



For success in a changing world

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 02-12-2025

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International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)

Subject: GS-2: Polity (International Organisation)

Context:

India's Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar will assume the Chair ship of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) on December 3, 2025, in Stockholm.

What is it?

- An **intergovernmental organisation** exclusively devoted to **democracy support** worldwide.
- Founded in **1995**; **Headquarters: Stockholm, Sweden**.
- Works to **strengthen democratic institutions, processes and norms**.

Membership

- Began with **14 founding members** (including India, Norway, Spain, Australia, South Africa).
- Currently has **35 member countries**.
- **US & Japan** participate as **observers**.
- Granted **UN General Assembly Observer Status** (2003).

Aim

- To **advance & safeguard sustainable democracy** globally.
- Focus on promoting **electoral integrity, rule of law, participation, inclusion**, and democratic reforms.

Core Functions

- **Knowledge Production:** Research on elections, political parties, constitutions, governance, reforms.
- **Capacity Building:** Training Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and political institutions.
- **Technical Assistance:** Support in **electoral reforms** and **institutional design**.
- **Advocacy:** Setting and promoting global democratic standards.
- **Dialogue Convening:** Facilitating global exchanges among governments, civil society & experts.

Significance

- Only **global intergovernmental body** dedicated solely to **democracy support**.
- Provides a “**virtuous cycle**”: → Research → Capacity Building → Advocacy → Policy Impact
- Plays a key role in democratic resilience amid rising authoritarian trends.

India & International IDEA

- **India is a founding member.**
- India’s **Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar** to assume **Chairship on December 3, 2025** (Stockholm).
- Reinforces **India’s leadership** in election management for **90+ crore voters**.
- Opportunity to **share best practices**, influence **global electoral governance**.

Sanchar Saathi App

Subject: GS-2: Governance / Cyber Security

Context

- Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has mandated **pre-installed Sanchar Saathi app** in all smartphones sold in India **from March 2026**.

What is Sanchar Saathi?

- A **telecom security and citizen-protection platform**.
- Developed by: **DoT, Government of India**.
- Objective: Protect mobile users from identity fraud, SIM misuse, and device theft.

Key Features

- **Fraud and Scam Reporting (Chakshu Tool)**
 - Report phishing, fake KYC alerts, impersonation scams, suspicious SMS/WhatsApp messages.
- **SIM & Identity Management**
 - Check all **mobile connections linked to one’s ID** to detect unauthorized SIMs.
- **Lost / Stolen Phone Blocking**
 - IMEI-based blocking and tracing of stolen devices.
 - **7+ lakh devices** recovered since launch.
- **Device Verification**

- Check authenticity of IMEI, detect blacklisted or cloned devices.
- **International Call Masking Detection**
 - Report foreign calls falsely appearing with **+91** caller ID.
- **Spam Reporting**
 - Report unwanted telemarketing calls, malicious links, counterfeit apps/APKs.
- **General Utilities**
 - Local ISP locator, authorized helpline directory, awareness on cyber hygiene.

Significance

- Strengthens national response to:
 - Digital fraud and cyber-enabled financial crimes.
 - Mobile theft and unlawful IMEI tampering.
- Boosts transparency and consumer protection in **India's large second-hand smartphone market**.
- Enhances **telecom security ecosystem** in line with Digital India goals.

50th Anniversary of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)

Subject: GS-2: International Relations

Context:

India hosted an international conference — “*50 Years of BWC: Strengthening Biosecurity for the Global South*” — in New Delhi to mark 50 years since the BWC entered into force.

What is the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)?

- **World's first multilateral disarmament treaty** banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.
- **Prohibits:**
 - Development, production, stockpiling, acquisition, transfer & use of biological and toxin weapons.
- **Established:**
 - *Opened for signature:* 10 April 1972 (London, Moscow, Washington)
 - *Entered into force:* 26 March 1975

➤ **Membership:**

- India is a **founding State Party** and one among **189 signatories**, committed to full compliance.

Key Features of the BWC

Core Prohibitions (Articles I-III)

- Ban on bioweapons development, stockpiling & use.
- Obligation to **destroy existing stockpiles**.

No Verification Mechanism

- **Major limitation** — lacks an institutional system to verify adherence.
- Historical violations by **Soviet Union&Iraq**.

Review Conferences

- Held **every ~5 years** to update norms & governance.

International Cooperation (Article X)

- Promotes **peaceful use of biotechnology**.
- Emphasis on **capacity building for developing countries**.

Enforcement — Political, Not Legal

- Complaints mechanism (Article VI) exists but **rarely used**.

Strong Global Norm

- No nation openly claims possession of bioweapons today.

Significance

- **Primary global bulwark** against biological warfare.
- **Rapid technological advancements** — AI, synthetic biology, CRISPR, gain-of-function research — heighten risks.
- **Global South more vulnerable:**
 - Weak biosecurity infrastructure
 - Higher infectious disease burden
 - Limited regulatory frameworks
- Calls for **strengthened verification**, global cooperation & governance reforms.

Masala Bonds

Subject: GS-3: Indian Economy

Context:

ED has issued show-cause notices against Kerala CM, ex-Finance Ministry officials and KIIFB over alleged FEMA/RBI violations in KIIFB's 2019 Masala Bond issuance.

What are Masala Bonds?

- **Rupee-denominated bonds issued overseas** by Indian entities.
- Currency risk is **borne by foreign investors**, not Indian borrowers.
- First issued globally by **IFC in 2014** (~₹1,000 crore).
- **RBI formally allowed** them under the Rupee-Denominated Bond Framework in **2015**.

Objectives

- Enable Indian corporates/NBFCs to raise **global capital in INR**.
- **Reduce dependence on ECBs** where borrowers bear forex risk.
- Deepen **offshore rupee markets** and support **internationalisation of INR**.
- Provide long-term funding for **infrastructure and development projects**.

Key Features

- **Pricing and redemption in INR**; subscribed overseas.
- Eligible issuers: Corporates, NBFCs, **REITs, InvITs**, select State entities.
- Can be **listed on global exchanges** (London, Singapore etc.).
- **Minimum maturity:** initially 5 years → **reduced to 3 years**.
- **Use restrictions:**
 - Not allowed for **real estate** (except affordable housing), capital market investment, land purchase, or **FDI-prohibited sectors**.
- **Tax incentives:**
 - **5% withholding tax** on interest.
 - **Capital gains exemption** from INR appreciation.

Benefits

- **No currency fluctuation risk** for Indian issuer → lower borrowing cost.
- Diversifies external funding sources and investor base.

- Supports **infrastructure financing** for States/PSUs.
- Enhances global confidence in **Indian economy & rupee stability**.

Challenges / Issues

- Still dependent on **foreign investor appetite** for INR.
- Higher yield demanded during **rupee depreciation periods**.
- Strict regulatory and end-use compliance requirements.

Conclusion

Masala Bonds are an innovative external financing tool that shifts exchange rate risk to global investors while fostering INR's global presence and strengthening India's infrastructure financing ecosystem.

Uranium Contamination in Delhi

Subject: GS-3; Environment / Water Pollution

Context

- Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) testing reveals **rising uranium concentrations** in Delhi groundwater.
- **13-15%** of samples now exceed safe drinking limits — indicating a growing public health concern.

What is Uranium Contamination?

- Presence of **radioactive heavy metal uranium** in groundwater **above permissible limits**.
- Uranium is naturally occurring but harmful when ingested through drinking water.

Permissible Limits

Agency	Limit for Drinking Water
WHO Guideline	30 µg/L (0.03 mg/L)
BIS (IS 10500:2012 Revised)	0.03 mg/L (30 µg/L) → India follows WHO limit

Reasons for Rising Uranium Levels in Delhi

- **Agricultural Inputs**
 - Overuse of **phosphate fertilizers** containing trace uranium
 - Leaching into soil → contamination of shallow aquifers

➤ **Industrial & Anthropogenic Sources**

- Improper disposal of **industrial effluents**, solid waste
- Urban waste infiltration in rapidly growing Delhi region

➤ **Natural Geological Factors**

- Uranium-rich **granite/alluvial formations**
- **Over-extraction of deep groundwater** → accelerates rock–water interaction and release of uranium

Impacts

Health Impacts

- **Nephrotoxic effect** → kidney damage and reduced renal function
- Increased risk of **bone damage** and **urinary tract cancers**
- Bio-accumulation concerns due to long-term consumption

Environmental Impacts

- Persistent contamination → **loss of potable aquifer quality**
- **Multi-pollutant risk**: uranium found with **fluoride + nitrate** in same CGWB zones
- Increased pressure on alternative water sources (treated surface water, RO dependency)

Policy and Governance Challenges

- Lack of **routine uranium monitoring** in municipal water testing
- **Groundwater dependence** (≈40% of Delhi's supply) worsens vulnerability
- Need for **source tracing** and **remediation mapping** for hotspot aquifers

Way Forward

- Promote **regulated fertilizer use** & Integrated Nutrient Management
- **Aquifer recharge**, rainwater harvesting, and sustainable groundwater extraction
- Install **adsorption-based treatment** (activated alumina/anion exchange)
- Strict industrial regulation + **mandated uranium testing** in utilities

Conclusion

Uranium contamination in Delhi represents a **hidden but serious** groundwater crisis driven by **unsustainable groundwater use** and anthropogenic practices. Strengthening hydrogeological monitoring and **preventive policies** is essential to safeguard public health and future water security.