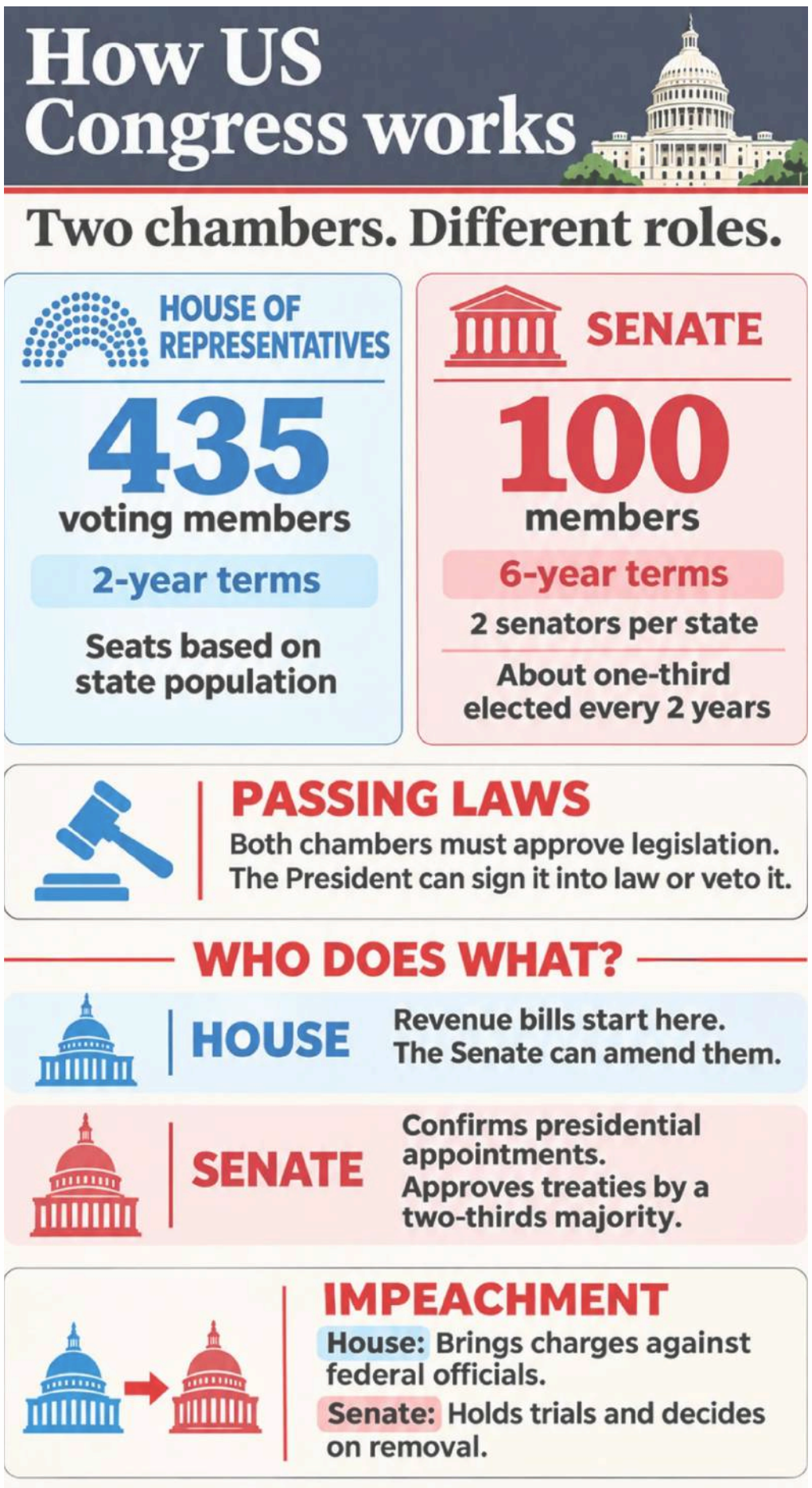
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Editor's Note

As the week draws to a close, Pala Civil Times brings you its latest edition, revisiting some of the most significant headlines and developments of the week. If there were to be a common theme running through this edition, it would undoubtedly be voting rights and electoral behaviour in the 21st century.

Our National page examines the Special Summary Revision (SSR) of electoral rolls in the context of the recent controversies surrounding the Special Intensive Revision (SIR). It also takes up the issue of OBC non-creamy layer certificates, which has recently come under the Supreme Court's scrutiny.

Moving ahead, the Editorial Decoder explores the implications of the latest US midterm elections, examining what the Democratic Party's victory over the incumbent Republicans could mean for the United States, India and the wider world. We also examine the evolving debate on whether access to the internet should be recognised as a fundamental right, particularly in the context of children's rights and online safety.

We hope this edition offers our readers valuable insights into the developments shaping the world around them.

Happy Reading!

P6. WORLD



Internet Access as a Fundamental Right: Balancing Children's Freedom and Online Safety

Exploring the constitutional dimensions of internet access, particularly its significance for children's rights, safety and development

Editorials Decoded

THE HINDU

The Indian EXPRESS



Epic failures: on electoral roll, welfare

xamining the concerns surrounding the proposed use of SIR-revised electoral rolls to determine welfare beneficiaries and its implications for social protection and the constitutional welfare state.



Retrieving common ground in America

Analysing the Democratic victory, its impact on the Trump administration and its implications for US foreign policy and India.

Special Summary Revision (SSR) of Electoral Rolls

On November 5, 2026, the Election Commission of India (ECI) announced the annual Special Summary Revision (SSR) of electoral rolls for six States/Union Territories where the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) has been completed and final electoral rolls have been published. This follows the earlier announcement of SSR for 17 States/UTs on October 15, 2026. The exercise is significant because the annual revision of electoral rolls had been skipped in 2026 following the launch of the SIR in 2025, which attracted controversy over its documentation requirements and large-scale deletion of voter names.

Special Summary Revision (SSR): Meaning and Legal Basis

Meaning: SSR is an annual exercise undertaken by the ECI to update existing electoral rolls by including newly eligible voters, correcting entries and removing names of deceased or shifted electors.

Constitutional Basis: Article 324 of the Constitution empowers the ECI to prepare and supervise electoral rolls.

Statutory Framework: The preparation and revision of electoral rolls are governed by the Representation of the People Act, 1950, and the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960.

Section 21(2) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950: Provides for the revision of electoral rolls before general elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies and for periodic revision as directed by the ECI.

Qualifying Date: January 1, 2027, is the qualifying date for the present revision. It enables the enrolment of persons who have attained or will attain 18 years of age by that date.

Schedule and Coverage of the Current SSR

First Phase: On October 15, 2026, the ECI announced SSR for 17 States/UTs, including Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Manipur and Goa.

Second Phase: On November 5, 2026, SSR was announced for six additional States/UTs: ***Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Mizoram, Odisha and Sikkim.***

Objective: To enrol eligible voters, particularly young and first-time electors, and facilitate advance applications from those who will become eligible on April 1, July 1 and October 1, 2027.

Enrolment and Revision Procedure

Automatic Inclusion: Unlike the SIR, all existing electors will automatically be included in the draft electoral rolls under the SSR.

New Voters: Individuals who have attained 18 years of age can apply for enrolment using Form 6.

Correction and Shifting: Existing voters can use Form 8 to correct electoral details or shift their enrolment.

Aadhaar Details: Furnishing Aadhaar details in Forms 6 and 8 is voluntary. No application can be rejected and no existing entry can be deleted solely because Aadhaar details have not been furnished.

No Citizenship Documentation: Electors are not required to submit documents proving citizenship or establish their linkage with earlier electoral rolls.

Claims and Objections: After publication of the draft electoral rolls, electors can submit claims and objections within the prescribed period to seek additions, corrections or deletions.

Major Changes Introduced in the Current SSR

No House-to-House Verification: Booth Level Officers (BLOs) will not conduct house-to-house visits. Instead, draft and final electoral rolls will be displayed at polling booths.

Readable Electoral Rolls: Contesting candidates can be provided with alphabetically arranged, readable PDF copies of electoral rolls in pen drives or other electronic storage devices. This addresses the demand for machine-readable rolls that can be digitally searched, indexed and verified.

Supplementary Voter Lists: Political parties will also receive supplementary voter lists, which were earlier maintained primarily for official records and future reference.

Difference Between Special Summary Revision (SSR) and Special Intensive Revision (SIR)

The ECI introduced the SIR in 2025 after a gap of approximately 20 years. It departed from the regular summary revision process by requiring existing electors to re-establish their eligibility through enumeration forms and supporting documents.

Basis	SSR	SIR
Nature	Annual updating of existing electoral rolls.	Intensive revision involving fresh verification of electoral rolls.
Existing voters	Automatically included in the draft rolls.	Required to submit enumeration forms to establish eligibility.
Documentation	No citizenship documents or linkage with previous electoral rolls required.	Required supporting documents to establish eligibility, including citizenship.
Verification	No general house-to-house verification in the present exercise.	Involved an intensive verification exercise.
Deletion of names	Deletion requires statutory procedure, including notices and hearings.	Names could be excluded if eligibility was not established through the prescribed process.
Claims and objections	Electors can seek additions, corrections and deletions after draft publication.	Additional document verification and hearings were conducted for electors flagged for logical discrepancies.
Objective	Regular updating and maintenance of electoral rolls.	Fresh and comprehensive verification of electoral rolls.

Significance of the SSR

Electoral Inclusion: Facilitates the enrolment of young and first-time voters.

Protection of Voter Rights: Reduces the documentation burden on existing electors and provides safeguards against arbitrary deletion.

Electoral Transparency: Availability of readable electoral rolls improves digital accessibility and enables political parties to scrutinise voter lists.

Regular Electoral Updates: Restores the annual revision mechanism that was interrupted following the introduction of the SIR.

Conclusion

The Special Summary Revision is a routine annual exercise aimed at maintaining accurate and updated electoral rolls through the inclusion of eligible voters, correction of entries and removal of ineligible entries. Unlike the SIR, it does not require every existing voter to re-establish their eligibility through fresh documentation. The current exercise is significant for strengthening electoral inclusion, protecting voting rights and improving transparency in the preparation of electoral rolls.

PYQ COMPASS

Q. Consider the following statements: (2020)
1. According to the Constitution of India, a person who is eligible to vote can be made a minister in a state for six months even if he/she is not a member of the Legislature of that state.
2. According to the Representation of People Act, 1951, a person convicted of a criminal offence and sentenced to imprisonment for five years is permanently disqualified from contesting an election even after his release from prison.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Supreme Court Clarifies Implementation of OBC Creamy Layer Verdict

On November 6, 2026, the Supreme Court clarified the scope of its March 11, 2026, judgment on the determination of the creamy layer among Other Backward Classes (OBCs). It ruled that the judgment will not reopen selections and appointments already concluded but will apply to the pending service allocation process of the Civil Services Examination (CSE) 2025. The Court also extended the deadline for compliance by two months while refusing the Centre's request for two years to establish equivalence between posts in government services, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and the private sector.

Understanding the OBC Creamy Layer

Meaning: The creamy layer refers to the relatively advanced and wealthier sections among OBCs who are excluded from reservation benefits.

1993 Office Memorandum: It laid down the criteria for identifying OBC candidates belonging to the creamy layer. Under Category IV of the criteria, income from sources other than salaries and agricultural land is considered.

2004 Clarification: The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), through an October 2004 letter, clarified that where equivalence between posts in PSUs, banks and government employment had not been determined, salaries would be assessed separately. If the prescribed income limit was exceeded for three consecutive years, the children would be classified under the creamy layer.

PYQ COMPASS

Q. Consider the following statements : (2023)
Statement-I: The Supreme Court of India has held in some judgments that the reservation policies made under Article 16(4) of the Constitution of India would be limited by Article 335 for maintenance of efficiency of administration.
Statement-II: Article 335 of the Constitution of India defines the term 'efficiency of administration'.
Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?
(a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement I
(b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I
(c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect
(d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement- II is correct

What has happened?

Supreme Court's March 2026 Verdict: The Supreme Court held that salary income alone cannot determine the creamy layer status of OBC candidates. The status and category of parents' posts must also be considered.

Centre's Request: The Centre sought clarification on the retrospective application of the judgment, expressing concerns that completed selections and appointments could be disturbed. It also sought two years to establish equivalence between posts in government services, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and the private sector.

Supreme Court's November 2026 Clarification

Completed Selections: The March judgment will not reopen selections, appointments or service allocations made before March 11,2026.

Pending CSE 2025 Allocation: The revised criteria will apply to the pending service allocation process of CSE 2025.

No Retrospective Revision: The Court ruled out retrospective revision of completed appointments, seniority or service allocations.

Limited Compliance Requirement: The six-month deadline applied only to considering the claims of candidates involved in the original proceedings, not reviewing all previous recruitment years.

Finality of Judgment: The Court refused to reconsider the merits of its March ruling through the Centre's clarification application.

Extended Deadline: The Court granted an additional two months for compliance, rejecting the Centre's request for two years to establish equivalence between posts.

Epic failures: on electoral roll, welfare

Union Panchayati Raj Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh stated that voter identity cards (EPIC), supported by biometric authentication, would replace Aadhaar as the basis for identifying beneficiaries and making payments under his Ministry's schemes. This is significant because the Election Commission of India (ECI) has recently conducted Special Intensive Revisions (SIR) of electoral rolls, resulting in large-scale deletions of voters, particularly in West Bengal.

What has happened?

Supreme Court's position: In its May 27 judgment on the Bihar SIR, the Supreme Court held that the ECI's limited enquiry into citizenship is confined to determining eligibility for electoral registration. Any resulting action must have electoral consequences alone. Deletion from electoral rolls cannot automatically affect a person's entitlement to welfare benefits.



Why is it significant?

Contradiction with judicial observations: Using EPIC to determine welfare eligibility conflicts with the Supreme Court's position that electoral registration and welfare entitlements are distinct matters.

EPIC is a derivative document: The Court described the EPIC as a document issued on the basis of inclusion in the electoral roll. Using it to independently verify eligibility would be circular and defeat the purpose of verification.

Different eligibility criteria: Not every citizen is eligible to vote, and electoral registration is governed by criteria that are different from those governing access to welfare schemes. Therefore, electoral inclusion cannot serve as a universal measure of welfare eligibility.

Risk of exclusion: The SIR has created difficulties for migrant and itinerant populations in establishing their eligibility. Linking welfare benefits to the revised rolls could extend these exclusions beyond the electoral process.

What are its implications?

Threat to welfare entitlements: People wrongly deleted from electoral rolls could also lose access to essential welfare schemes.

Disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups: Migrants, itinerant workers and marginalised communities could face multiple layers of exclusion because of difficulties in establishing electoral eligibility.

Undermining the constitutional welfare state: Making welfare access dependent on electoral registration risks weakening the principle that social protection and electoral rights operate under distinct legal frameworks.

Concerns over institutional independence: Delays in conducting the Census, changes in the procedure for appointing Election Commissioners and the use of revised electoral rolls for welfare identification raise concerns about institutional accountability.

Fiscal implications: The proposal could also serve as a means of restricting welfare expenditure amid slowing growth in tax revenues.

PYQ COMPASS

Q. Right to vote and to be elected in India is a (2017)
(a) Fundamental Right
(b) Natural Right
(c) Constitutional Right
(d) Legal Right

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 (GS II - 2026)

Retrieving common ground in America

The 2026 US midterm elections mark a major political setback for Donald Trump, with Democrats regaining control of Congress amid public dissatisfaction over the cost of living, immigration enforcement and the Iran war. The outcome strengthens congressional checks on the presidency and could reshape US domestic and foreign policy during the remaining two years of Trump's term.

What has happened?

Democratic Victory: The Democratic Party has won control of both the US Senate and the House of Representatives, ending Republican control of Congress for the remainder of President Donald Trump's term.

Defeat in Republican Strongholds: Democrats made significant gains in traditionally Republican states, including Texas, Kansas and Iowa, while retaining victories in traditional strongholds such as Colorado, Oregon and Illinois and important swing states such as Georgia, Michigan and Virginia.

Historic Firsts: Abdul El-Sayed became the first Muslim Senator in US history, Chris Pappas became the first openly gay man elected to the Senate, and Hakeem Jeffries is poised to become the first African-American Speaker of the House.

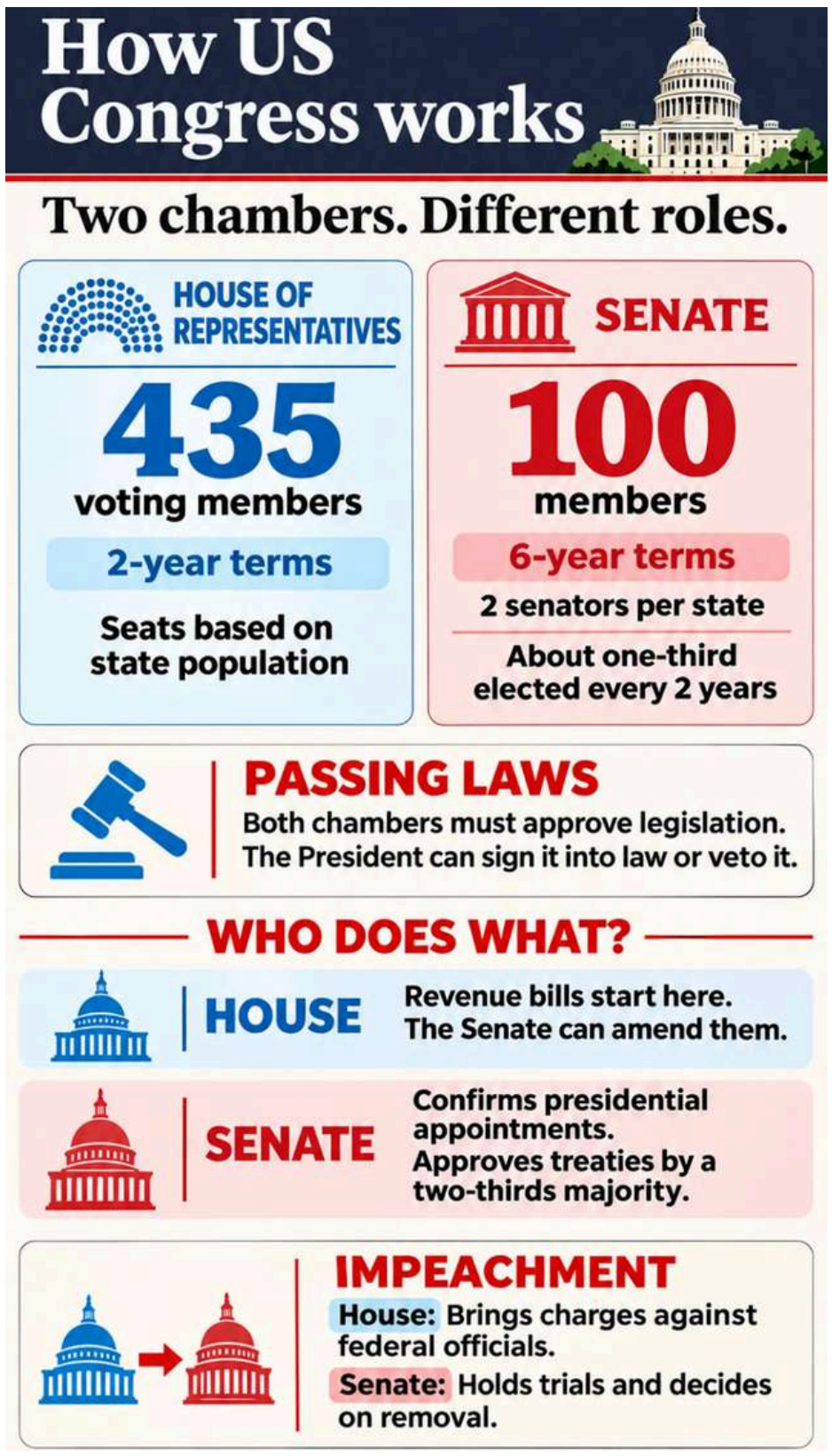
Why is it significant?

Referendum on Trump's Presidency: The results represent a major rejection of the second Trump administration's performance.

Cost-of-Living Concerns: Rising fuel and gas prices, inflationary pressures and the growing cost of necessities emerged as key influencing factors.

Opposition to the Iran War: The escalation around the Strait of Hormuz contributed to rising energy prices and dissatisfaction among his supporters.

Immigration Concerns: Immigration raids and accelerated deportations by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) triggered protests and strengthened support for immigration reform.



What are its implications?

Legislative Check on the President: Democratic control of both chambers will constrain Trump's legislative agenda and increase congressional scrutiny of his administration.

Limits on Congressional Power: Trump retains presidential veto powers, meaning Democrats will need bipartisan support to advance major legislation and overcome presidential opposition.

Scope for Political Confrontation: Democratic lawmakers may intensify investigations into the Trump administration, although excessive political confrontation could undermine opportunities for meaningful policy changes.

PYQ COMPASS

Q. Examine how the separation of powers is practised in India compared to the rigid presidential model of the United States of America. In this context, compare the actual authority of the Indian Prime Minister with that of the President of the USA. (GS II - 2026)

Internet Access as a Fundamental Right: Balancing Children's Freedom and Online Safety

In Just Rights for Children Alliance v. S. Harish (2026), the Supreme Court recognised Internet access as a fundamental right, particularly emphasising its importance for children's access to knowledge, creativity and self-expression. The Court highlighted that protecting children online should not necessarily mean restricting their freedom. The ruling brings attention to the need to balance children's digital rights with protection from harmful online content and other internet-related risks.

Internet Access and Fundamental Rights

Freedom of Expression: Internet access is an essential component of the right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.

Access to Information: The Internet enables children to access knowledge, express opinions, develop creativity and connect with people across geographical boundaries.

Right to Digital Access: Internet access should be recognised as a matter of right rather than a privilege, particularly in an increasingly digital society.

Right to Know: In Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting v. Cricket Association of Bengal (1995), the Supreme Court recognised that Article 19(1)(a) includes the right to know and to receive and impart information and ideas.

Authority-Liberty Coordination

Constitutional Balance: The concept of authority-liberty coordination emphasises balancing the powers of the State with the freedoms of individuals.

Reasonable Restrictions: Restrictions on individual freedoms are necessary to protect wider social interests, provided they remain within constitutional limits.

Preventing State Overreach: Unrestricted State authority can encourage dictatorial tendencies, while the exercise of individual freedoms without reasonable restraint can lead to anarchy.

PYQ COMPASS

Q. Which one of the following reflects the most appropriate relationship between law and liberty? (2018)
(a) If there are more laws, there is less liberty. (b) If there are no laws, there is no liberty.
(c) If there is liberty, laws have to be made by the people.
(d) If laws are changed too often, liberty is in danger

Internet as a Tool for Learning and Development

Capability Enhancement: Amartya Sen emphasised that expanding human capabilities contributes to development. Internet access enhances children's opportunities to acquire knowledge and develop skills.

Social Transformation: Joseph Stiglitz highlighted the importance of transformation, alongside capability enhancement, in achieving development.

Wider Opportunities: Digital access enables children to develop technological skills, express themselves and access educational resources.

Need for Regulation: The benefits of Internet access must be supported by appropriate regulations to prevent exposure to harmful and inappropriate online content.

Judicial Recognition of Digital Rights in India

Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India (2020): The Supreme Court held that freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) and freedom to carry on trade or business under Article 19(1)(g) are protected when exercised through the Internet.

Pragya Prasun v. Union of India (2025): The Court held that excluding persons with disabilities from digital Know Your Customer (KYC) processes violated Article 21 and recognised digital access as an intrinsic component of the right to life.

Just Rights for Children Alliance v. S. Harish (2026): The Court recognised the importance of Internet access for children's knowledge, creativity and self-expression while emphasising the need to balance freedom with safety.

PYQ COMPASS

Q. Consider the following statements: (2020)
1. According to the Constitution of India, a person who is eligible to vote can be made a minister in a state for six months even if he/she is not a member of the Legislature of that state.
2. According to the Representation of People Act, 1951, a person convicted of a criminal offence and sentenced to imprisonment for five years is permanently disqualified from contesting an election even after his release from prison.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans : a

Statement 1 is correct: One who is eligible to vote is not necessarily eligible to be a minister (for e.g., on grounds of age). The question used the term "a voter can" and not "every voter", here many voters who meet the eligibility to be a member of the Legislature of a state can be made a Minister even when they are not the members of the state Legislature (Article 164). Voter eligibility is not mentioned in the Constitution. This question is related to checking the concept rather than fact.
Statement 2: Incorrect. Under the Representation of People Act, 1951, a person convicted of a criminal offense and sentenced to five years is disqualified for six years after release, not permanently.

Q. Right to vote and to be elected in India is a (2017)
(a) Fundamental Right
(b) Natural Right
(c) Constitutional Right
(d) Legal Right

Ans : C

The right to vote and to be elected in India is a Constitutional Right. It is governed by Article 326 of the Constitution, which provides that elections to the House of the People and the Legislative Assemblies of States shall be based on adult suffrage.

PYQ COMPASS

Q. Consider the following statements : (2023)
Statement-I: The Supreme Court of India has held in some judgments that the reservation policies made under Article 16(4) of the Constitution of India would be limited by Article 335 for maintenance of efficiency of administration.
Statement-II: Article 335 of the Constitution of India defines the term 'efficiency of administration'.
Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?
(a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement I
(b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I
(c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect
(d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement- II is correct

Ans : C
Statement-I: This is correct. The Supreme Court has held in several judgments (e.g., Indra Sawhney case, M. Nagaraj case) that reservation policies under Article 16(4) (which provides for reservation in public employment) must not compromise the "efficiency of administration" as mandated by Article 335. Article 335 states that claims of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes must be balanced with maintaining administrative efficiency.
Statement-II: This is incorrect. Article 335 mentions "efficiency of administration" but does not define the term. The interpretation of what constitutes "efficiency of administration" is left to judicial interpretation and administrative practice.
Thus, Statement-I is correct, and Statement-II is incorrect, making the correct answer (c) Statement I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect.

Q. Which one of the following reflects the most appropriate relationship between law and liberty? (2018)
(a) If there are more laws, there is less liberty. (b) If there are no laws, there is no liberty.
(c) If there is liberty, laws have to be made by the people.
(d) If laws are changed too often, liberty is in danger

Ans : b
The most appropriate relationship between law and liberty is reflected in (b) If there are no laws, there is no liberty.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q. With reference to the right to vote in India, consider the following statements:

1. The right to vote is a Fundamental Right guaranteed under Part III of the Constitution.
2. Article 326 provides for elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies on the basis of adult suffrage.
3. The Constitution permits the denial of voting rights on grounds such as non-residence, unsoundness of mind, crime or corrupt practices, subject to law.

Which of the statements given above are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) 2 and 3 only
Statement 1 – Incorrect: The right to vote is not a Fundamental Right. It is recognised within the constitutional framework and regulated through electoral laws.
Statement 2 – Correct: Article 326 provides for elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies on the basis of adult suffrage.
Statement 3 – Correct: Article 326 permits disqualification from registration as a voter on grounds of non-residence, unsoundness of mind, crime or corrupt or illegal practices, subject to law.

Q. Which of the following best explains the constitutional concern arising from the proposed use of electoral rolls for determining welfare beneficiaries?
(a) It transfers the power of identifying welfare beneficiaries from the Union Government to the Election Commission.
(b) It makes the exercise of social and economic entitlements dependent on a process primarily intended to regulate electoral participation.
(c) It converts all welfare schemes into constitutional obligations under Article 326.
(d) It prevents the government from using biometric authentication for welfare delivery.

Answer: (b) Electoral rolls are intended to determine eligibility for voting. Making welfare access dependent on electoral registration could extend the consequences of electoral exclusion to social and economic entitlements.