



Daily Current Affairs

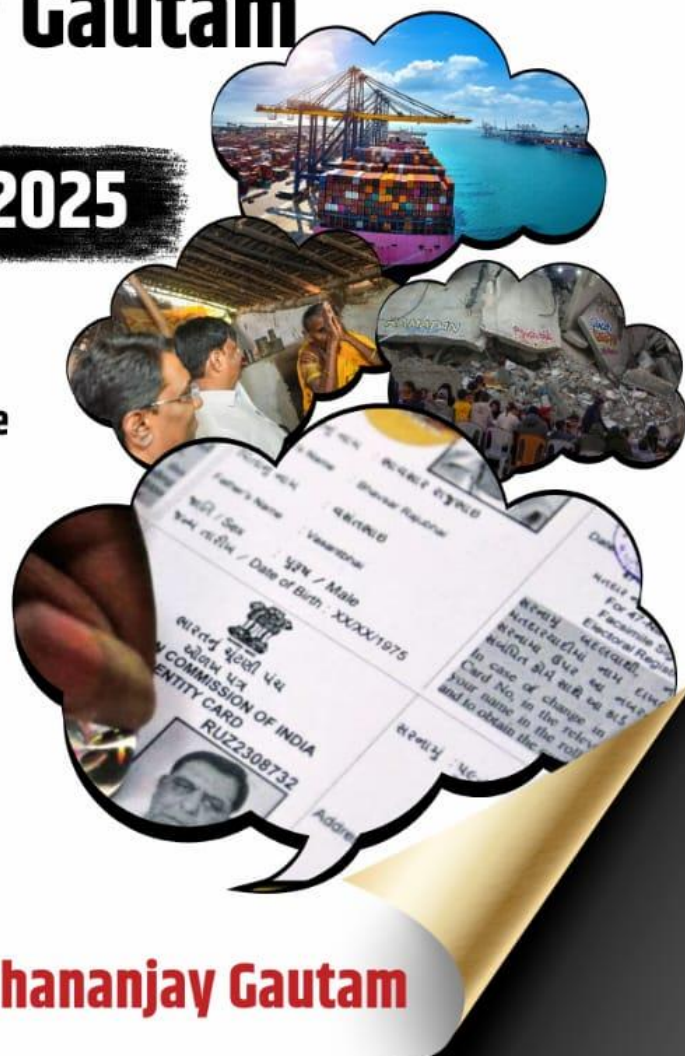


To The Point

by Dhananjay Gautam

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1

Election Commission Addresses Concerns Over Duplicate Voter ID Numbers

Context: The Election Commission of India (ECI) has acknowledged concerns regarding the issuance of **identical Electors Photo Identification Card (EPIC) numbers** to voters across different states. This issue has raised fears of **bogus voting** and **electoral fraud** in the country.

Understanding the Issue:

Before the introduction of **ERONET**, different states used independent voter registration systems. This led to **duplicate voter entries**, especially due to **migration**. To tackle this, the **ECI is actively working to rectify duplicate EPIC numbers** and is set to implement **ERONET 2.0** for enhanced voter database management.

What is an EPIC Number?

The **Electors Photo Identification Card (EPIC)** is a **10-digit alphanumeric voter ID number** issued by the ECI.

Purpose of EPIC:

- Serves as **proof of identity** for Indian citizens aged **18 and above**.
- Provides **access to electoral services**, such as **voter status checks, information updates, and new applications**.
- Helps prevent **fraudulent voting** and ensures electoral integrity.

What is ERONET?

ERONET (Electoral Roll Management Platform) is a **web-based system** designed to maintain a **centralized and accurate electoral database** across India.

Key Features of ERONET:

- **Unified Electoral Roll** for all **States & Union Territories**.
- Operates in **14 languages & 11 scripts**.
- Generates **Photo Similar Entries (PSE) & Demographic Similar Entries (DSE) Reports**.
- Reduces **duplicate voter registrations** caused by migration.

National Electoral Rolls Purification & Authentication Program (2015):

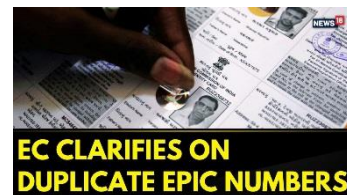
The ECI launched this initiative to remove duplicate voter entries by **linking EPIC data with Aadhaar**.

Benefits of EPIC-Aadhaar Linking:

- Ensures **"One Voter, One Vote" Policy**.
- Enhances **transparency & electoral integrity**. Maintains **clean electoral rolls** free of duplicates.
- Improves **efficient election management**.

Challenges in Aadhaar Linking:

- **Aadhaar Errors** may lead to **wrongful voter deletions**.
- **Aadhaar is not proof of citizenship**, raising concerns about **non-citizens** being added to voter rolls.





- **Privacy Risks** due to linking sensitive Aadhaar data with electoral rolls.

Way Forward:

- **Public Awareness:** Educate voters on the **benefits and security measures** of EPIC-Aadhaar linking.
- **Address Privacy Concerns:** Assure citizens that the **secrecy of their vote remains protected**.
- **Strengthen Electoral Transparency:** Implement stricter **verification mechanisms** to ensure a **fair and credible** voting process.

By addressing these concerns, the **ECI aims to enhance trust and accuracy** in India's electoral system, ensuring a **transparent and fraud-free democracy**.



2 Remote Tribal Village Receives Electricity for the First Time

Context: Recently, a tribal village in Male Mahadeshwara Hills, Karnataka, was electrified for the first time, marking a major step toward inclusivity and socio-economic development. This milestone highlights the government's efforts to extend basic amenities to remote regions.



Government Initiative Behind Electrification:

Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY) played a crucial role in making rural electrification a reality.

Launched: 2014

Objective: To provide electricity to rural areas, separate feeders for agriculture and households, and strengthen power infrastructure.

Key Features of DDUGJY:

- Electrification of previously **un-electrified villages**.
- **Dedicated power feeders** for households and agriculture.
- **Improved power distribution** to reduce losses and ensure efficiency.
- **Subsidy support:** 60% for general states, **85% for special category states**.

Impact of Electrification:

- **Better Education:** With reliable electricity, students can now use **digital learning tools** and study during **extended hours**.
- **Improved Healthcare:** Health centers now have **proper lighting** and can store medicines with **refrigeration facilities**, improving medical care.
- **Economic Growth:** Access to electricity boosts **local businesses**, supports **irrigation**, and creates **new livelihood opportunities**.
- **Women Empowerment:** Reduced dependency on **kerosene lamps** enhances **safety**, while access to electricity supports **women-led businesses**.

Challenges & The Way Forward:

- **Infrastructure Gaps:** Several remote areas still **lack proper transmission infrastructure**, making power supply unreliable.
- **Affordability Issues:** Ensuring **subsidized power and affordable tariffs** is essential for sustainable rural electrification.
- **Renewable Energy Integration:** Expanding **solar microgrids** can provide a **sustainable and long-term solution** to electrify rural communities.
- Bringing electricity to **remote tribal villages** is a step toward bridging the development gap and ensuring **inclusive progress for all**.

3 New Regulations for National Waterways Development Introduced

Context: The Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW) has introduced fresh regulations, formulated by the **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)**, to enhance the efficiency and utilization of India's extensive inland waterways network.



Key Highlights of the National Waterways (Construction of Jetties/Terminals) Regulations, 2025

The newly introduced regulations aim to boost private sector participation in the development of inland waterway terminals, ensuring smoother operations and streamlined procedures.

- Any entity, including **private developers**, must secure a **No Objection Certificate (NoC)** from the **IWAI** before constructing or operating an inland waterway terminal.
- The regulations cover **both new and existing terminals**, including **permanent and temporary installations**.
- Permanent terminals** can be operated for a **lifetime** by the developer.
- Temporary terminals** will be **initially granted a five-year term**, with the possibility of extensions.
- Developers and operators are responsible** for the **technical design, construction, and accessibility** of their terminals, aligning them with business requirements.

Role of the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI):

Established in 1986 under the **Inland Waterways Authority of India Act, 1985**, IWAI is responsible for **developing, maintaining, and regulating** the country's **National Waterways (NWs)** under the **National Waterways Act, 2016**.

- Headquarters:** Noida
- Key Objective:** Strengthening and modernizing India's inland water transport system.

Why Inland Waterways Are Crucial:

- Reducing Logistics Costs:** India's **logistics expenses** account for **14% of GDP**, which is **much higher than the global average of 8-10%**. Strengthening inland waterways can **significantly lower** transportation costs.
- Decongesting Roads and Railways:** Encouraging cargo transport via **inland waterways** will help **reduce the burden on congested road and rail networks**.
- Eco-Friendly Transport:** Waterways offer a **fuel-efficient and low-emission mode of transport**, supporting **India's sustainable development goals (SDGs)** and climate action commitments.
- Economic Growth:** Increased cargo movement through **National Waterways** will **boost trade, commerce, and economic activities**, particularly in regions close to major waterways. The **cargo movement on India's waterways** has seen a dramatic rise from **18 million tonnes to 133 million tonnes** in FY 2023-24.

Major Government Initiatives Supporting Waterways Development:

Jalvahak Scheme:

- Provides **direct incentives** to cargo owners using inland waterways for distances exceeding **300 km**.



- Offers **reimbursement of up to 35%** of total operational expenses.

Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP):

- Focused on **modernizing NW-1** with **advanced infrastructure and terminals**.

Sagarmala Project:

- Aims to **integrate inland waterways** with **coastal shipping and major ports**.

Freight Village Development:

- Establishing **logistic hubs** near **key waterways** to enhance **multimodal transport efficiency**.

Conclusion:

The National Waterways (Construction of Jetties/Terminals) Regulations, 2025 mark a significant step toward **boosting private investment**, **reducing logistics costs**, and **promoting sustainable cargo transport**. With **increased digitization** and **government support**, these regulations will **strengthen India's inland waterway infrastructure**, making it a **competitive and viable transport alternative**.



4 Historic Moment: Private U.S. Spacecraft Lands Upright on the Moon

Context: For the first time in history, a private U.S. spacecraft has successfully landed upright on the lunar surface. This groundbreaking achievement was accomplished by Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost Mission 1, making it the second private mission to reach the Moon.

About Blue Ghost Mission 1:

Mission Objective:

The mission aims to deliver ten scientific and technological payloads to the Moon under NASA's Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) initiative.

Launch and Landing Details

- **Launch Vehicle:** SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket
- **Launch Site:** Kennedy Space Center, Florida
- **Landing Location:** Mare Crisium, near Mons Latreille on the Moon's northeastern near side

Historic Firsts:

- **First commercial mission to land successfully and remain upright** on the lunar surface.
- The lander is designed to **operate for one lunar day** (approximately **14 Earth days**) to conduct crucial scientific research.

Scientific Experiments and Instruments:

The spacecraft carries advanced instruments to study the Moon's environment, geology, and navigation capabilities:

- **Lunar Regolith Adherence Characterization (RAC):** Examines how lunar dust sticks to surfaces, crucial for future lunar missions.
- **Lunar PlanetVac (LPV):** Collects lunar soil samples for scientific analysis.
- **Lunar Instrumentation for Thermal Exploration with Rapidity (LISTER):** Measures heat flow from the Moon's interior, helping understand its thermal history.
- **Lunar GNSS Receiver Experiment (LuGRE):** Tests whether Earth's Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) signals can be used for lunar navigation.
- **Lunar Environment Heliospheric X-ray Imager (LEXI):** Captures X-ray images of Earth's magnetosphere, offering insights into space weather effects.

Contribution to NASA's Artemis Program:

This mission plays a vital role in supporting NASA's Artemis program, which focuses on returning humans to the Moon and preparing for deep-space exploration. The data collected will provide valuable insights for future human missions.

NASA's Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) Initiative:

CLPS is a NASA-led program designed to involve private companies in lunar exploration. The goal is to stimulate a lunar economy, foster innovation, and accelerate scientific discoveries.

Exciting Upcoming Discoveries:





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- **Capturing a Total Eclipse:** Blue Ghost will record **high-definition images** of a total lunar eclipse, when **Earth will completely block the Sun from the Moon's perspective**.
- **Understanding Lunar Dust Levitation:** The mission will investigate how **lunar dust lifts off the surface under solar radiation**, contributing to knowledge of the **mysterious lunar horizon glow**, first observed by **Apollo astronaut Eugene Cernan**.

With this historic success, **Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost Mission 1** is paving the way for **the next generation of commercial lunar exploration**, bringing us **one step closer to a sustainable human presence on the Moon**.



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5

Israel Halts Gaza Aid to Pressure Hamas on Ceasefire Agreement

Context Israel has **blocked the entry of all goods and humanitarian supplies** into the **Gaza Strip**, warning of **further consequences** if Hamas does not **accept a new ceasefire proposal**. Hamas has condemned this move, accusing Israel of **weaponizing starvation** to force an agreement and **undermining peace efforts**.



Ceasefire Phase One Ends:

- The **first phase of the ceasefire** concluded on **March 1, 2025**, during which **humanitarian aid surged** into Gaza.
- The **second phase** was expected to include **the release of remaining hostages by Hamas**, an **Israeli military withdrawal**, and discussions on a **permanent peace deal**.
- However, **negotiations stalled**, and no agreement was reached for the **next phase**.

New Ceasefire Proposal by Israel:

Israel has agreed to a **U.S.-backed ceasefire extension plan**, known as the **"Witkoff Proposal"**, which **modifies the terms of the original agreement**:

- **Hamas must release half of the remaining hostages** to secure an **extended truce** and continue peace talks.
- The **temporary ceasefire** would last until **April 20, 2025**.
- **On the first day of the truce extension**, Hamas must **release half of the hostages**, including **both living and deceased individuals**.
- The **remaining hostages will be freed** only if a **permanent ceasefire agreement** is finalized by the end of the truce period.

Hamas Rejects the Proposal:

- Hamas has **rejected the U.S.-Israel proposal**, arguing that it **violates the original ceasefire terms**.
- In response, **Israel has halted all humanitarian aid** to Gaza, further **intensifying pressure on Hamas**.
- With **negotiations deadlocked**, Israel insists that talks **can only resume if Hamas changes its stance**.

Israel's Position and Future Actions:

- **Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** has confirmed that Israel is **committed to the hostage deal** but **reserves the right to resume military operations** if negotiations fail.
- If Hamas **violates the terms** of any agreement, Israel has warned of **renewed military action**.

With the situation at a critical juncture, the future of the ceasefire remains **uncertain**, and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza **continues to escalate**.



6 National Board for Wildlife: Key Announcements by PM Modi

Context: India has taken a major step in wildlife conservation, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiling a series of initiatives during his visit to Gir National Park, Gujarat. Chairing the 7th meeting of the National Board for Wildlife, the Prime Minister introduced landmark measures to protect endangered species, restore habitats, and integrate technology into conservation efforts.



Some of the key announcements include:

- India's first-ever riverine dolphin estimation report
- Expansion of the cheetah reintroduction program
- Launch of the National Great Indian Bustard Conservation Action Plan
- Establishment of a National Referral Centre for Wildlife
- Creation of a Centre of Excellence for human-wildlife conflict mitigation

Major Wildlife Conservation Announcements:

First-Ever Riverine Dolphin Estimation:

- India's first riverine dolphin survey recorded 6,327 dolphins across 28 rivers in eight states.
- The survey covered 8,500 km, with Uttar Pradesh leading in dolphin population, followed by Bihar, West Bengal, and Assam.
- PM Modi emphasized community participation in dolphin conservation and proposed educational programs for schoolchildren to raise awareness.

Strengthening Asiatic Lion Conservation:

- The 16th Asiatic Lion Population Estimation will take place in 2025 to monitor conservation progress.
- Barda Wildlife Sanctuary will receive enhanced conservation efforts, including prey augmentation and habitat restoration to facilitate natural lion dispersal.
- PM Modi praised Gir's success in lion conservation and highlighted the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital documentation to replicate similar efforts in other national parks.

Expansion of Cheetah Reintroduction Program:

- India's cheetah reintroduction project will expand to Gandhisagar Sanctuary (Madhya Pradesh) and Banni Grasslands (Gujarat).
- This move aims to strengthen biodiversity and establish a stable cheetah population in India.

New Wildlife Protection Initiatives:

- National Referral Centre for Wildlife: A facility in Junagadh dedicated to wildlife disease management and health monitoring.
- Centre of Excellence at SACON, Coimbatore: A specialized center to tackle human-wildlife conflict by equipping Rapid Response Teams with AI-driven surveillance and tracking gadgets.
- Use of Remote Sensing & AI: Advanced geospatial mapping, AI, and machine learning will be deployed to prevent forest fires and mitigate human-animal conflicts.

**Strengthening Conservation of Endangered Species:**

- **Gharial Conservation Project:** A nationwide initiative to **revive the critically endangered gharial population** and protect their habitat.
- **National Great Indian Bustard Conservation Action Plan:** A comprehensive strategy to **save the Great Indian Bustard**, one of the most **critically endangered birds in India**.
- **Tiger Conservation Beyond Reserves:** A special scheme to **protect tigers in buffer zones and areas outside protected reserves**, reducing **human-wildlife conflicts**.

Leveraging Technology for Conservation:

- **AI and remote sensing** will be used for **wildlife tracking and conflict resolution**.
- **Forest Survey of India (FSI) and BISAG-N collaboration** will use **space technology** to **enhance forest fire detection and prevention**.
- **Traditional ecological knowledge** will be **digitally documented** to preserve **indigenous conservation practices**.

Role of Local Communities in Conservation:

- PM Modi highlighted a **sixfold increase in community reserves** in the last decade, stressing the **importance of local participation** in conservation.
- **Eco-tourism infrastructure** will be expanded to improve **access to wildlife sanctuaries**, benefiting both **conservation and local economies**.

Conclusion:

These announcements mark a **new era in India's wildlife conservation efforts**, integrating **species protection, habitat restoration, advanced technology, and community involvement**. With a **strong commitment to biodiversity and sustainability**, India is poised to become a **global leader in wildlife conservation**, ensuring a **harmonious coexistence between humans and nature**.

TOGETHER WE SCALE HEIGHTS