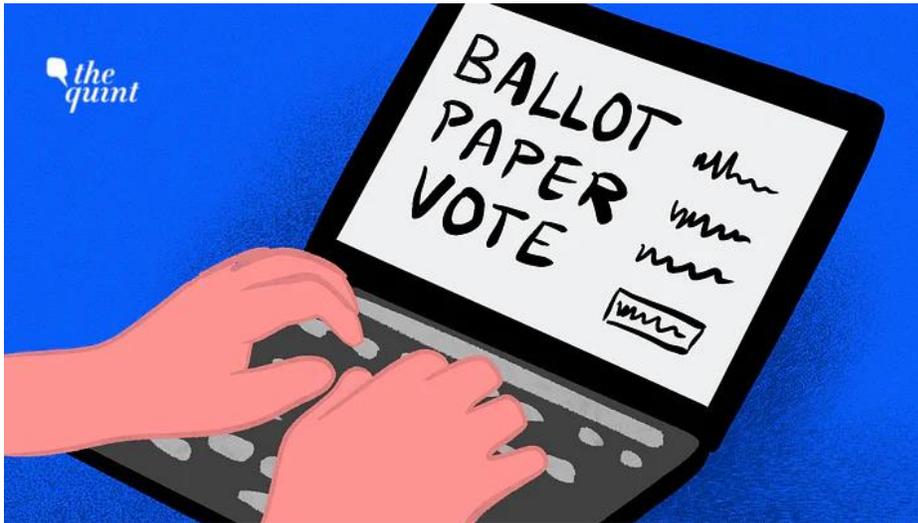


## 1. Ways to facilitate NRIs to Cast Vote Remotely



**Topic: Polity and Governance**

**In News:** The Union government in the Supreme Court said it was considering ways to facilitate non-resident Indians (NRI), especially migrant labourers, to cast their votes remotely.

### More on the Topic

- Currently Election Commission of India (ECI) allows **NRIs to register as overseas electors as long as they have not acquired the citizenship of another country.**
- An NRI can vote in the constituency in which his/her place of residence, as mentioned in the passport, is located.
- He/she can only vote in person and will have to produce her passport in original at the polling station for establishing identity.
- Voting rights for NRIs were introduced only in 2011, through an amendment to the Representation of the People Act 1950.

### Challenges with the present system:

- It is evident that the number of NRIs registered as voters is abysmally low and out of these registered NRIs, the number of voters who actually voted or turn up for voting in the elections may be even poorer.
- **The main reason for low turnout for voting could be the provision of law requiring in person presence at polling station.**
- NRIs have been demanding that NRI should be allowed to vote by alternative methods. Some NRIs have also approached courts.

### Vinod Zutshi Panel Recommendations:

- The Committee favoured postal ballot, where **blank postal ballot paper is transferred electronically to NRI and returned by post by NRI.**



- The committee was not in favour of the e-postal ballot system, as it has almost no risk of manipulation, rigging or violation of secrecy. The committee recommends that the option of **voting through proxy** appointed by the overseas electors can be considered to be provided to the overseas electors.
- It had ruled out the possibility of allowing NRIs to vote through the Internet or at diplomatic missions abroad for the time being.

#### **Voting Rights for Migrant Workers:**

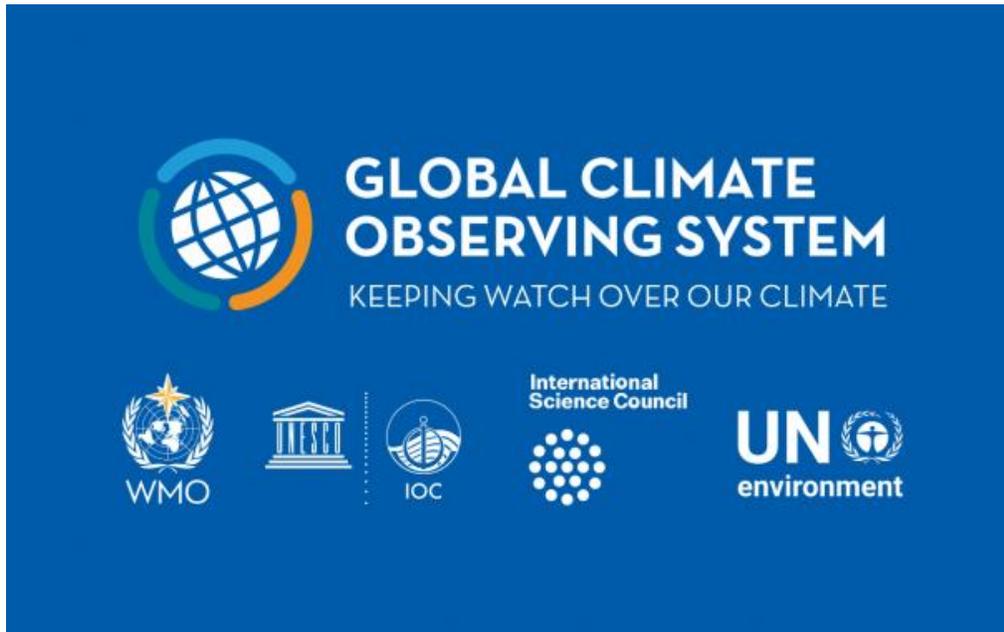
- An **11-member panel of ministers were** mandated to examine NRI voting feasibility and also to examine the issue of **extending similar voting rights to migrant workers, a move which is vehemently opposed by the Election Commission.**
- Both migrant workers and NRIs are denied voting because the Representation of the People Act mandates that **“a citizen, to avail voting rights, should be an ordinary resident in his constituency”.**
- The EC has, however, rejected another plea to allow inter-state migrants to also have options of postal, proxy or e-ballot to enable them vote for their native constituencies.

**Source: Indian Express**

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## **2. Global Climate Observing System(GCOS)**

**Topic: Science and Technology**



**In News:** Global Climate Observing System has commented that the Climate observing system remains fragile and needs financing for strengthening and sustaining it.

### More on the Topic:

- The declaration was released by the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) conference which was held recently.
- The conference has announced its commitment to a “comprehensive and sustainable global climate observing system” in light of the rapid pace of climate change.

### About GCOS Conference:

- GCOS conference was hosted by Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT).
- Operational monitoring of the climate and detection of global climatic changes are the fundamental objectives of EUMETSAT.
- GCOS is co-sponsored by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Science Council.

### Important Observations by the Conference:

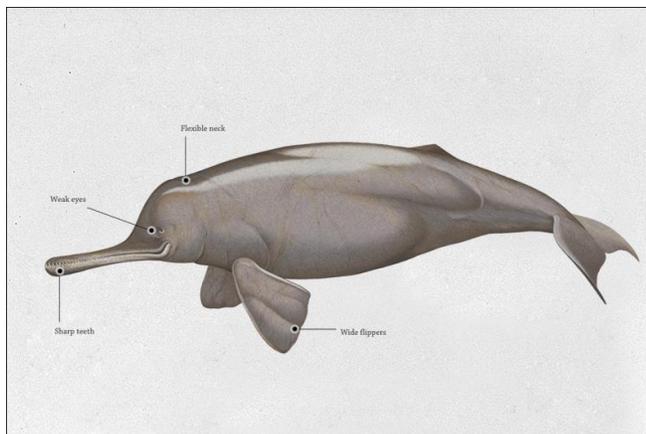
- The status of climate observation systems has not improved much in Africa, South America and Southeast Asia since 2015.
- Africa, South America and South-East Asia **urged prioritising advancements in climate observation systems**. Prioritisation must also be given to polar and deep ocean observing systems.
- There is a **need to focus on improving data quality, availability, accessibility and utility**.
- The climate observations are underexploited as the processing of the available data has been inconsistent, the declaration underlined.
- The conference called for **access to climate data through global data repositories**. In addition, access to climate data must be made free and open.
- They called for **advancements in local climate change information networks**.

Source: Down to Earth

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## 3. Gangetic Dolphin

Topic: Environment and Ecology





**In News:** Carcass of endangered dolphin found at UP's Katarnia wildlife sanctuary.

**More on the Topic:**

- Dolphins are one of the oldest creatures in the world along with some species of turtles, crocodiles and sharks.
- The Ganges river dolphin was officially discovered in 1801. Ganges river dolphins once lived in the **Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems of Nepal, India, and Bangladesh.**
- But the species is extinct from most of its early distribution ranges.

**Gangetic Dolphin:**

- The Ganges river dolphin can only live in freshwater and is essentially blind.
- **They hunt by emitting ultrasonic sounds**, which bounces off of fish and other prey, enabling them to “see” an image in their mind.
- They are frequently found alone or in small groups, and generally a mother and calf travel together.
- Calves are chocolate brown at birth and then have grey-brown smooth, hairless skin as adults. Females are larger than males and give birth once every two to three years to only one calf.
- Being a mammal, the Ganges River dolphin cannot breathe in the water and must surface every 30-120 seconds. Because of the sound it produces when breathing, the animal is **popularly referred to as the ‘Susu’.**

**Conservation Status:**

- IUCN Status: **Endangered**
- It is placed in Schedule-I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act
- It is listed on **CITES Appendix I**, which lists species that are the most endangered among CITES-listed animals and plants

**Source:** Hindu

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## 4. Aerosol Study



### Topic: Environment and Ecology

**In News:** According to a new study, there were differences in the aerosol concentrations in the atmosphere as measured by ground observations and climate models. The variation in the findings may have a bearing on climate policymaking.

#### More on the Topic:

- Aerosols are extremely small solid particles, or very small liquid droplets, suspended in the atmosphere.
- Aerosols consisting of solid particles can be placed in the atmosphere primarily by large dust storms, volcanic eruptions, or the soot particles from large fires.
- The sources of aerosols are erupting volcanoes, sea salt and wildfires. Humans, too, add aerosols to the atmosphere by burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas.
- Aerosols such as black carbon, organic carbon, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds and sulfur dioxide are known to hurt the climate and human health. They stick around in the atmosphere for weeks.

#### Significance of Studying About the Aerosol:

- Aerosols can damage lung tissue and lead to lung diseases. They also influence the climate by changing how much solar energy is absorbed or reflected away from Earth.
- Aerosols influence the Earth's climate by acting as seeds on which clouds form.
- Increased aerosol particles can lead to more but smaller cloud droplets, which may likely reduce rains that fall from the cloud.
- Excess infant deaths due to aerosols in India were estimated to be three million — the highest among eight regions evaluated in the study.
- Crop output declined 12.5 tonnes due to aerosol pollution, the study published in Science Advances.
- They impact crop productivity as well.

Source: PIB



## 5. Data Centre

### Topic: Science and Technology



**In News:** UP Chief minister has unveiled North India's first hyperscale data centre, Yotta D1, at its Greater Noida Data Centre Park.

#### More on the Topic:

- The data centre will increase **the data storage capacity of the country.**
- It is until now stood at two percent only despite the fact that 1.5 billion mobile phones and 650 million internet users in the world are from India using 20 per cent of data.
- For storage of data India is utilising service from centres abroad.

#### About Data Centre:

- At its simplest, a data center is a physical facility that organizations use to house their critical applications and data.
- A data center's design is based on a network of computing and storage resources that enable the delivery of shared applications and data.
- **It is a dedicated secure space within a centralized location where computing and networking equipment is concentrated for purpose of collecting, storing, processing, distributing or allowing access to large amounts of data.**

#### Significance of Data Centres:

- They ensure **digital sovereignty** of the nation.
- They are **essential to meet the data localisation norms** of the government.

#### Government Policies:

- Infrastructure status to Data Centres.
- Draft Data centre policy 2020 which aims to make India a digital hub of data centres.

**Source: Business Standard**



## 6. Lily Thomas vs. Union of India case

Topic: Polity and Governance

### Lily Thomas vs Union Of India & Ors



• In this case the Supreme Court in a PIL declared sub-section (4) of Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, which allowed convicted members of legislative bodies a 3 month time period for appeal against the conviction and sentencing, as ultra vires the Constitution.

• The Court ruled that Members of Parliament, Legislative Councils and Legislative Assemblies convicted of crimes where they had been awarded a minimum sentence of 2 years imprisonment would cease to be members of the house to which they were elected from the date of sentencing.



**In News:** Government The precedent of Lily Thomas vs. Union of India case was utilised to automatically disqualify UP MLA.

#### More on the Topic:

- Supreme Court in Lily Thomas vs. Union of India case (along with Lok Prahari vs. Union of India), had ruled that any **MP/MLA who is convicted of a crime and given a minimum of two years' imprisonment, loses membership of House with immediate effect.**



- Earlier, Representation of the People Act allowed convicted lawmakers a three-month period for filing appeal to higher court and to get a stay of conviction and sentence.
- This loop hole has allowed the convicts to hold their post till all the judicial remedies get exhausted.

Source: Business Standard

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## 7. Saffron Festival



### Topic: Economy

**In News:** Directorate of Tourism, Kashmir organised a saffron festival in the karewa of Pampore.

### More on the Topic:

- Saffron is a plant whose dried stigmas (thread-like parts of the flower) are used to make saffron spice.



- Saffron cultivation is believed to have been introduced in Kashmir by Central Asian immigrants around the 1st Century BCE.
- It has been associated with **traditional Kashmiri cuisine and represents the rich cultural heritage of the region.**
- It is cultivated and harvested in the **Karewa (highlands) of Jammu and Kashmir.**
- It grows in many different soil types but thrives best in calcareous (soil that has calcium carbonate in abundance), humus-rich and well-drained soil with a pH between 6 and 8.

**Conditions For the Growth of Saffron:**

- For saffron cultivation, we need an explicit climatological summer and winter with temperatures ranging from no more than 35 or 40 degree Celsius in summer to about – 15 or –20 degree Celsius in winter.
- It also requires adequate rainfall that is 1000-1500 mm per annum.
- Saffron grows well at an altitude of 2000 meters above sea level. It needs a photoperiod (sunlight) of 12 hours.

**Source: Business Standard**

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