reconciliatory statements activated different brain regions involved in cognitive processing and emotion regulation.
- The amygdala's activation in response to threats is automatic, while cortical activation suggests cognitive effort.
- More research is needed to understand neural processing and its generalizability, which could inform strategies for reconciliation.
- Social and cultural narratives that paint certain groups as "bad people" are often based on misappropriated interpretations of brain biology.
- Understanding our own biology can help us be more informed and critical of narratives that evoke emotional responses.

Catatumbo lightning: a torrent of current (6 May)

Catatumbo lightning, also known as Everlasting Storm or Relámpago del Catatumbo (which means "Lightning of Catatumbo" in Spanish), is a mesmerizing atmospheric phenomenon that occurs over the mouth of the **Catatumbo River** where it empties into Lake Maracaibo in Venezuela.

Catatumbo translates to "**House of Thunder**" in the language of the Bari people, a very fitting name considering the awe-inspiring electrical spectacle that unfolds here.

Catatumbo lightning:

- Occurs over and around Lake Maracaibo, typically over the bog area formed where the **Catatumbo River flows** into the lake. The storm activity is concentrated between coordinates **8°30'N 71°0'W and 9°45'N 73°0'W**.
- Witnessed for **140 to 160 nights a year, lasting up to nine hours each day.**
- Lightning strikes occur at a staggering frequency of 16 to 40 times per minute, making it one of the most active storm areas on Earth.
- The collisions of warm, moist air from the **Caribbean Sea** with cold air masses moving down from the Andes mountains are believed to be the primary cause for this perpetual storm.
- Catatumbo lightning is a natural phenomenon that occurs over the Catatumbo River in Venezuela, where lightning strikes almost continuously.
- It primarily happens at the mouth of the Catatumbo River, where it meets Lake Maracaibo, the largest lake in Venezuela.
- Several factors contribute to the unique conditions required for Catatumbo lightning, including warm, moist air from the Caribbean Sea colliding with cooler air descending from the Andes mountains.
- This collision creates towering cumulonimbus clouds as the warmer air is forced to rise rapidly.
- Strong winds and temperature differentials generate electrical charges within these clouds, leading to the buildup of static electricity.
- When the electrical potential within the clouds becomes too great, it discharges in the form of lightning.

- Catatumbo lightning is distinguished by its frequency and duration, occurring for up to 160 nights in a year, with an average of 28 lightning strikes per minute at its peak.
- Due to this constant flow of lightning, the area has earned the title of "the lightning capital of the world."

The PM's speeches fall foul of the Model Code of Conduct (6 May)   (GS Paper II: Election)

If the Prime Minister ceases to be the role model, nothing will be left of our great democracy

The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is a set of guidelines established by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to regulate the conduct of political parties and candidates during elections.
It aims to ensure free and fair elections by setting standards for behavior and activities related to campaigning.

1. **Scope**: The MCC covers various aspects of election-related activities, including speeches, campaigns, public meetings, processions, and polling.
2. **Objective**: Its primary objective is to ensure a level playing field for all parties and candidates, prevent electoral malpractices, and maintain the integrity of the electoral process.
3. **Enforcement**: The MCC is enforced by the Election Commission of India. It becomes effective as soon as the **election schedule is announced** and remains in force until the conclusion of the electoral process.
4. **Key Provisions**: The MCC prohibits activities such as:
   - Appealing to voters on the basis of religion, caste, community, or language.
   - Making personal attacks or using derogatory language against opponents.
   - Distributing cash, liquor, or other inducements to voters.
   - Displaying posters and banners without obtaining necessary permissions.
   - Using government resources for campaigning purposes.
5. **Compliance**: Political parties and candidates are required to adhere strictly to the provisions of the MCC. Violations can result **in disciplinary action by the Election Commission, including reprimands, warnings, and even disqualification**.
6. **Importance**: The MCC plays a crucial role in maintaining the democratic process and ensuring fair competition among political parties. It promotes ethical conduct and accountability in electoral activities.
7. **Public Awareness**: The Election Commission conducts awareness campaigns to educate voters, political parties, and candidates about the provisions of the MCC and the importance of compliance.

- Lok Sabha elections are happening in the country.
- **Political manifestos, which are statements of what political parties promise to do if elected,** are being discussed in the news.
- People are talking more about what these manifestos are missing rather than what they include.
- The Prime Minister recently said that the Congress party wants to take away people's properties, including their gold and wedding necklaces (mangalsutra), and give them to members of the minority community.

- This statement shows how the election debate is going, with a focus on controversial issues rather than facts.
- The Prime Minister, being the leader of the world's largest democracy, and his advisors are expected to know the truth and stick to facts.

The contents of the two manifestos

- The Congress party has released its manifesto called **'Nyay Patra'** for the elections.
- It talks about various issues in the country and what the party aims to do about them if they win.
- The manifesto covers topics like **equity, minorities, senior citizens, disabilities, LGBTQIA+, health, education, sports, women's empowerment, farmers, workers, culture, economy, taxation, and defending the Constitution.**
- It states that wealth creation is important for businesses and the Congress wants rapid growth and aims to double the GDP in the next 10 years.
- It emphasizes that welfare for everyone, especially the poor, is a priority and government resources will be used for their benefit.
- The **manifesto highlights the need for fairness and equal opportunities in the economy, especially for marginalized communities like SC, ST, and OBC.**
- The **Congress plans to conduct a census to understand the socio-economic conditions of different castes and use this data to strengthen affirmative action policies**.
- Nowhere does it suggest taking wealth from one group and giving it to another. It's not about redistribution like Robin Hood.
- The **manifesto aligns with the principles of the Constitution's Preamble, aiming for a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic that ensures justice, liberty, and equality for all citizens.**

THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a [1][SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC] and to secure to all its citizens :

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all;

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the [2][unity and integrity of the Nation];

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949 do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.

1. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Sovereign Democratic Republic" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)
2. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Unity of the Nation" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)

- **Article 39** of the Constitution outlines the **State's responsibility to ensure citizens have adequate livelihoods, distribute resources for the common good, and prevent wealth concentration.**
- **Article 38 aims for a social order promoting welfare, minimizing income inequalities, and eliminating disparities in status, facilities, and opportunities.**
- **Article 46 focuses on promoting the educational and economic interests of weaker sections, especially Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.**

- The BJP is advocating for a **uniform civil code**, aligned with **Article 44** of the Directive Principles.

Question: Which one of the following objectives is not embodied in the Preamble to the Constitution of India?

(a) Liberty of thought
(b) Economic liberty
(c) Liberty of expression
(d) Liberty of belief

UPSC 2017

By Amit Kumar Gupta

- The **BJP's manifesto, 'Sankalp Patra',** emphasizes achievements like free rations, direct transfers to citizens' accounts, health insurance, and housing schemes.
- These initiatives reflect the BJP's commitment to goals outlined in the Constitution's Preamble.
- Accusations against the Congress manifesto are seen as misguided, given the BJP's own commitments to similar objectives.

No law to govern manifesto

- In **2013, the Supreme Court (S. Subramaniam Balaji v. Government of Tamil**
- **Nadu & Ors. (2013))** highlighted the need for laws governing election manifestos.
- It directed the Election Commission of India (ECI) **to create guidelines in consultation with political parties.**
- The ECI conducted a meeting with parties in 2013 and issued 'Instructions to political parties on manifestos' in 2015.
- These guidelines state that while election promises aren't considered corrupt practices, offering freebies can influence voters and impact fair elections.
- The **Model Code of Conduct (MCC)** issued by the ECI in 2024 prohibits actions that may fuel existing differences or create tension among different groups.

- **It restricts criticism of other parties to their policies and past records, avoiding personal attacks or unverified allegations.**
- The MCC also forbids appeals to caste or communal sentiments to gain votes.
- Activities violating the MCC can be considered corrupt practices or offenses under election laws.
- In 1996, the Supreme Court (Dr. Ramesh Yeshwant Prabhoo v. Prabhakar Kashinath Kunte Case, 1996) ruled that religious speeches influencing voters are corrupt practices, citing an example involving Bal Thackeray's remarks.
- In 2017, the Court (Abhiram Singh v. C.D. Commachen Case, 2017) interpreted the Representation of People Act, stating that appeals based on religion, race, caste, community, or language are corrupt practices and can lead to election annulment.
- The Prime Minister's recent statements targeting the Opposition and minority community violate the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and constitute corrupt practices, according to the Supreme Court.
- It's crucial for the Prime Minister to follow the MCC both in word and action to maintain democracy's integrity.
- The **Election Commission of India (ECI) is constitutionally mandated to ensure free and fair elections** but has been criticized for failing in its duty, indicating flaws in its composition as approved by the Supreme Court.

Indian Defence University (6 May)   (GS Paper III: Internal Security)

- Thucydides, an ancient Greek thinker, is quoted as saying that a nation that separates its scholars from its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and its fighting done by fools.
- This quote emphasizes the **importance of integrating academic rigor and strategic thinking into military institutions.**
- Many nations, including India's neighbors like Pakistan and China, have established defense universities to promote academic excellence within their armed forces.
- Pakistan reportedly has two universities dedicated to its armed forces, while China has three, with more than 60 other universities in China having military and security connections.
- However, India lacks a dedicated defense university despite the need for one being long overdue.
- The absence of an Indian Defense University (IDU) raises concerns about the country's ability to enhance strategic thinking and academic rigor within its armed forces.

Professional Military Education

- The **nature of war remains constant, but its character is constantly changing**, necessitating a focus on military education.
- Military officers need academic preparation to address current and future security challenges, especially in dynamic and chaotic environments like Europe and West Asia.

- Military officers are expected to produce results despite uncertain initial information and rapidly changing circumstances.
- A well-constructed **Professional Military Education (PME)** continuum empowers officers to handle complex challenges throughout their careers.
- The evolution of PME in the U.S. is relevant to India's aims of theaterization.
- The **Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986** in the U.S. brought significant structural reforms.
- 'Ike' Skelton played a crucial role in reforming military education in the U.S. armed forces through a report to the U.S. Congress.
- Skelton's report recommended focusing educational institutions on specific learning objectives, enhancing the quality of faculty, establishing a two-phased system for joint officer education, and forming an Institute for National Strategic Studies at National Defense University, among other things.

Slow progress

- **The idea of establishing a Defence Services University in India was first proposed by the Chiefs of Staff Committee in 1967.**
- **In 1982,** a Study Group emphasized the need for an apex educational body for the armed forces, leading to the concept of the Indian Defence University (IDU).
- **Following the Kargil conflict, a committee chaired by Dr. K. Subrahmanyam was formed to examine the establishment of the IDU.**
- Based on the committee's recommendations, 'in principle' approval was given in May 2010 to establish **the IDU in Gurgaon.**
- Despite initial optimism, progress on setting up the IDU has been slow.
- **India's armed forces have several world-class training and education institutions, but they lack** an integrated Professional Military Education (PME) framework.
- Affiliations with universities for degree courses are not seen as the optimal solution for the armed forces' educational needs.
- The **IDU aims to address these shortcomings by providing a central institution of higher military learning with a qualified faculty comprising academicians and serving/retired officers.**
- The university's curriculum would **cover various subjects relevant to national security and defense, integrating theory with practice.**
- Different colleges and institutions under the IDU's governance would offer diverse subjects in sciences and humanities related to defense and security.

An idea whose time has come

- The establishment of the Indian Defence University (IDU) has been delayed despite its long-overdue realization.
- Some experts have suggested that the **Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU) in Gujarat could** fulfill the need for the IDU. However, this argument is flawed.
- The comparison between the IDU and RRU is like comparing apples and oranges because their objectives and curricula differ significantly.

- The **RRU Act does not specify education related to 'defence' in its objectives, and its curriculum is not solely focused on military requirements for war management and execution of plans.**
- Delays in commissioning the IDU come at the cost of defense preparedness, strategic culture, and inter-service integration.
- The urgent need is to operationalize the IDU promptly to establish the foundation for joint warfighting through a well-calibrated and futuristic military education curriculum.

In the frontline: On Rahul Gandhi contesting from Rae Bareli (6 May)

Rahul Gandhi should have decided to contest from Rae Bareli much earlier

- Rahul Gandhi has decided to contest the elections in Rae Bareli, Uttar Pradesh, a constituency historically significant to his family.
- His grandmother, grandfather, and mother have all represented Rae Bareli in the past.
- In 2019, Rahul Gandhi lost the adjacent Amethi constituency but won from Wayanad, Kerala.
- He has chosen to contest from Rae Bareli again while seeking re-election in Wayanad.
- His decision to contest from Rae Bareli came just before the nomination deadline, leading to speculation about his intentions.
- His sister, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, decided not to contest, while her husband, Robert Vadra, who expressed interest in a party ticket, was overlooked.
- Rahul Gandhi has declared his mission to resist BJP's Hindutva politics and promote social justice, particularly focusing on the Hindi belt and western regions.
- The BJP's stronghold lies in these regions, while the Congress struggles to regain its influence.
- Rahul Gandhi's decision to contest from Kerala in 2019 was seen as a strategic mistake, avoiding the tough battle in Uttar Pradesh.
- His entry into the electoral fray in Uttar Pradesh may energize the opposition, especially with the alliance between Congress and the Samajwadi Party.
- Winning both Wayanad and Rae Bareli would require Rahul Gandhi to retain Rae Bareli, signaling his commitment to the ideological battle against the BJP in the long run.

Yearning for change: On Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh going to the polls (6 May)

The opposition in Kashmir and Ladakh are united in their aims, not electorally

- Jammu and Kashmir, along with Ladakh, are Union Territories formed from the former State of Jammu & Kashmir.
- Elections are being held across multiple phases in these regions.

- Voting has already taken place in Jammu constituencies, with encouraging turnout figures.
- However, voter turnout in the Kashmir Valley constituencies like Srinagar, Anantnag, and Baramulla has been low.
- This low turnout is attributed to disillusionment among voters due to the dissolution of the State Assembly and continued central rule.
- The abrogation of special status and the UT status for J&K have further deepened the sense of alienation among Kashmiris.
- Despite distrust between Kashmiri parties and New Delhi, traditional parties like the PDP and NC have not united to contest elections together.
- The BJP's focus on Jammu and Ladakh, along with its talk of "unifying" the country, has been criticized as hollow.
- In Ladakh, activist Sonam Wangchuk's campaign has highlighted issues of Statehood and environmental concerns.
- However, opposition parties like Congress and NC couldn't agree on a consensus candidate for the Ladakh constituency, resulting in a split in their support.

Make the poor richer without making the rich poorer (6 May)

It is simply incontestable that the economic disparity between the rich and the poor has widened alarmingly over the last two decades, not just in India but across the world

Pareto optimality, or Pareto efficiency, is a concept in economics that refers to a situation where **no improvement can be made to one person's situation without making someone else worse off.**

It is a state of affairs where resources are allocated in the most efficient way possible, given the preferences of all individuals involved.
- The **Pareto frontier illustrates** the different combinations of two objectives that can be achieved without making anyone worse off.
- Any point on the curve is considered **Pareto optimal**, while points below the curve are considered inefficient.

Pareto optimality:
- It is a theoretical concept, and in practice, it can be difficult to achieve a truly Pareto optimal outcome.
- Pareto optimality **does not imply equality or fairness.** It is simply a way of identifying the most efficient allocation of resources.
- The concept of Pareto optimality is used in many different fields, including economics, political science, and engineering.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has accused the Congress party of promising wealth redistribution in its manifesto, but there's no mention of it in the document.
- This sparked a debate on inequality in India and globally, with economic disparity growing significantly over the past two decades.
- Politicizing this issue detracts from finding real solutions to bridge the wealth gap.

- Bridging the gap can be achieved by either making the rich poorer, making the poor richer, or both.
- The concept of "Pareto Optimum" suggests that improving one person's situation may worsen another's, which is relevant in developed nations with slow growth.
- However, developing nations with faster growth rates have more options for addressing inequality, presenting a fundamental difference in ideological approaches.

'Fix the system'

- The idea of a wealth tax, aimed at extracting from the super-rich to aid the poor, is rooted in a 'zero-sum' approach to reducing economic disparity.
- Taxing wealth acquired through unfair means conflates the process with the outcome, suggesting a need to fix the system rather than targeting wealth directly.
- An inheritance tax, while morally appealing, may not significantly impact economic inequality and could deter investments.
- India's economic growth is essential for expanding the overall economic pie, requiring investment, which aggressive taxation policies may hinder.
- India's inequality stems from skewed economic growth and taxation, leading to jobless growth where GDP expansion doesn't translate into jobs and prosperity for the majority.
- To address this, there's a need to rebalance the capital-labor skew through labor-focused policy incentives, as seen in some promises in the Congress manifesto, such as the right to apprenticeship for youth and employment-linked incentive schemes for corporates.
- India's inequality is exacerbated by an imbalance in taxation, where the common person pays more taxes compared to corporates.
- Out of every 100 rupees collected in taxes, 64 rupees come from the poor and middle class through indirect (GST) and income taxes, while only 36 rupees come from rich corporates.
- This leads to the poor and common person facing a double burden of being excluded from economic growth gains and taxed more than corporates.
- The manifesto aims to address this by proposing an overhaul of India's taxation structure, including simpler and lower GST rates and a new direct tax code.
- Social security nets through welfare programs are crucial to support the poor until they benefit from economic growth.
- Funding for welfare programs can come from faster growth, higher tax buoyancy, and efficient welfare delivery without penalizing the rich.
- A pragmatic approach to reducing the rich-poor gap involves maximizing economic growth, minimizing unemployment, lowering tax burdens for the common person, and providing a safety net for the poor.
- This requires a delicate balance of labor market incentives, welfare safety nets, and attracting investments.
- Punitive taxation of the rich to benefit the poor is not considered practical, wise, or desirable. Instead, India can reduce inequality by focusing on making the poor richer without necessarily making the rich poorer.

Question	Answer
Question 1: Which of the following is NOT a percussion instrument? (a) Dhol (b) Sitar (c) Xylophone (d) Dholki	**Answer: (b) Sitar** **Explanation:** Percussion instruments produce sound when struck or beaten. The sitar is a stringed instrument played by plucking the strings. Dhol, Xylophone, and Dholki are all percussion instruments.
Question 2: The rhythmic patterns in Indian classical music played on the tabla are called: (a) Taal (b) Raga (c) Sargam (d) Bhatiyali	**Answer: (a) Taal** **Explanation:** Taal refers to the rhythmic cycle in Indian classical music, often played on the tabla. Raga defines the melodic framework, Sargam is the musical scale, and Bhatiyali is a specific genre of folk music in Bengal.
Question 3: In which of the following tribal dances of India is the Dhol played prominently? (a) Bhangra (b) Bihu (c) Garba (d) Ghoomar	**Answer: (a) Bhangra** **Explanation:** The Dhol is a double-headed barrel drum, a vital instrument in the energetic Bhangra dance of Punjab. Bihu (Assam), Garba (Gujarat), and Ghoomar (Rajasthan) have their own distinct percussion instruments.
Question 4: Consider the following statements about Catatumbo lightning: (i) It is a unique type of lightning that occurs over the Catatumbo River in Venezuela. (ii) It is the most frequent lightning activity recorded on Earth. (iii) The cause of this phenomenon is not fully understood. (iv) It is a major tourist attraction in Venezuela. Which of the statements given above are correct? (a) (i) and (ii) only (b) (i), (ii) and (iii) only (c) (i), (iii) and (iv) only (d) All of the above	**Answer: (d) All of the above** **Explanation:** Catatumbo lightning is a well-documented phenomenon that occurs over the Catatumbo River in Venezuela. It is known for its exceptional frequency, with estimates suggesting up to 40 lightning strikes per minute during peak activity. This makes it a strong contender for the title of the most frequent lightning activity on Earth. The exact cause of this extreme lightning concentration is still being researched, but factors like specific atmospheric conditions and the presence of methane gas from nearby marshes are believed to play a role. Due to its spectacular light show, Catatumbo lightning is indeed a tourist attraction in Venezuela, often referred to as "The Everlasting Storm."
Question 5: The Catatumbo lightning phenomenon is most likely associated with which of the following? (a) Volcanic activity (b) Unique atmospheric conditions (c) Presence of large water bodies (d) Movement of tectonic plates	**Answer: (b) Unique atmospheric conditions** **Explanation:** Volcanic activity, movement of tectonic plates, and large water bodies are not directly linked to Catatumbo lightning. While water vapor plays a role in lightning formation, the specific atmospheric conditions in the Catatumbo region, possibly influenced by methane emissions, are considered the key driver for this phenomenon.
Question 6: The Mullaperiyar Dam is a subject of dispute between which two Indian states?	**Answer: (c) Kerala and Tamil Nadu** **Explanation:**

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	The Mullaperiyar Dam is located in Kerala, but it diverts water to irrigate parts of Tamil Nadu. Concerns about the dam's safety have led to a long-standing dispute between the two states.
(a) Kerala and Karnataka (b) Kerala and Andhra Pradesh (c) Kerala and Tamil Nadu (d) Tamil Nadu and Karnataka	
Question 7: What is a major concern associated with the Mullaperiyar Dam? (a) High maintenance costs (b) Inefficient water usage (c) Seismic vulnerability (d) Silting of the reservoir	Answer: (c) Seismic vulnerability **Explanation**: The dam's age and location in a seismically active zone have raised concerns about its ability to withstand an earthquake. This is a major point of contention between Kerala and Tamil Nadu
Question 8: Which of the following statements about the Mullaperiyar Dam is not true? (a) It was constructed during the British Raj. (b) It is located on the Periyar River. (c) The dam generates a significant amount of hydroelectric power. (d) The Supreme Court of India has issued rulings regarding the dam's operation.	Answer: (c) The dam generates a significant amount of hydroelectric power. **Explanation**: While the dam does generate some hydropower, irrigation remains its primary purpose. The focus on irrigation is reflected in the design and capacity of the dam.
Question 10: The Rashtriya Raksha University is significant because it aims to: (a) Promote research in the field of agriculture. (b) Provide high-quality training for personnel involved in law enforcement and security. (c) Offer advanced degrees in engineering and technology. (d) Focus on the preservation of India's cultural heritage	Answer: (b) Provide high-quality training for personnel involved in law enforcement and security. **Explanation**: RRU's focus is on training and education related to policing, criminal justice, and internal security. It aims to address the need for a skilled workforce in these areas. The other options don't align with the core objective of the university.
Question 11: The location of Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU) in Gandhinagar can be advantageous due to the presence of other institutions like: (a) Medical colleges and hospitals. (b) Institutes of technology and engineering. (c) National Law University and forensic science university. (d) Agricultural universities and research centers.	Answer: (c) National Law University and forensic science university. Explanation: The presence of the National Law University and the forensic science university creates an opportunity for collaboration and interdisciplinary learning in areas related to law enforcement, criminal justice, and evidence collection. Medical colleges and hospitals, institutes of technology, agricultural universities, and research centers are not as directly مرتبط (mutalliq - related) to RRU's core focus.