



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 18-02-2025

GS-2

1. Chief Election Commissioner
2. India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEEC)

GS-3

3. J. C. Bose Grant
4. Bird Flu
5. Karnataka's Clean Mobility Policy 2025-2030

Chief Election Commissioner

Syllabus: GS-2; Polity- Constitutional Body

Context

- Gyanesh Kumar Appointed New Chief Election Commissioner.



Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 324:** Grants the Election Commission (EC) the power to supervise, direct, and control elections in India (President, Vice-President, Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Legislatures).
- **Composition:** The EC consists of the **Chief Election Commissioner (CEC)** and other Election Commissioners (ECs).
- Initially, the EC had only one member (CEC), but since **1993**, it has been a **multi-member body** with **one CEC and two ECs**.

Appointment & Tenure

- **Appointed by:** The President of India.
- **Tenure:**
 - Fixed **six years** or until they attain the age of **65 years**, whichever is earlier.
- **Removal:**
 - The **CEC enjoys security of tenure** and can be removed only through **impeachment**, similar to a Supreme Court judge (on the grounds of proved misbehavior or incapacity).
 - Other ECs can be removed by the President on the recommendation of the **CEC**.

Powers & Functions

- **Conduct of Elections:** Ensures free and fair elections to Parliament, State Legislatures, and the offices of the President & Vice-President.
- **Supervises Political Parties:** Recognizes political parties, allots symbols, and enforces the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).
- **Electoral Roll Management:** Prepares and updates voter lists.
- **Advisory Role:** Advises the President and Governor on matters related to election disputes and disqualifications under the Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951.
- **Decision-making:** The CEC and other ECs have **equal powers**, and decisions are taken by majority vote.

Challenges & Reforms Needed

- **Need for an Independent Appointment Process:** Currently, the President appoints the CEC & ECs on the advice of the government. There is a demand for a **collegium-based appointment system**.
- **Financial Independence:** The ECI does not have direct financial autonomy; its budget is approved by the government.
- **Issues with MCC Implementation:** Political parties often violate the **Model Code of Conduct**, and enforcement remains a challenge.
- **Electoral Reforms:** Need for **state funding of elections, criminalization of politics, and more transparency in electoral bonds**.

Recent Developments

- The **Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service, and Term of Office) Act, 2023** changed the appointment process:
 - Now, the **CEC and ECs** are appointed by a **three-member panel** consisting of:
 - **Prime Minister (Chairperson)**
 - **Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha**
 - **Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the PM**
 - This replaces the previous Supreme Court recommendation of a **collegium system (PM, LoP, and CJI)**.

India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEEC)

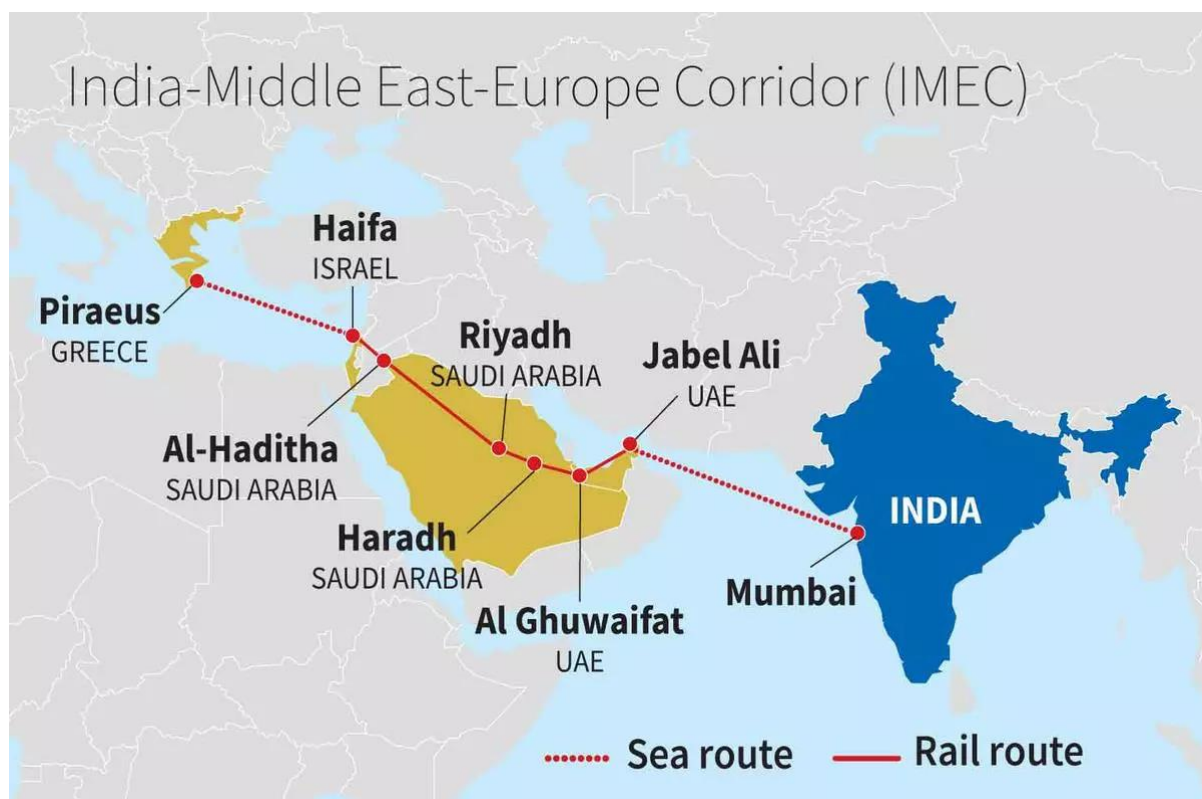
Syllabus: GS-2: International Relations - Projects.

Context:

- India and France on Wednesday (February 12, 2025) announced that they would continue to work closely to implement the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEEC) project.

Introduction

- The **India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEEC)** was announced during the **G20 Summit in September 2023**.
- It is a transcontinental trade and connectivity initiative linking **India, the Middle East, and Europe**.
- Positioned as an alternative to traditional maritime routes like the **Suez Canal**.
- Aims to **reduce transit time by 40%** and **transportation costs by 30%**, revolutionizing international trade.



Key Features of IMEC

1. Connectivity

- Establishes **fast and cost-effective trade routes** between India, the Middle East, and Europe.

2. Economic Integration

- Diversifies trade and enhances India's **global supply chain integration**.
- Increases India's **export potential**.

3. Clean Energy and Technology

- Plans for **energy grid linkages, undersea fiber-optic cables, and pipelines for sustainable energy trade**.

4. Digital Trade Facilitation

- The **India-UAE Virtual Trade Corridor (VTC)** serves as a model for other IMEC participants to enhance trade efficiency.

Challenges

1. Geopolitical Risks

- **Israel-Palestine conflict** affects the western segment of IMEC.
- **Arab-Israel diplomatic hurdles** pose challenges to collaboration.

2. Uneven Development

- The **eastern segment (India-Middle East)** progresses steadily, while the **western segment (Middle East-Europe)** faces uncertainties.

3. Technical and Financial Feasibility

- Requires **multilateral funding** and **technical cooperation** for infrastructure development.
- **Clean energy pipelines, fiber-optic cables, and telecommunication networks** need heavy investments.

Opportunities for India

1. Domestic Infrastructure Enhancement

- Upgrading **Mumbai, Mundra, and Kochi ports** to integrate with IMEC.
- Developing **economic zones near connectivity nodes** to boost exports.

2. Global Supply Chain Hub

- Positions India as a **reliable alternative** to China in global supply chains.

3. Digital Logistics Transformation

- Enhances **domestic logistics efficiency** through digital solutions.

4. Clean Energy Collaboration

- Leverages India's **renewable energy potential** for sustainable trade partnerships.

Strategic Importance

1. Economic

- Enhances **India's export capacity** to **Europe and the Middle East**.
- Promotes **regional trade standardization** and improves **logistics efficiency**.

2. Geopolitical

- Counters China's **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** by providing an alternative trade corridor.
- Strengthens **diplomatic and economic ties** with **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations**.

3. Environmental

- Encourages **sustainable trade** practices.
- Focuses on **green hydrogen** and renewable energy integration.

Broader Implications

1. For Global Trade

- Reduces reliance on the **Suez Canal**, diversifying global trade routes.

2. For India's Economic Growth

- Improves **connectivity and competitiveness**, enhancing India's global trade standing.

3. For Participating Nations

- Strengthens **sustainable energy cooperation**.
- Facilitates **telecommunication integration and digital trade**.

The Road Ahead

Short-Term Goals

- Strengthening **India-UAE trade relations**.
- Expanding the **Virtual Trade Corridor (VTC)** to other IMEC participants.

Medium-Term Goals

- Preparing **ports and logistics networks** for higher trade volumes.
- Developing **clean energy** and **digital connectivity** components.

Long-Term Goals

- Expanding IMEC to include **Africa and Central Asia**.
- Establishing IMEC as a **model for inclusive and sustainable global trade**.

Conclusion

- IMEC has the potential to **reshape global trade** by offering a **viable alternative to traditional trade routes**.
- Success depends on overcoming **geopolitical and logistical challenges**.
- **India's strategic investments** in infrastructure, digital logistics, and clean energy will determine its leadership role in IMEC.
- IMEC can solidify India's position as a **central player in the evolving maritime and trade landscape**.

J. C. Bose Grant

Syllabus: GS-3: Science and Technology – Schemes and Policies.

Context:

- The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) has recently launched the J. C. Bose Grant (JBG).

J. C. Bose Grant (JBG) – An Initiative by ANRF

Introduction

- The **J. C. Bose Grant (JBG)** is a new research funding initiative by the **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)**.
- Aims to **honour senior Indian scientists and engineers** for their exceptional contributions.
- Provides **extra-mural funding** to enhance research in advanced scientific and technological domains.
- Aligns with the **National Education Policy (NEP)** goal of strengthening India's research ecosystem.

Objectives

- Recognises **senior-level researchers** with outstanding achievements.

- Focuses on **diverse domains**, including **science, technology, agriculture, medicine, and humanities**.
- Encourages research excellence through funding for projects with significant societal impact.

Eligibility Criteria

- Open to **active senior scientists and researchers** in India.
- Applicants must hold **at least a Professor-level position** or its equivalent.
- Requires a **proven track record** in **publications, patents, technology transfers, and research awards**.

Funding Details

- **Annual research grant:** ₹25 lakhs for 5 years.
- **Institutional overhead:** ₹1 lakh per year for the host institution.
- Supports **advanced research projects** in key scientific and technological fields.

Continuity of Funding

- If the **Principal Investigator (PI) retires**, funding continues if the **host institution accommodates them**.
- Grant is available **until the age of 68**, ensuring sustained research contributions.

Selection Process

- Conducted **annually** by a **Search-cum-Selection Committee**.
- Follows **predefined guidelines** to ensure transparency and merit-based selection.

Historical Context

- **Restructured from the J. C. Bose Fellowship**, previously awarded by the **Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB)**.
- Reflects a **stronger commitment** to supporting senior researchers with enhanced funding.

Significance of Research Funding

- **Boosts innovation** and scientific advancements in India.
- Encourages a **culture of research and development**.
- Supports India's **goal of becoming a global leader in science and technology**.

About ANRF (Anusandhan National Research Foundation)

- **Established under the ANRF Act, 2023** as India's premier research funding body.
- Supports **research, innovation, and entrepreneurship** in science, engineering, technology, health, environment, and agriculture.
- Strengthens **R&D in universities, colleges, research institutions, and laboratories**.
- Functions as a **top institution for shaping India's scientific research**, aligning with **NEP recommendations**.

Bird Flu

Syllabus: GS-3: General Science – Diseases.

Context:

- Recent bird flu scare in Andhra Pradesh has led to a decline in chicken and egg consumption.
- Poultry businesses are experiencing severe financial losses due to reduced demand.

Introduction

- Bird Flu, or **Avian Influenza (AI)**, is a viral disease that primarily affects birds but can infect humans and other animals in certain cases.
- It is caused by **Influenza Type A viruses** and has several strains, some of which are highly pathogenic.

Types of Avian Influenza Viruses

- **Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI)**
 - Causes mild symptoms in birds.
 - Usually does not spread to humans.
- **Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)**
 - Causes severe disease and high mortality in birds.
 - Some strains, such as **H5N1, H7N9, H5N8**, can infect humans.

Transmission of Bird Flu

a. Among Birds

- Spread through direct contact with infected birds, secretions, and contaminated surfaces (water, feed, and equipment).

b. To Humans

- **Direct contact** with infected poultry or contaminated surfaces.
- **Consumption** of undercooked poultry or eggs (though rare).
- **Airborne transmission** in farms with poor hygiene conditions.

Major Outbreaks of Bird Flu

- **H5N1 (1997, Hong Kong):** First reported human infection.
- **H7N9 (2013, China):** High fatality rate in humans.
- **H5N8 (2020, India & other countries):** Spread among birds but no human cases.

Bird Flu in India

- **First outbreak:** 2006 in Maharashtra.
- **Recent outbreaks:** 2021 in several states including Kerala, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh.
- **Government Response:**
 - Rapid culling of infected birds.
 - Ban on poultry trade in affected areas.
 - Surveillance and biosecurity measures.

Symptoms of Bird Flu in Humans

- Fever, cough, sore throat.
- Severe respiratory distress (pneumonia).
- Muscle pain, conjunctivitis, and, in severe cases, organ failure.

Preventive Measures

a. In Poultry Farming

- **Strict biosecurity** in farms.
- **Regular screening** and testing of poultry.
- **Culling infected birds** to prevent spread.

b. For Humans

- Avoid contact with sick or dead birds.
- Properly cook poultry and eggs.

- Use **personal protective equipment (PPE)** for poultry workers.

Treatment & Vaccination

- **No specific treatment**, but antiviral drugs like **Oseltamivir (Tamiflu)** help reduce symptoms.
- **Vaccines for poultry** exist but are not widely used due to virus mutations.
- **No universal vaccine** for humans yet.

Global and National Response

a. International Efforts

- **World Health Organization (WHO)**: Tracks and reports outbreaks.
- **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**: Helps in surveillance and prevention strategies.

b. Indian Government Initiatives

- **National Action Plan for Avian Influenza** – Guidelines for surveillance and containment.
- **Rapid Response Teams (RRTs)** – Deployed in affected areas.
- **Ban on import of live birds** from affected countries.

Challenges in Controlling Bird Flu

- **High mutation rate** of the virus.
- **Lack of awareness** among farmers and consumers.
- **Illegal poultry trade** spreading the infection.
- **Limited healthcare infrastructure** for detection and response in rural areas.

Way Forward

- **Strengthening poultry biosecurity** to prevent outbreaks.
- **Early detection systems** to track new strains.
- **Investment in vaccine research** for effective human immunization.
- **Public awareness campaigns** to ensure proper hygiene and safe consumption of poultry.

Karnataka's Clean Mobility Policy 2025-2030

Syllabus: GS-3: Environmental Policies.

Context:

- Launched by Energy Minister **K.J. George** at **Global Investors' Meet – Invest Karnataka 2025**.
- Aims to **attract ₹50,000 crore investment** and **create one lakh jobs**.
- Positions Karnataka as a **clean mobility innovation hub in Asia**.
- Focuses on **reducing carbon emissions** and **improving air quality**.

Key Features

1. Financial Incentives & Subsidies

- **Subsidy up to 25%** on capital expenditure for clean mobility projects.
- **20% subsidy** for projects in **Bengaluru Urban and Rural districts**.
- Encourages investment in **clean transportation** initiatives.

2. Infrastructure Development

- **2,600 new EV charging stations** to be added.
- Existing **5,403 stations** support over **2.5 lakh registered EVs**.

3. Clean Mobility Clusters

- Development of **clean mobility clusters** in **Gauribidanur, Dharwad, and Harohalli**.
- Brings together **manufacturers, suppliers, and research centers**.
- Promotes **collaboration and innovation** in the EV sector.

4. Collaboration & Skill Development

- Partnerships with **global institutions** to enhance innovation.
- Expansion of **EV-focused training programs** in technical institutions.
- Aims to create a **skilled workforce** for clean mobility industries.

5. Last-Mile Connectivity

- Promotes **electric rickshaws and auto-rickshaws**.

- Improves **public transport integration**, especially in **Bengaluru**.

6. Public Transport Enhancements

- Expansion of **shared bus services beyond BMTC's jurisdiction**.
- **Flexible permit system** to enhance **short-route services**.

7. Private Transport Initiatives

- Encourages transition to **clean mobility vehicles**.
- **E-commerce companies** to replace fleets with **electric vehicles by 2030**.

8. Retrofitting Existing Vehicles

- **Existing vehicles can be retrofitted** to meet safety and emission standards.
- **Transport Department to issue guidelines** for retrofitting approvals.

9. Private Sector & Educational Institutions Involvement

- **Private companies and schools** encouraged to switch to **electric/hydrogen-powered fleets**.
- Includes **school buses and company vehicles**.

10. Innovation & Research Support

- **Tax exemptions** for electric vehicles under the **Karnataka Motor Vehicles Taxation Act**.
- Establishment of **venture capital fund** for startups in **clean mobility and battery innovation**.

Conclusion

- The Karnataka Clean Mobility Policy 2025-2030 is a **comprehensive roadmap** to make the state a leader in clean transportation.
- **Encourages investment, innovation, and sustainability**, aligning with **India's green mobility goals**.