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From

28th Sep *to* 03rd Oct 2026



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GENERAL STUDIES 2

1.1. POLITY & GOVERNANCE

1.1.1. FROM STATUTORY TO FUNDAMENTAL: SECURING THE BALLOT AGAINST SYSTEMIC VULNERABILITIES

Context

An unprecedented internal rift within the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** alongside the erroneous exclusion of 97 voters in Goa via the centralized **ECINet software** has renewed the constitutional debate over whether the right to vote should be elevated to a fundamental right.



Introduction

Article 326 guarantees **universal adult suffrage**, yet judicial precedent designates the franchise as an ordinary **statutory right** under the **Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951**. As electoral administration increasingly relies on centralized software, this statutory classification faces growing scrutiny.

How Was Universal Adult Suffrage Conceived in India?

- **Immediate Universal Inclusion:** Unlike Western democracies that expanded the franchise over decades through property and gender criteria, India granted immediate adult franchise under **Article 326**.
- **Administrative Innovations:** The first Chief Election Commissioner, **Sukumar Sen**, made voting accessible to 173 million largely illiterate citizens by introducing pictorial **election symbols**.
- **Dual Statutory Architecture:** The mandate is operationalized through the **RPA, 1950** (electoral roll preparation) and the **RPA, 1951** (conduct of elections and qualifications).

Thus, while universal adult suffrage is a constitutional ideal, the right to vote remains strictly a statutory entitlement.

What Governs the Legal Status of the Right to Vote?

- **Constituent Assembly's Reluctance:** The Advisory Committee declined proposals by **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar** to place the franchise within Part III (Fundamental Rights).
- **The Statutory Doctrine:** A 5-judge Constitution Bench in **Kuldip Nayar v. Union of India (2006)** settled that the right to elect is strictly a **statutory right** under **Section 62 of the RPA, 1951**.
- **Judicial Divergence & Dissent:** While *Rajbala (2015)* referenced it as a constitutional right, the larger bench ruling in *Kuldip Nayar* governs. In **Anoop Baranwal (2023)**, **Justice Ajay Rastogi** dissented, linking the franchise to **Article 19(1)(a)** (expression) and **Article 21** (dignity).
- **Judicial Threshold:** Under *Lakshmi Charan Sen (1985)*, courts intervene only if roll discrepancies "**materially affect**" an election's outcome, leaving minor administrative purges largely unaddressed.

Consequently, this narrow judicial threshold and statutory classification leave voters disproportionately vulnerable to systemic governance and technological failures.

What Triggered the Recent Administrative and Software Crisis?

- **Internal Institutional Discord:** Two Election Commissioners submitted **14 written objections** over unilateral decisions by the CEC, conflicting with the consensus-or-majority mandate under **Sections 17 and 18 of the 2023 Act**.
- **Rigid Software Architecture:** Centralized **ECINet software** prevented local **Electoral Registration Officers (EROs)** from reversing erroneous deletions of 97 eligible voters in Goa.
- **Loss of Linked Welfare Rights:** Because the **Goa Mediclaim Scheme** requires voter roll enrollment for eligibility, automated disenfranchisement abruptly halted access to essential super-speciality medical treatments.

What Is the Significance of Constitutionalizing the Right to Vote?

- **Insulation from Legislative Dilution:** Protects the franchise from being arbitrarily narrowed or altered by ordinary parliamentary amendments to electoral statutes.
- **Direct Constitutional Remedies:** Enables aggrieved citizens to invoke **Article 32 and Article 226**, subjecting roll deletions to strict fundamental rights review.
- **Reinforcing the Basic Structure:** Directs judicial protection to popular sovereignty, which forms an essential core of democracy under **Kesavananda Bharati (1973)**.
- **Protection of Interlinked Social Welfare:** Prevents the collateral loss of public health and welfare entitlements when states link safety nets to voter rolls.
- **Institutional Accountability:** Compels the ECI to adhere strictly to collegial consultation and procedural fairness, limiting centralized executive discretion.

Core Challenges in Making Voting a Fundamental Right?

- **Binding Judicial Precedent:** The five-judge bench decision in **Kuldip Nayar (2006)** cannot be altered without a reference to a larger **seven-judge Constitution Bench**.
- **Reduced Legislative Flexibility:** Restricts Parliament's authority to frame reasonable residency, qualification, and procedural requirements under **Articles 325 and 326**.
- **Surge in Constitutional Litigation:** Routine electoral processes, such as booth rationalization and roll revisions, could face excessive constitutional litigation.
- **Algorithmic Inflexibility:** Centralized platforms like **ECINet** disempower field officers, lacking built-in real-time correction workflows.
- **Erosion of Institutional Collegiality:** Persistent administrative frictions and public rifts among Commissioners undermine public confidence in electoral neutrality.

Strategic Way Forward to Safeguard Electoral Integrity?

- **Reference to a Larger Constitution Bench:** The Supreme Court should refer the legal status of the vote to a **seven-judge Bench** to reconcile the conflict between *Kuldip Nayar* and *Rajbala*.

- **Restore Decentralized Field Overrides:** Modify **ECINet software** to grant **Electoral Registration Officers (EROs)** the technical authority to override erroneous automated deletions, backed by an audit trail.
- **Enforce Statutory Redress Deadlines:** Formulate binding timelines for investigating wrongful exclusions from electoral rolls, fixing clear administrative accountability.
- **Institutionalize Multi-Member Consensus:** Mandate formal adherence to **Sections 17 and 18 of the 2023 Act**, requiring all rule changes and software deployments to undergo collegial voting.
- **Decouple Welfare Entitlements from Voter Rolls:** Direct state governments to establish welfare eligibility through independent civil databases rather than voter lists.
- **Activate Political Party Verification:** Utilize **Booth Level Agents (BLAs)** under the *Lakshmi Charan Sen* framework to verify draft rolls before publication.

Conclusion

The right to vote represents the foundational currency of democratic governance. Elevating the franchise beyond ordinary legislative grace provides essential constitutional insulation against administrative inertia and software-driven disenfranchisement.

***Q.** Is the right to vote a fundamental right? Discuss the position of the Election Commission of India while undertaking the revision of electoral rolls. Can it also examine the question of citizenship of voters? 10 Marks 2016*

1.2. HEALTH

1.1.2. THE HIDDEN HEARTBREAK: THE SILENT CARDIAC CRISIS CHALLENGING TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

Context

An alarming rise in sudden heart attacks among fit, young women lacking traditional risk factors has highlighted the urgent need to address **Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection (SCAD)**, a hidden cardiac emergency.

Introduction

Historically, premenopausal women were considered low-risk for acute coronary syndromes due to the protective properties of estrogen. However, **SCAD** disrupts this paradigm, exposing severe anatomical and hormonal vulnerabilities that demand a radical re-evaluation of cardiac diagnostic protocols and gender-specific care.



What is SCAD?

- **Mechanism of Injury:** Unlike classical heart attacks caused by plaque rupture, SCAD occurs when the **coronary artery wall spontaneously tears**, trapping blood and obstructing oxygen flow to the heart.

- **Demographic Vulnerability:** The condition is highly gender-specific, with young women accounting for **80–90%** of all cases.
- **Clinical Presentation:** It causes significant chest pain, elevated cardiac biomarkers, and classical ECG changes, mimicking a traditional heart attack despite the **absence of atherosclerosis**.

Etiology and Known Triggers

- **Hormonal Fluctuations:** Shifts in estrogen and progesterone degrade arterial collagen, making the **postpartum period** (especially the first week) a highly vulnerable window.
- **Fibromuscular Dysplasia (FMD):** A non-atherosclerotic disorder causing arteries to abnormally narrow and bulge, serving as the strongest known **structural association** with SCAD.
- **External Stressors:** Severe **emotional stress** (predominantly in women) and extreme **physical exertion** (predominantly in men) often precipitate the arterial tear.

Diagnostic and Therapeutic Deviations

- **Misleading Angiograms:** SCAD often appears as a **smooth narrowing** rather than a jagged tear, leading to frequent misdiagnoses during standard imaging.
- **Risks of Stenting:** Standard angioplasty can severely exacerbate the tear, making **conservative observation** the preferred initial intervention unless the artery is completely blocked.
- **Pharmacological Shifts:** Treatment relies heavily on **beta-blockers** for blood pressure control, strictly rationalizing the use of statins and antiplatelets on a case-by-case basis.

Significance

- **Redefined Risk Profiles:** Shifts cardiovascular assessment away from **lifestyle-induced atherosclerosis** toward intrinsic structural vulnerabilities in otherwise healthy individuals.
- **Gendered Health Disparities:** Highlights how female physiological milestones, particularly **pregnancy**, independently elevate acute cardiac risks.
- **Maternal Mortality Impact:** Identifies the immediate **postpartum phase** as a hyper-vulnerable window requiring specialized maternal-cardiac monitoring.
- **Diagnostic Innovation:** Exposes critical limitations in conventional angiography, driving the need for advanced **intravascular imaging** techniques.
- **Tailored Therapeutics:** Prevents the hazardous deployment of stents and unnecessary medications in **non-atherosclerotic patients**.

Challenges

- **Clinical Blind Spots:** Medical professionals routinely dismiss acute chest pain in young women due to the **absence of conventional risk factors**, leading to fatal delays.
- **High Misdiagnosis Rates:** Because patients do not fit the traditional heart attack profile, their symptoms and ECG changes are frequently **misinterpreted or overlooked**.
- **Treatment Complications:** Balancing intervention is difficult; **standard stenting** can worsen the condition, yet there is a 15% risk of the tear naturally worsening within the first few days.

- **Severe Recurrence Anxiety:** A persistent **long-term recurrence rate** creates psychological distress regarding future physical exercise and pregnancies.
- **Lack of Predictive Biomarkers:** The medical infrastructure currently lacks predictive imaging or genetic tools to identify high-risk individuals before the **first catastrophic event** occurs.

Way Forward

- **Revamped Triage Protocols:** Mandate comprehensive acute cardiac screening for younger women, strictly overriding **conventional risk-factor dependencies**.
- **Advanced Imaging Training:** Train interventional cardiologists to recognize atypical patterns and utilize **Intravascular Ultrasound (IVUS)** for precise diagnostics.
- **Integrated Maternal-Cardiac Care:** Institutionalize joint assessments by cardiologists and **maternal-fetal medicine specialists** for survivors contemplating future pregnancies.
- **Targeted Rehabilitation:** Design specialized programs emphasizing **moderate aerobic activity** while strictly prohibiting extreme endurance training and heavy weightlifting.
- **National Clinical Registries:** Aggregate patient data to accelerate international research on genetic predispositions and **evidence-based pharmacotherapy**.
- **Optimized Drug Regimens:** Standardize protocols to limit unnecessary statin use while maximizing **blood pressure management** to prevent arterial stress.

Conclusion

SCAD represents a critical paradigm shift, proving that acute cardiac events are not exclusively lifestyle diseases of the elderly. Addressing this crisis requires **gender-sensitive diagnostics**, cautious therapeutics, and a comprehensive overhaul of maternal health frameworks to protect this vulnerable demographic.

Q. Analyze the etiology of Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection (SCAD). How does it challenge the traditional understanding of cardiovascular diseases in women? 15 Marks

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2.1. INTERNAL SECURITY

2.1.1. SATISFACTION WITH POLICE REMAINS LOW AMONG CYBERCRIME VICTIMS

Context

India's expanding digital economy has increased exposure to cyber fraud, identity theft and online scams. The **Status of Policing in India Report 2026** highlights a critical governance gap: cybercrime reporting has become easier, but victims' satisfaction declines sharply during investigation and follow-up.



Introduction

The findings reveal that India's cyber-policing challenge is shifting from **access to reporting towards access to effective justice**, with dissatisfaction, repeated visits, delays and gender-rural disparities weakening public trust.

Key Findings of the Report

1. **High dissatisfaction among victims:** Nearly **63% of cybercrime victims are dissatisfied** with police handling, including around one-fifth who are very dissatisfied.
2. **Satisfaction declines across the policing chain:** Satisfaction falls from **50% at the cyber-helpline stage to 47% for the online portal, 46% during complaint registration and only 43% during investigation.**
3. **Gender disparity:** Women report greater severe dissatisfaction, with **26% being very dissatisfied compared with 18% among men**, indicating gender-sensitive gaps in cyber-policing.
4. **Long waiting periods:** Around **34% of victims waited 2–3 hours** at police stations, while **14% waited for more than four hours**, potentially discouraging continued engagement.
5. **Repeated visits:** Nearly **23% of victims visited police stations five or more times**, imposing financial, occupational and psychological costs on victims.
6. **Rural-urban divide:** **38% of rural victims** reported five or more visits compared with **19% of urban victims**, highlighting unequal access to effective policing.
7. **Mixed accessibility:** Although **57% found complaint registration easy**, 42% still considered it somewhat or very difficult, demonstrating that procedural accessibility remains incomplete.

Importance Of This News

1. Internal Security

- Cybercrime has become an important dimension of **internal security**, as criminals exploit digital payments, social media, identity systems and increasingly sophisticated online platforms.
- The issue demonstrates that cybersecurity is not merely a technological challenge but also a **law-enforcement and institutional-capacity challenge**.

2. Governance and Citizen-Centric Administration

- The findings highlight the difference between creating digital mechanisms and delivering **effective, citizen-centric public services**.
- A portal or helpline can improve access, but public trust ultimately depends upon **timely investigation, communication, recovery of losses and closure of cases**.

3. Police Reforms

- The findings reinforce the need to shift police reform from merely increasing infrastructure towards **professionalisation, specialisation, accountability and victim-oriented policing**.
- Cyber investigations require personnel trained in **digital forensics, financial investigation, data analysis, cryptocurrency tracing and electronic evidence**.

4. Social Justice

- The gender and rural disparities show that cyber-policing has an important **equity dimension**, because the ability to pursue a complaint depends partly on mobility, time, digital literacy, institutional familiarity and economic resources.

5. Rule of Law and Access to Justice

- Repeated visits and prolonged waiting periods increase the **transaction costs of justice**, particularly for victims who have already suffered financial losses.
- Effective cyber-policing is therefore essential for translating the constitutional promise of **equality before law and access to justice** into practical outcomes.

Major Challenges

1. Investigation remains the weakest link

- The fall in satisfaction to **43% during investigation** indicates that improving the first point of contact has not automatically translated into effective case resolution.

2. Shortage of specialised manpower

- Police forces often face shortages of personnel with expertise in **digital forensics, blockchain, cryptocurrency, malware, financial technology and cyber intelligence**.

3. Jurisdictional complexity

- Cybercrime frequently crosses **State and national boundaries**, while police administration remains substantially organised around territorial jurisdictions.

4. Rapidly evolving criminal techniques

- Phishing, deepfakes, synthetic identities, AI-generated scams, mule accounts and cryptocurrency-based transactions evolve faster than conventional policing procedures.

5. Fragmented institutional coordination

- Effective investigation may require coordination among **State police, Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), banks, payment platforms, telecom companies, internet intermediaries and other agencies**.

India's Institutional Response

1. **National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP):** The portal provides citizens with an online mechanism for reporting cybercrime, particularly financial cyber fraud.

2. **Cyber Crime Helpline – 1930:** The helpline facilitates rapid reporting of financial cyber fraud and can help initiate measures for tracing or preventing further diversion of funds.
3. **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C):** I4C provides an institutional framework for coordinating efforts against cybercrime and strengthening capabilities of law-enforcement agencies.

Way Forward

1. **Shift from reporting-centric to resolution-centric policing:** Performance assessment should measure not merely the **number of complaints registered**, but investigation quality, response time, fund recovery, case disposal and victim satisfaction.
2. **Strengthen specialised cyber-police capacity:** States should expand dedicated cyber units and provide continuous training in **digital forensics, financial fraud, cryptocurrency, AI-enabled crime and electronic evidence**.
3. **Establish integrated case-management systems:** Victims should receive a **unique case ID, investigating-officer details, status updates and clearly defined escalation mechanisms**, reducing unnecessary visits.
4. **Improve inter-agency coordination:** Police, banks, telecom operators, payment intermediaries and cyber agencies should operate through **real-time information-sharing and coordinated response mechanisms**.
5. **Strengthen first-response mechanisms:** The initial hours following financial cyber fraud are crucial; therefore, the **1930 helpline and financial-fraud response ecosystem** should be rapidly integrated with banks and law-enforcement agencies.

Conclusion

India's cyber-policing challenge is no longer merely about enabling citizens to **report crimes**. The next phase must ensure **swift investigation, victim support, institutional accountability and equitable access to justice**, thereby converting digital policing infrastructure into public trust.

Q. Discuss different types of cyber crimes and measures required to be taken to fight the menace.

10 Marks

2.1.2. AFSPA EXTENSIONS: A PERSISTENT NECESSITY OR A DEMOCRATIC ANOMALY?

Context

The **Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** recently extended the **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA)** in parts of **Manipur, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh** for **six months** starting **October 1, 2026**. This highlights persistent internal security challenges in the Northeast and reignites debates over military authority versus civilian rights.



Introduction

AFSPA grants extraordinary powers to the armed forces in designated conflict zones. While security agencies deem it an indispensable operational shield against terrorism, civil society heavily criticizes the law for enabling human rights abuses, eroding state autonomy, and undermining democratic accountability.

What is AFSPA?

It is a **specialized legislative framework** that empowers **military and paramilitary forces** with vast authority to **restore and uphold public order**. It is deployed exclusively in regions formally labelled as "disturbed" due to severe internal security threats that overwhelm local law enforcement capacities.

AFSPA Historical Background

- **Colonial Origins:** The core concept was originally conceived by British authorities under Viceroy Linlithgow to violently suppress the 'Quit India' movement.
- **Post-Independence Enactment:** Its modern legislative roots trace back to a 1948 ordinance, which was subsequently passed as the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act in 1958 to counter the escalating Naga insurgency.
- **Regional Variants:** Subsequent iterations were enacted to address specific regional militancies, including the Armed Forces (Punjab and Chandigarh) Special Powers Act, 1983 (later withdrawn), and the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act, 1990, which remains active today.

Armed Forces Special Power Act Key Provisions

- **'Disturbed Area' Declaration:** Under Section 3, a State Governor, Union Territory Administrator, or the Central Government has the authority to officially designate a region as disturbed.
- **Extraordinary Authority:** Personnel are legally permitted to use lethal force against individuals violating prohibitory orders, destroy fortified insurgent shelters, and conduct arrests and property searches without a judicial warrant.
- **Legal Immunity:** Security personnel receive near-absolute legal protection under the Act. No prosecution or civil suit can be initiated against them for official actions without the prior, explicit sanction of the Central Government.

The Current Footprint of AFSPA

- **Manipur:** The entire state remains disturbed (excluding 13 Valley police stations). Following the May 2023 ethnic conflict, the MHA unilaterally restored the Act in several areas, overriding the State Government's request for a withdrawal in the public interest.
- **Nagaland & Arunachal Pradesh:** The Act is retained in specific districts due to active insurgent groups and the unresolved Naga political peace process involving factions like the NSCN-IM.
- **Revocations:** The law has been successfully and **fully repealed in Mizoram, Tripura (2015), and Meghalaya (2018).**

Supreme Court on AFSPA

- **Constitutional Validity:** In the **1998 Naga People's Movement vs. Union of India** case, the Court upheld the Act but mandated strict six-month reviews of the 'disturbed area' status and emphasized the use of minimum necessary force.
- **Proportionality Doctrine:** A landmark July 2016 ruling directed that armed forces must not use excessive or retaliatory force even in AFSPA-imposed regions, reinforcing human rights protections.
- **Judicial Oversight:** In July 2017, overruling Central objections, the Court ordered a CBI Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe alleged **fake encounters in Manipur**, breaking the absolute shield of military immunity.

Significance of AFSPA

- **Counter-Insurgency Edge:** Facilitates swift, intelligence-led operations against terrorism without standard civilian procedural delays.
- **Border Security:** Critical for countering cross-border terrorism, arms smuggling, and militant infiltration in geopolitically volatile frontiers.
- **Institutional Shield:** Protects soldiers operating in high-stress, hostile zones from frivolous, retaliatory litigation, allowing decisive action.
- **Administrative Support:** Restores public order in regions where local police forces are compromised or overwhelmed by armed militants.

Challenges and Criticisms

- **Human Rights Violations:** The Act is consistently linked to severe allegations of extrajudicial killings and torture.
- **Erosion of Accountability:** The stringent requirement for Central prosecution sanction has resulted in abysmal conviction rates, fostering a perceived culture of impunity.
- **Alienation and Trauma:** Prolonged military presence and sweeps cause deep-seated psychological distress among civilians, frequently pushing disenfranchised youth toward extremism.
- **Federal Friction:** Unilateral impositions by the MHA undermine the principles of cooperative federalism and side-line local civilian governance.

Way Forward

- **Align with Constitutional Safeguards:** Mandate **strict military compliance with Article 22**, ensuring arrested individuals are presented before a civilian magistrate within 24 hours of detention.
- **Establish Scientific Criteria:** Develop a transparent, evidence-based methodology in consultation with states to objectively determine when an area qualifies for 'disturbed' status.
- **Strengthen Civilian Oversight:** Empower independent human rights commissions to transparently investigate complaints of excesses without requiring prior central sanction.

- **Adopt Committee Recommendations:** Seriously evaluate the recommendations of the **Justice Jeevan Reddy Committee** and the **Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)**, which advocated for the sweeping **overhaul or repeal of AFSPA** to align with democratic norms.
- **Foster Cooperative Federalism:** Ensure State Governments are active, consensual partners in the declaration or revocation of 'disturbed area' status.

Conclusion

While robust military capability is vital for securing India's volatile borders, AFSPA in its current form remains a severe democratic anomaly. Achieving lasting peace requires moving beyond draconian legal shields, prioritizing cooperative federalism, institutional accountability, and fundamental human rights to ensure the state does not alienate the citizens it seeks to protect.

***Q.** Human rights activists constantly highlight the fact that the Armed forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) is a draconian act leading to cases of human rights abuses by security forces. What sections of AFSPA are opposed by the activists? Critically evaluate the requirement with reference to the view held by the Apex Court 15 Marks 2015*

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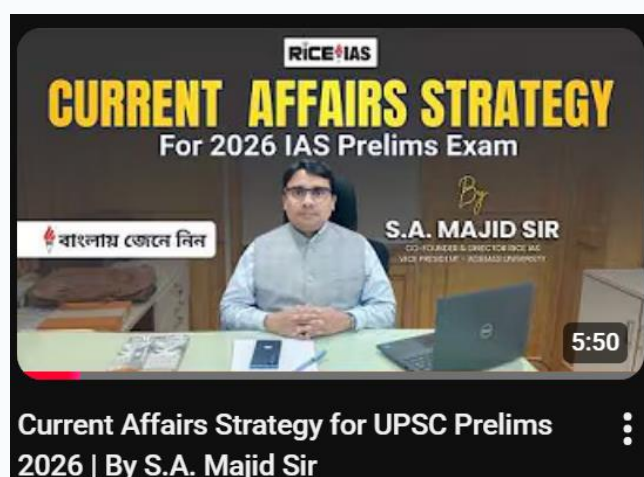
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