

# NEWS TODAY

## SUPREME COURT NOTICE TO CENTRE, ELECTION COMMISSION ON PLEA OVER PRE-POLL FREEBIES

- Supreme Court issued notice on a plea seeking directions to Election Commission (EC) to **frame guidelines to stop political parties from promising or distributing "irrational freebies from public funds"**.
- **Concerns associated with freebies**
  - Unduly influences the voters.
  - Disturbs the level playing field and vitiates the purity of election process.
  - Shakes the roots of free-fair election.
  - Huge economic burden on states.
- Supreme Court in **Subramaniam Balaji vs State of Tamil Nadu, 2013** states that promises in the **election manifesto cannot be construed as "corrupt practice"**.
  - Distribution of freebies can't be stopped when the **ruling party uses public funds for this purpose through passage of Appropriation Acts in state assembly**.
- However, the distribution of freebies influences all people and it asked the **EC to frame guidelines** and stressed the need "for a **separate legislation** to be passed by the legislature in this regard for **governing the political parties**".
  - The EC has already implemented the **directions in Balaji case** by incorporating guidelines governing election manifestos in **Part VII to the Model Code of Conduct** which has binding force.



## GLOBAL FIRST: EUROPEAN COMMISSION PROPOSES DIGITAL RIGHTS, PRINCIPLES

- Declaration of digital rights and principles **establishes that what is illegal offline should also be illegal online**.
  - It is an **extension of the Berlin declaration on Digital Society and Value-Based Digital Government** of EU council.
- **Significance**
  - To **protect people's rights**, support democracy and **ensure a fair and safe online environment**.
  - To provide a **guide for policymakers and companies** when dealing with new technologies.
  - To promote these principles as a **standard for the world countries**.
- **Key Principles**
  - **Putting people at the centre of the digital transformation** i.e technologies respect democratic values.
  - **Solidarity and inclusion** i.e digitisation should benefit all;
  - **Freedom of choice** to help people make their own informed choices online.
  - **Participation in the digital public space** by promoting an online open environment for a healthy, vivid democratic debate.
  - **Safety, security and empowerment**, which covers right to safe digital technologies and protect **privacy**.
  - **Greened digital technologies** to achieve **green transition goals**.
- **Steps taken by India to protect digital rights**
  - Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019
  - Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021
  - Information Technology Act 2000.



# SC DECLINES INTERIM RELIEF IN PLEA TO EXTEND VALIDITY OF EXPIRED FCRA LICENCES OF NGOS

- The Supreme Court refused to extend the **lapsed Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) licences of 6,000 NGOs for their failure to adhere to norms prescribed for receiving foreign funds.**
  - The FCRA requires NGOs to get a **license from the Union Ministry of Home (MHA) authorising them to receive foreign funds.**
- FCRA was **enacted during the Emergency in 1976 to regulate foreign donations to individuals and associations** so that they functioned "in a manner consistent with the values of a sovereign democratic republic".
  - It was **amended in 2010** to "consolidate the law" on utilisation of foreign funds, and **"to prohibit" their use for "any activities detrimental to national interest"**.
  - Law was **amended again in 2020**, giving the **government tighter control and scrutiny over the receipt and utilisation of foreign funds by NGOs.**
  - **For new rules on FCRA - Refer infographic.**
- However, The top court is yet to pronounce its verdict on petitions challenging an amendment to FCRA prohibiting transfer of foreign funds, requiring Aadhaar as identification for prior approval, registration and mandating opening of FCRA primary account exclusively in an SBI branch in New Delhi.

## What Changes Now?

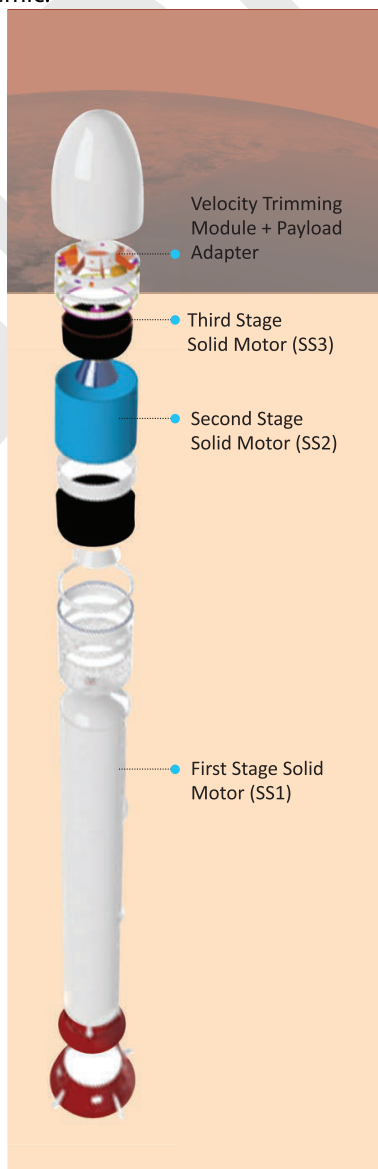
- ◆ **Public sector employees** are forbidden to receive foreign contributions
- ◆ **Transfer of funds** received under FCRA to other individuals or organisations prohibited
- ◆ **Quantum of administrative expenses** eligible to be funded by FCRA funds lowered from 50% to 20%
- ◆ **Providing Aadhaar number mandatory** for all office bearers, directors or key functionaries of organisations
- ◆ **Powers to suspend FCRA registration** of NGOs for more than 180 days vested on the government
- ◆ **Renewal of registration** after the five-year tenure will involve same level of scrutiny as new applicants
- ◆ **Designated FCRA account** has to be mandatorily created with State Bank of India (SBI), Delhi
- ◆ **Voluntary surrendering of FCRA certificate** option available to nonprofits

# INDIAN SPACE RESEARCH ORGANISATION'S SMALL SATELLITE LAUNCH VEHICLE(SSLV) TO HAVE MAIDEN FLIGHT IN APRIL

- **SSLV-D1 Micro SAT is scheduled for launch in April 2022** after the project was delayed in July 2019 owing to COVID 19 pandemic.

## About SSLV

- It has been **designed to meet "Launch on Demand" requirements.**
- It is a **three stage all solid vehicle** with capability to launch up to 500 kg satellite mass into **500 km low earth orbit.**
  - Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle can launch satellites weighing above 1000 kg.
- It is the **smallest vehicle at 110-ton mass at ISRO**
- **Reduced turnaround time** (take only 72 hours to integrate, unlike the 70 days taken now).
- **Cost effective** (cost will be only around Rs 30 crore).
- **Multiple satellite mounting** options for nano, micro and small satellites.
- **Minimum infrastructure requirement**
- It aims to **cater to the market for the launch of small satellites into Earth's low orbits** that has emerged in recent years to cater to the need of developing countries, universities for small satellites, and private corporations.
- **NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), a PSU, will be the sole nodal agency** responsible for providing end-to-end SSLV Launch services for customer satellites from contractual, technical, programmatic, launch campaign, launch and post launch activities.








# CENTRAL VIGILANCE COMMISSION(CVC) REVISES STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR IMPLEMENTING INTEGRITY PACT (IP)

- IP envisages an **agreement between the prospective vendors/bidders and the buyer**, committing persons and officials of both sides to **not resort to any corrupt practices in any aspect or stage of the contract.**
  - It is **implemented through a panel of Independent External Monitors (IEM)**, appointed by the organisation.
  - IEMs report to **Chief Vigilance Officers (CVOs)**
- **Key highlights of the new rules**
  - IEMs will only be picked from a **panel of eminent persons/officers who have held the post of additional secretary or equivalent or any other position at a higher pay scale** in GOI at the time of retirement.
  - Existing rules, issued in June 2021, only considered officials at the rank of secretary to government of India, chief secretaries in the states or officials at equivalent pay scale at the time of retirement.
  - For retired officers of armed officers, too, **only those officers equivalent to the ranks of additional secretaries or higher** in GOI will be eligible.
- Changes are expected to **provide a larger pool of IEMS** for examining government contracts.
  - **CVC** is the apex vigilance institution, free of control from any executive authority, monitoring all vigilance activity under the Central Government and advising various authorities in Central Government organizations in planning, executing, reviewing and reforming their vigilant work.






# UN YET TO AGREE ON COMMON DEFINITION OF TERRORISM, SAYS INDIA

- At the United Nations General Assembly meeting, India has raised concern that the **global body has neither agreed on a common definition of terrorism nor crafted a well-coordinated policy** to tackle the global scourge and dismantle its enabling networks.
- India proposed a draft document on the **Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) at the UN in 1986** but it has not been implemented yet as there is no unanimity on the definition of terrorism among the member states.
- CCIT provides a **legal framework** which makes it binding on all signatories to **deny funds and safe havens to terrorist groups**.
- Major objectives of CCIT**
  - To have a universal definition of terrorism that all 193-members of the UNGA will adopt into their own criminal law.
  - To ban all terror groups and shut down terror camps.
  - To prosecute all terrorists under special laws.
  - To make cross-border terrorism an extraditable offence worldwide.
- India's efforts to counter terrorism:**
  - India co-sponsored a **draft resolution on Human Rights and Terrorism**, which was adopted in 1999.
  - India supported and joined the **Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Adopted** by the General Assembly.

## ALSO IN NEWS

 <p><b>Various awards announced on republic day</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Padma Awards: Highest civilian awards</b> in the country, instituted in 1954 and are awarded to citizens of India for their distinguished contribution in various fields of activity including education, arts, literature, science, acting, social service and public affairs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They comprise of <b>three categories</b> based on the scale of the awardee's achievement - The highest being <b>Padma Vibhushan</b>, followed by <b>Padma Bhushan</b>, and <b>Padma Shri</b>.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Gallantry awards</b>- Param Vir Chakra (Highest Military decoration), Mahavir Chakra, Vir Chakra, Ashoka Chakra, Kirti Chakra, Shaurya Chakra.</li> <li><b>President's Police Medals</b> for meritorious service to law enforcement personnel in the country.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Project Monitoring Group (PMG) portal</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Minister of Commerce &amp; Industry</b> reviewed the <b>pace of implementation</b> of infrastructure projects <b>being monitored through the Project Monitoring Group (PMG) portal</b>.</li> <li><b>About PMG portal:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is a unique institutional mechanism to <b>facilitate resolution of bottlenecks</b> in infrastructure projects with <b>investments upward of ₹ 500 crores</b>.</li> <li>Presently, PMG is monitoring <b>1,351 under implementation projects</b> with total anticipated investment of <b>approximately INR 48.94 lakh crore</b>.</li> <li>It <b>allows project proponents to raise issues</b> with concerned government agencies which are <b>causing hindrances in implementation</b>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
 <p><b>Spot-billed pelicans</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A <b>nematode infestation</b> has led to mass mortality of spot-billed pelicans at Telineelapuram Important Bird Area (IBA) in Andhra Pradesh. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nematode infections are <b>commonly found in the gastrointestinal system</b> of all orders of reptiles.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>About Spot billed pelicans</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>IUCN Status</b> - Near threatened.</li> <li><b>Habitat</b> - Lives in lowland freshwater, brackish, and marine wetland areas.</li> <li><b>Characteristics</b> - Hunt for food in both freshwater and marine environments, can dive slightly below the surface but never to great depth.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
 <p><b>Insect Apocalypse</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pollutants affect certain insects more than others as they can kill them or mess with their ability to sniff flowers, lowering pollination services.</li> <li>The <b>threats to insects</b> include <b>habitat loss, climate change, land-use change and insecticides</b>.</li> <li><b>Importance of Insect</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insects <b>keep pests in check</b>. For example, ladybird preys on aphids, that damage crops.</li> <li>Insects are <b>food sources for amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals</b>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
 <p><b>Kathakali</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kathakali patron Padma Shri <b>Milena Salvini passed away recently</b>.</li> <li><b>About kathakali:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is <b>one of the classical dance forms</b> of India.</li> <li>Kathakali or 'story play' took shape in <b>Kerala</b> in southern India in the <b>seventeenth century</b>.</li> <li>It is a blend of <b>dance, music and acting</b> and dramatizes stories, which are mostly adapted from the <b>Indian epics</b>.</li> <li>A <b>traditional performance</b> of Kathakali starts in the <b>evening</b> after preliminaries that include an <b>invocatory drumming on the Maddalam</b>, and concludes <b>only at daybreak</b>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



 <p><b>National Voters' Day</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The National Voters' Day is <b>celebrated every year on January 25</b> to encourage the country's voters to <b>participate in the electoral process</b>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The <b>first-ever</b> National Voters' Day was celebrated <b>on January 25, 2011</b>.</li> </ul> </li> <li>The theme for this year is <b>'Making Elections Inclusive, Accessible and Participative'</b>.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>CHIRU-2Q22</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Iran, Russia, and China</b> began the 2022 <b>Marine Security Belt naval drill (CHIRU-2Q22)</b> in the northern Indian Ocean to <b>"deepen practical cooperation"</b>.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Places in news</b></p>	<p><b>Serbia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is a country in the <b>west-central Balkans</b>. It was a <b>part of Yugoslavia</b>.</li> <li><b>Political features: Capital is Belgrade</b> which lies at the confluence of the <b>Danube and Sava rivers</b>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ It is <b>bordered by</b> Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Geographical features: Important mountain ranges</b> include Dinaric Alps, Carpathian and Rhodope mountain systems. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Drainage is primarily to the <b>Danubian system and flows into the Black Sea</b>. The Tisa River is the most prominent tributary of the Danube.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  <p><b>Nile river</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Longest river in the world, it <b>rises south of the Equator</b> and flows from <b>south to north through eastern Africa</b>.</li> <li>It <b>covers a distance of 6600 km</b> and <b>empties into the Mediterranean Sea</b></li> <li><b>Its basin includes</b> parts of Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Sudan, and the cultivated part of Egypt.</li> <li><b>Its three main tributaries are the White Nile, the Blue Nile, and the Atbara.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>White Nile begins at Lake Victoria, Africa's largest lake</b>, which touches the countries of <b>Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania</b>.</li> <li>➤ <b>Blue Nile's source is at Lake Tana in Ethiopia</b>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> 



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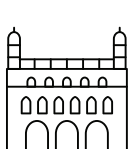
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LUCKNOW



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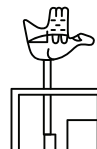
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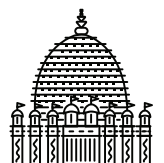
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CHANDIGARH



GUWAHATI