

ELECTORAL BONDS

SYLLABUS: GS PAPER-II (TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY, GOVERNMENT POLICIES & INTERVENTIONS)

CONTEXT: Donations to political parties through electoral bonds (EBs) have crossed the Rs 10,000 crore mark.

ABOUT ELECTORAL BOND (EB)

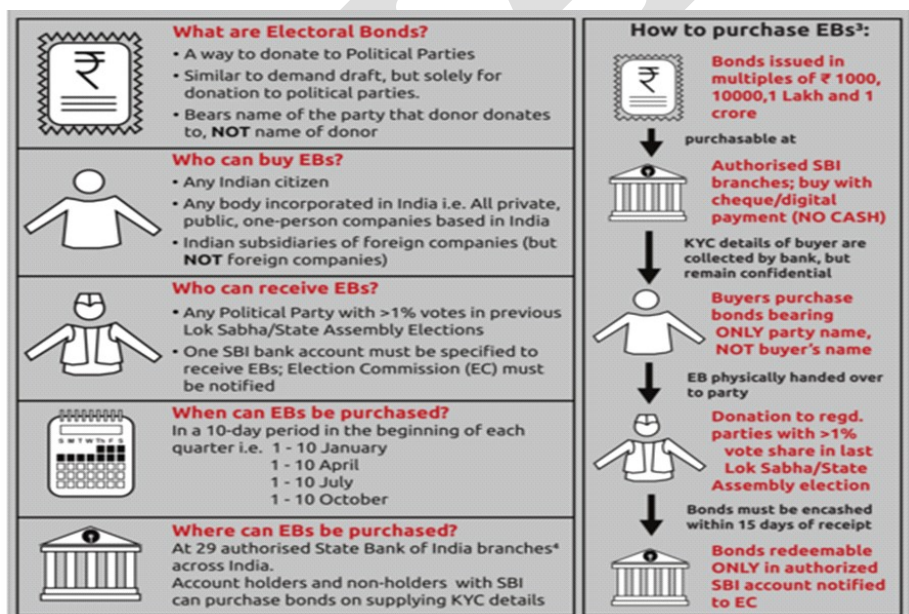
- An electoral bond is like a **financial tool used for making donations to political parties**. The public can also issue these bonds to fund eligible political parties.
- These bonds play a similar role as banknotes that are payable to the bearer free of interest and demand.
- An individual party can purchase these bonds digitally or with the help of a DD or cheque.
- The electoral bond scheme was launched by the Union government in 2018.

WORKING

- These bonds are **issued in multiples of Rs. 1,000, Rs. 10,000, Rs. 1 lakh, Rs. 10 lakh and Rs. 1 crore** without any maximum limit.
- **State Bank of India is authorized to issue and encash these bonds**, which are valid for fifteen days from the date of issuance.
- These bonds are only redeemable in the designated account of a registered political party.
- The bonds are available for purchase by any citizen of India for a period of **ten days each in the months of January, April, July, and October** as may be specified by the Central Government.
- A person being an individual can buy bonds, **either singly or jointly with other individuals**.

RATIONALE BEHIND THE INTRODUCTION OF EB

- The central idea behind the electoral bonds scheme was **to bring about transparency in electoral funding in India**.
- In the opinion of the Central government the electoral bonds would keep a tab on the use of black money for funding elections.



- The government had described the scheme as an “**electoral reform**” in a country moving towards a “**cashless-digital economy.**”
- The donor’s name is not mentioned on the bond.
- Donors who contribute less than Rs. 20,000 to political parties through purchase of electoral bonds need not provide their identity details such as PAN, etc.
- In the absence of electoral bonds, donors would have no option but to donate by cash after siphoning off money from their businesses, the government said.

CRITICISM

Contradicting its Basic Idea:

- The central criticism of the electoral bonds scheme is that it does the exact opposite of what it was meant to do- bring transparency to election funding.
- For example, critics argue that the anonymity of electoral bonds is only for the broader public and opposition parties.

Possibility of Extortion:

- The fact that such bonds are sold via a government-owned bank (SBI) leaves the door open for the government to know exactly who is funding its opponents.
- This, in turn, allows the **possibility for the government of the day to either extort money**, especially from the big companies, or victimize them for not funding the ruling party — either way providing an unfair advantage to the party in power.

Benefits of Electoral Bonds

WILL BRING substantial transparency in political donations against the present system of contributions in the election funding mechanism

HOW MUCH funding comes, what kind of funding it is, the source of funding and where it will be spent will be known clearly

NON DISCLOSURE of recipients will ensure people are free to donate to any political party of their choice

WILL REINFORCE the idea of moving away from a cash system towards clean money which cheque system could not achieve

15 DAYS between buying and selling will ensure they don't turn into a parallel economy

A Blow to Democracy:

- Through an amendment to the **Finance Act 2017**, the **Union government has exempted political parties from disclosing donations received through electoral bonds.**
- This means the voters will not know which individual, company, or organization has funded which party, and to what extent.
- However, in a representative democracy, citizens cast their votes for the people who will represent them in Parliament.

Compromising Right to Know:

- The Indian Supreme Court has long held that the “**right to know,**” especially in the context of elections, is an integral part of the right to freedom of expression (Article 19) under the Indian Constitution.

Against Free & Fair Elections:

- Electoral bonds provide no details to the citizens.
- The said **anonymity does not apply to the government of the day**, which can always access the donor details by demanding the data from the State Bank of India (SBI).
- This implies that the government in power can leverage this information and disrupt free and fair elections.

Crony Capitalism:

- The electoral bonds scheme **removes all pre-existing limits on political donations and effectively allows well-resourced corporations to fund elections**, subsequently paving the way for crony capitalism.

FAMILY COURTS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2022

SYLLABUS: GS PAPER-II (FAMILY COURTS ACT)

CONTEXT: The Rajya Sabha passed the **Family Courts (Amendment) Bill, 2022** by voice vote.

The Bill makes a provision to grant **statutory cover to family courts set up in Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland**.

KEY AMENDMENTS

- **Sub-section 3 of section 1:** The Bill seeks to insert a provision in sub-section 3 of section 1 to provide for the establishment of family courts in Himachal Pradesh with effect from February 15, 2019 and in Nagaland with effect from September 12, 2008.
- **Section 3A:** It also seeks to insert a new section 3A to retrospectively validate all actions under the act taken by the governments of Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland and the family courts of these states.
- **Retrospective effect:** The establishment of Family Courts in both states will be retrospectively valid from these dates.
- All actions taken under the Act in both the states, including the appointment of judges and orders and judgments passed by the Family Courts, will also be deemed to be valid from these dates retrospectively.

FAMILY COURTS ACT OF 1984

Establishment of Family Courts:

- The Family Courts Act, 1984 was enacted for the establishment of Family Courts with a view to promoting conciliation, and securing speedy settlement of disputes relating to marriage and family affairs and for related matters.

Appointment of Judges:

- The State Government may, with the concurrence of the High Court, appoint one or more people to be the Judges of a Family Court.

Association of Social Welfare Agencies:

- The State Government may provide a Family Court of:

- a. Institutions or organizations engaged in social welfare.
- b. People professionally engaged in promoting the welfare of the family.
- c. Persons working in the field of social welfare.
- d. Any other person whose association with a Family Court would enable it to exercise its jurisdiction more effectively in accordance with the purposes of this Act.

PRELIMS FACTS

HAR GHAR TIRANGA CAMPAIGN

- 'Har Ghar Tiranga' is a campaign under the aegis of **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav to encourage people to bring the Tiranga home and to hoist it to mark the 75th year of India's independence.**
- Bringing the flag home collectively as a nation in the 75th year of independence thus becomes **symbolic of not only an act of personal connection to the Tiranga but also an embodiment of our commitment to nation-building.**
- The idea behind the initiative is **to invoke the feeling of patriotism in the hearts of the people** and to promote awareness about the Indian National Flag.

COMMONWEALTH GAMES

- Tejaswin clinched bronze after he cleared 2.22m in his first try.
- **Tejaswin Shankar's** Bronze in High Jump is also **India's first in Track and Field at Commonwealth Games, 2022.**
- It is a **member-based organization** that receives no funding from the government and exists to administer, control, and coordinate the participation of sports events and the athletes, along with the officials of the commonwealth game.
- The 2022 Commonwealth Games are officially known as **XXII Commonwealth Games and are known as Birmingham 2022.**
- In 1881, a new idea of having multiple games at one sports event was **introduced by Astley Cooper.**
- The Commonwealth Games is also known as the **Friendly Games.**
- The Commonwealth Games are **quadrennial** which means it is held for four years.
- The Indian team for the Commonwealth Games consists of **322 members which include 72 team officials, 26 extra officials, nine contingent staff,** and three general managers.

OCEAN THERMAL ENERGY CONVERSION PLANT (OTEC) IN LAKSHADWEEP

- The National Institute of Ocean Technology is establishing an Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC) plant with a capacity of 65 kilowatts (kW) in Kavaratti, the capital of Lakshadweep.
- Ocean thermal energy conversion (OTEC) is a **process or technology for producing energy by harnessing the temperature differences (thermal gradients) between ocean surface waters and deep ocean waters.**
- Energy from the sun heats the surface water of the ocean.

- In tropical regions, surface water can be much warmer than deep water.
- This temperature difference can be used to produce electricity and to desalinate ocean water.

CENTRAL DEPOSITORY SERVICES LIMITED (CDSL)

- The number of active demat accounts on CDSL **crossed 7-crore mark**.
- CDSL was founded in 1999 to fulfil the **goal of convenient, dependable, and secure depository services at affordable cost to all market participants**.
- Depository facilitates holding of securities in electronic form.
- A demat account **helps investors hold shares and securities in an electronic format**.
- CDSL was **promoted by BSE Ltd.** jointly with leading banks such as State Bank of India, Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, HDFC Bank, Standard Chartered Bank and Union Bank of India.

