



IAS PARLIAMENT

Information is a Blessing

A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative

GIST OF EPW

JANUARY 2018



Shankar IAS Academy™

Door No 18, New Plot No 259 /109,
AL Block, 4th Avenue, Shanthi Colony,
Annanagar, Chennai - 600040.



I N D E X

EPW – JANUARY 2018

SL.NO.	TITLE	PAGE NO.
1	COSTLY APATHY	3
2	CLASS–CASTE DIFFERENCES IN ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL CREDIT IN INDIA	4
3	FOCUS ON INVESTMENT	5
4	KANYASHREE PRAKALPA	7
5	TYRANNY OF RANKINGS	8
6	CREEPING UN-FREEDOMS	9
7	USER CHARGES ONSLAUGHT ON PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES	10
8	SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY - LESSONS FROM GERMANY	11
9	BEYOND THE SUPREME COURT	12
10	MILITARISTIC NATIONALISM	14



EPW – JANUARY 2018

1. COSTLY APATHY

Why in news?

In December 2017, Mumbai witnessed two major fires—one in a pub that claimed 14 lives and another in a suburban snack-making unit that killed 12 workers.

What is the prevailing situation?

- The India Risk Survey 2017 lists 12 risks to business operations in the country.
- Fire ranks fifth on the list.
- It has gone up by three places from the 2016 survey.
- The National Crime Records Bureau says that in 2015 a total of 18,450 cases of fire accidents were reported and 17,700 persons were killed.
- It further adds that 42.1% of those deaths were due to fire accidents in residential buildings.
- The majority of fire accidents were reported in Maharashtra, which accounted for 22% of these accidents.
- Interestingly, the survey put corruption, bribery and corporate frauds at the third position.

What is the reason?

- These building crashes, fires and other accidents have been very frequent.

- Almost everything about the “accidents” seem to follow a set pattern.

- They are–

1. exposure of a series of violations of safety norms,
2. promises of swift punitive action by the authorities,
3. kneejerk reactions of demolishing illegal structures all over the city.

- Nothing has been learnt from horrific fire accidents of the past.
- There has been no effect in better implementation of safety laws either.
- Any attempt to enforce safety regulations is seen as “harassment” by the builders and business operators.
- It is further fuelled by cynicism that things cannot and will not change.
- But the most over looked issue here is the ongoing apathy from citizens and authorities alike.
- The lack of urban planning is only equalled by the lack of the community’s involvement in the process.

What should be done?

- There is no lack of laws.



- The problem is their strict implementation without fear or favour.
- The awareness and vigilance of the community at large play a big role.
- In most residential buildings and industrial there are residents' associations that look after day-to-day affairs.
- Tapping these bodies would be a first step in raising awareness of safety issues.
- A pressure lobby of citizens that must ensure that politicians in power and the authorities enforce these norms.

2. CLASS-CASTE DIFFERENCES IN ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL CREDIT IN INDIA

What is the issue?

- Farmers from smaller farm-size class and socially marginalised castes face difficulty in accessing credit due to lower asset valuations and social discrimination.
- There is a need for asset creation and reorientation of the present agricultural credit policy for greater inclusiveness.

What is the importance of Credit?

- Credit is an important mediating input for agriculture to improve productivity and growth of the sector.
- It can be used for building up capital stock—irrigation facilities, machines, and so on—and to replace informal

credit associated with high interest burden.

- At the same time, the issue of inclusiveness in terms of class and caste in access to credit is also important.
- Many studies clearly established the positive relation between easy access to credit by farmers and agricultural productivity in India.

What are the problems?

- The land size-based class tends to influence the access to credit from both formal and informal agencies.
- The bank officers carry out banking in the village through the rich farmers.
- Hence, it is not just the collateral that makes the difference, but the access to the bank bureaucracy by large farmers.
- The share of marginal and small farmers in agricultural credit disbursed has declined.
- This has been happening despite the increasing capacity of marginal farmers to absorb credit compared to large farmers.
- Farmers' access to formal agricultural loans also depends on their caste - higher castes are given more credit than the lower.
- While commercial banks do not discriminate against lower caste farmers in lending, cooperative banks do, as they are prone to interest group capture at the local level.



Table 1: Credit to Agricultural Households by Class, Caste, and Source of Borrowing (%)

Class/Caste	Proportion of AHs Who Borrowed					Proportion of Loans				
	ST	SC	OBC	Others	All	ST	SC	OBC	Others	All
Cooperatives										
Marginal	6.7	11.7	14.9	18.4	14.1	13.4	13.9	17.1	21.8	17.5
Small	13.1	32.2	27.3	33.2	27.2	20.4	24.7	21.4	35.8	25.7
Semi-medium	20.8	30.0	34.2	41.4	33.8	27.8	24.9	24.0	35.6	27.8
Medium	21.6	27.5	51.0	41.4	43.7	25.4	27.6	34.8	32.5	33.1
Large	71.6	19.3	50.8	40.8	44.8	44.8	23.5	34.1	33.2	33.7
All	10.1	16.9	20.9	26.0	20.1	17.8	17.6	20.2	28.2	21.9
SCBs										
Marginal	4.8	12.2	15.1	15.2	13.2	9.6	13.9	16.6	18.6	16.1
Small	9.1	17.2	27.0	25.5	22.5	15.1	11.7	22.0	24.0	20.6
Semi-medium	18.3	23.1	35.3	31.6	30.4	24.5	16.3	26.6	27.3	25.8
Medium	29.7	13.2	37.7	35.1	34.7	35.7	11.3	25.1	29.0	26.7
Large	16.1	63.4	37.7	43.5	41.3	12.1	48.5	30.0	32.5	31.2
All	7.7	13.9	20.5	21.0	17.9	13.9	13.6	19.8	22.3	19.2
PMLs										
Marginal	12.3	24.8	22.3	17.6	20.1	27.5	32.7	31.5	23.6	29.3
Small	16.2	32.0	29.3	16.6	24.2	27.5	27.4	26.0	15.7	23.5
Semi-medium	16.0	39.2	31.0	17.4	25.1	24.9	32.8	26.1	13.7	22.9
Medium	19.8	26.5	26.2	22.5	24.2	21.8	28.7	24.3	19.8	22.2
Large	30.7	12.3	13.6	22.9	18.7	16.8	23.4	7.8	18.0	13.6
All	13.7	27.0	24.7	17.8	21.6	26.9	31.3	28.9	19.9	26.5

Source: Author's calculation based on Debt and Investment Survey, NSSO, 70th Round.

Table 2: Average Amount of Cash Loan from Different Credit Agencies (₹ '000s)

Class/Caste	Proportion of AHs Who Borrowed (per household)					Proportion of Loans (per hectare)				
	ST	SC	OBC	Others	All	ST	SC	OBC	Others	All
Cooperatives										
Marginal	71.5	68.6	105.0	114.2	100.9	109.5	120.8	184.3	217.8	180.2
Small	63.4	99.6	139.4	225.8	155.7	45.1	68.8	96.6	152.7	107.0
Semi-medium	118.2	159.8	190.3	215.9	190.2	45.3	66.4	70.2	79.3	70.8
Medium	195.5	199.9	199.1	287.5	237.3	34.8	40.0	35.9	50.9	42.5
Large	84.9	784.4	374.8	630.0	487.2	6.6	62.9	24.9	34.0	29.3
All	84.4	94.5	140.5	191.4	148.4	52.1	77.6	76.8	88.4	79.3
SCBs										
Marginal	101.8	98.2	115.1	185.1	131.3	170.9	191.7	200.9	333.6	234.3
Small	153.9	90.0	170.2	307.4	202.8	110.5	63.8	120.1	221.5	144.2
Semi-medium	152.5	128.8	234.6	324.0	247.6	61.8	50.7	90.3	120.6	94.9
Medium	214.1	279.2	309.0	533.9	407.7	42.6	48.0	53.2	88.7	69.5
Large	523.0	114.8	575.3	926.5	726.2	32.0	7.7	39.6	72.9	53.4
All	137.1	102.4	168.8	299.8	200.0	84.6	89.4	101.5	143.7	115.2
PMLs										
Marginal	61.5	75.0	93.6	90.8	86.7	107.2	153.3	181.5	182.8	169.3
Small	69.0	79.5	137.0	147.5	122.2	48.9	54.6	97.3	103.9	86.2
Semi-medium	73.3	113.3	178.7	251.4	174.5	28.3	47.2	69.0	93.8	67.5
Medium	57.8	250.7	257.7	386.8	303.2	10.8	49.2	44.1	66.3	52.5
Large	43.7	178.3	336.8	311.6	301.9	4.1	11.4	22.4	18.0	18.6
All	64.9	82.3	122.2	150.1	116.2	54.3	86.0	97.4	90.6	90.3

The amount of cash loan includes both previously unpaid and currently received loans.
Source: Same as in Table 1.

Table 3: Average Annual Rate of Interest on Loan from Different Credit Agencies (%)

Class/Caste	ST	SC	OBC	Others	All
Cooperatives					
Marginal	7.5	9.3	9.5	8.2	8.9
Small	7.0	6.9	7.6	9.4	8.1
Semi-medium	7.3	7.6	7.4	7.7	7.5
Medium	7.6	7.0	7.5	6.8	7.1
Large	3.1	7.6	7.0	8.1	7.4
All	7.3	8.2	8.5	8.3	8.3
SCBs					
Marginal	8.5	9.1	8.5	8.2	8.5
Small	7.8	8.9	8.5	7.4	8.1
Semi-medium	7.7	8.5	8.0	8.2	8.0
Medium	8.7	7.2	8.2	8.6	8.4
Large	11.4	7.8	7.5	8.3	8.0
All	8.1	8.9	8.4	8.1	8.3
PMLs					
Marginal	39.4	41.3	39.3	39.9	39.8
Small	31.3	34.6	31.0	28.6	31.1
Semi-medium	35.7	31.8	29.5	27.5	30.0
Medium	29.2	31.9	26.0	22.7	25.0
Large	33.0	24.0	28.6	27.4	27.8
All	36.6	38.9	35.6	34.7	36.0

Source: Same as in Table 1.

3. FOCUS ON INVESTMENT

What is the issue?

India's GDP growth rate is slow and investment remains low and falling.

What is the present scenario?

- The First Advance Estimates of National Income, 2017–18 released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) estimates that the economy is growing the slowest it has in the last 4 years.
- These estimates are used for the formulation of the Union Budget.
- Gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) is the lowest since the new National Accounts Statistics (NAS) series began in 2011.

“GFCF refers to the net increase in physical assets i.e investment minus disposals, within the measurement period”

- Apart from the access and amount of credit, it is also important to look at the rate of interest on agricultural loans by the credit agencies across class and caste in India.
- Private Money Lenders charge heavy interest rates (above 30% per annum) from both the smaller class and socially marginalised caste groups.
- This leads to either unbearable burden on their uncertain and hard-earned income from agriculture.



- Hence, GFCF is a key indicator of an economy's ability to grow
- Further, there are uncertainties in these estimates because of demonetisation in 2016–17 and the disruptive introduction of the GST.
- It also estimates that real GDP will grow at 6.5% during 2017–18, year-on-year, lower than the 7.1% estimated for the previous financial year.
- Gross value added (GVA) at constant prices is expected to grow at 6.1% compared to the previous year's provisional estimates that record growth of 6.6%.

“GVA provides the rupee value for the amount of goods and services produced in an economy after deducting the cost of inputs and raw materials that have gone into the production.

While GVA gives a picture of the state of economic activity from the producers' side or supply side, the GDP gives the picture from the consumers' side or demand perspective.

Both measures need not match because of the difference in treatment of net taxes”

- The other component of GDP, net taxes on products, is expected to grow slower than last year at 10.9% as the indirect tax revenue collections are slower on account of GST.
- The agricultural sector will do worse this year than it did in the previous year.
- The manufacturing sector is also expected to grow at a lower rate.

- However the Purchasing Managers' Index is more optimistic and sees positive signs of growth.

“The PMI is based on five major indicators: new orders, inventory levels, production, supplier deliveries and the employment environment.

A figure above 50 denotes expansion in business activity. Anything below 50 denotes contraction.

Higher the difference from this mid-point greater the expansion or contraction”

- On the exports front too, India's performance has been quite modest.

What are the implications?

- In general, the CSO computes growth of current estimates over revised estimates of earlier data.
- This tends to give the initial full-year estimates of growth rates of GVA an upward bias.
- Subsequent revisions tend to be downwards.
- However the government seems to expect that the growth rates will be revised upwards.
- But so far there are no indicators in support of such economic activity.

What should be done?

- The government needs to avoid big-bang political moves like Demonetisation and the hurried implementation of GST.
- The focus must be on investing in rural infrastructure, agriculture, rural



non-farm employment, employment generation in manufacturing, and public services like health and education.

- All these would be key to raising incomes that would then create the necessary demand in the economy to boost investment.

4. KANYASHREE PRAKALPA

What is the issue?

- Kanyashree Prakalpa Scheme has been hailed as a much-needed intervention to combat the high rate of child marriage in West Bengal.
- However, an examination of the scheme highlights that rather than promoting higher education of women, the scheme has ended up entangled in the marriage economy of rural Bengal.

What is Kanyashree Prakalpa?

- The state ranked high in terms of underage marriages of girls according to the District Level Household and Facility Survey-3 (DLHS-3), and the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3).
- This prompted the Government of West Bengal to intervene in the education sector.
- Kanyashree Prakalpa, a conditional cash transfer scheme, was introduced.
- It incentivises girls to continue education, while simultaneously delaying early marriages.

- It provides an annual grant, as well as a larger one-time grant if the girl is still unmarried at 18 years.
- The scheme targets girls between the ages of 13 and 19 years, studying in Classes 8–11, as the dropout rate is the highest for this age group.
- Currently, over 40 lakh girls are beneficiaries of the scheme.
- As a result, the increase in enrolment rate has significantly improved the presence of girls at the secondary and higher secondary levels.
- The number of girls dropping out of school has decrease by 56%.

What are the problems?

- The popular narrative, however, is not wholly supported by field experience.
- **Awareness** - Most households were aware of the Kanyashree Prakalpa scheme, but very few were its beneficiaries.
- There also appears to be lack of clarity regarding the benefits.
- Many were receiving the old benefits, in spite of the case the benefit amount has been increased.
- **Small Incentives** - Part of the problem with the scheme is the small amount involved.
- Respondents spoke of the annual benefit as paltry, and unable to cover even basic educational expenses.
- **Red-tapism** - Further, a number of girls fill the form to avail the benefits,



but grow impatient due to the lengthy process that precedes the receipt of money.

- Moreover, since the money is directly transferred into the bank account of the recipient it often gets utilised for purposes other than the daughter's education.
- **Leakage** - In some cases, girls claim the benefit after marriage. They remain in school, and without a marriage registration, there is no proof of marriage. They drop out on receiving the grant.
- Families have retained daughters in school until they get the benefit, in order to use the money for marriage expenses.
- Thus, rather than promoting higher education, the scheme has ended up entangled in the marriage economy of rural Bengal.

How can this be dealt with?

- To be successful, Kanyashree Prakalpa may need to explore greater connections with regard to employment for young women.
- It was announced that the scheme would be extended and that women enrolled in higher educational institutes can avail a monthly benefit of ₹2,000 (arts) and ₹2,500 (science).
- These more substantial amounts may work better as incentives.
- Even then, linkages with jobs and economic opportunities are necessary.

- Making women economically independent will not only give them a voice, but also offer an alternative to marriage as the only means of securing a future.

5. TYRANNY OF RANKINGS

Why in news?

Ease of Doing Business (EDB) index published by the World Bank Group (WBG) is under scrutiny.

What is the reason?

- Paul Romer, the chief economist at the World Bank, has cast doubt on the *Doing Business* report that includes the EDB index.
- He was particularly concerned by the drastic drop in the rankings for Chile.
- Chile's ranking fluctuated between 25th and 57th since 2006.
- He feels that this is, in part, caused by the changes in methodology over the years.
- He put forth the fact that when variables are changed to calculate an index, the rankings are no longer comparable over the years.
- He stated that the World Bank would recalculate the rankings for at least the last four years using a consistent method.

Why does it matter?

- The greatest strength of an index is that it simplifies complex phenomena into comparable numbers. This very simplicity makes ranking popular and hence powerful, making it a



dangerous and often misguided tool for policy formulation.

- While not all stakeholders buy into such rankings, these are widely publicised and become impossible to ignore.
- The often meaningless movement of ranks gain undue public attention.
- Such rankings also sometimes incentivise governments to tweak their policies in order to go up the ranks.
- The desire to go up the ranks tends to lead governments to change policy in favour of what drives the index, which need not be what their people or economy require.
- The perception that a better ranking is positively correlated with foreign direct investment is another problematic consequence of these rankings.
- Importantly, this one-size-fits-all approach ignores the diverse contexts of development in different countries.
- The newest controversy should prompt the World Bank to have another look and to do away with the EDB index altogether.

6. CREEPING UN-FREEDOMS

What is the issue?

The deliberate silence of rulers is another form of media control.

What is the condition of media in India?

- *India Freedom Report 2017* by an independent media website concludes

that the climate for journalism in India has grown steadily adverse in the last year.

- Two journalists, including Gauri Lankesh, were shot dead and one was hacked to death.
- Although 11 journalists were killed, only three of these deaths could be connected directly to the work done by them.
- There were 46 attacks on journalists in the line of duty and 27 instances where journalists were detained, arrested or had cases filed against them.
- The report also notes various forms of censorship and denial of access to the media and such interventions cut across party lines.

What are the hidden restraints?

- Killing of journalists, attacks on them, and detention and imprisonment, as well as direct and indirect forms of censorship are of course recognisable examples of an attack on press freedom.
- But it is often not acknowledged that the denial of access to information and to people holding public office is another form of limiting press freedom.
- Of late, the dominant feature is an absence of questioning and one view being privileged over other, alternative views.



- Bureaucrats are increasingly afraid to speak or mingle openly with journalists.
 - People in power publicly endorse the popular “government’s view”.
 - There is no open debate within government.
 - In the three and a half years the Prime Minister has yet to hold a press conference.
 - One could argue, of course, that it is not mandatory for heads of state to meet the press and answer questions.
 - But, in the absence of direct engagement, the press is left with no option but to guess from their public pronouncements what Prime Ministers and Presidents think.
 - Today, tough questions are viewed not just as hostile and unnecessary, but also as disloyal and even anti-national
- Since early 1990s user charges for various health services in public health facilities has been notified.
 - This coupled with low public expenditure on healthcare has increased the out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure.
 - At the end of 2017, the Maharashtra government issued a government resolution that from January 2018, user charges in public hospitals for various services.

Why is this undesirable?

- GST has only replaced excise and custom duties and sales taxes/VAT and service tax.
- Further, the Fourteenth Finance Commission substantially increased the share of states in national taxes in 2014.
- Considering this increased revenue inflow, the recent hike in user charges by citing increased costs and deficits in resources is not justified.
- The public health department of Maharashtra had spent only 71% of its allocated budget.
- Now, another hike in user charges in tertiary care institutions will further cripple the public health system.
- User charges are the wrong medicine to revive a collapsing public health system.
- Instead, a substantial increase in budgetary allocations for healthcare is needed.

What should be done?

- The state of India’s press freedom is directly related to the closure of legitimate avenues of information, such as press conferences and briefings.
- Executive should accept the fact that the job of the press is to ask hard questions on policy, and to expose shortcomings in implementation and only a free press can do this.

7. USER CHARGES ONSLAUGHT ON PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

What is the issue?



- Maharashtra is one of the lowest spenders on public healthcare in the country, committing only 0.46% of its state domestic product (SDP).
- The national average is 1.2% of GDP.
- The National Health Policy 2017 aims to allocate 2.5% of the GDP to healthcare.
- So, the resource gap in achieving this goal, which would help make universal healthcare a reality, is huge.

less than 25% of total health spending.

- In India, private expenditure accounts for over 70% of total health expenditure.
- It is time we learnt from these experiences and allow user charges to wither away.

8. SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY - LESSONS FROM GERMANY

Table 1: Receipts and Expenditure of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Maharashtra (₹ crore)

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17 (RE)	2017-18 (BE)
(1) Total receipts of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	346	321	540	488	511
(2) ESIS contributions# as a part of total receipts	128	134	245	230	231
(3) Net receipts for health services (1-2)	218	187	304	268	281
(4) Total health expenditure	7,369	8,967	10,007	12,726	12,167
(5) Net receipts as a part of total expenditure (3 as a % of 4)	2.96	2.09	3.04	2.11	2.31

RE= Revised estimates; BE= Budget estimates; ESIS= Employees State Insurance Scheme.

ESIS receipts from employees are included under the health ministry and hence these have been subtracted from total receipts to arrive at net receipts.

Source: Calculated from Budget Documents 2015-16 to 2017-18, Departmental Books and Receipts, <https://beamsmahakosh.gov.in/Beams5/BudgetMVC/MISRPT/MistBudgetBooks.jsp>.

Why in news?

Germany's Network Enforcement Act recently came into force.

What is Network Enforcement Act?

- The law is applicable to “social networks” such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and others.

What should be done?

- World over, wherever universal access to healthcare prevails, the only method of financing healthcare is pooling together resources under a public authority.
- It should never be through individual modes of payment like user fees or private insurance.
- e.g National Health Services in the United Kingdom, National Health Insurance in Canada, Thai Universal Healthcare System, Sri Lanka, all OECD countries with the exception of the United States pool resources to reduce private expenditure burden to

- It requires them to remove “unlawful content” within 24 hours of receiving a complaint about the content on their website.
- The failure to do so involves massive penalties.
- It is important to note that the law itself does not define what “unlawful content” is.
- Rather, it relies on the pre-existing laws that criminalise some forms of speech, such as hate speech, incitement to violence, etc.

What are the criticisms?

- It has been criticised that it amounts to a “privatisation” of censorship.



- Critics fear that this may end up increasing the power of social media platforms to determine what content they find acceptable.
- It is also contended that this effectively means that the interpretation of the laws concerning free speech has been left to the discretion of private corporations rather than public institutions.

What are the problems in India?

- India has had its problems with unlawful speech on social media platforms.
- There is, simultaneously, a problem of under-regulation and over-regulation.
- Hate speech against women, minorities and disadvantaged communities continues unabated and mostly unpunished, while relatively innocuous content is taken down and criminal proceedings started because someone in power does not like it.
- Section 79 of the IT Act 2000 mandates that intermediaries (such as social networks) will not be held liable for content uploaded by others, provided that when it is communicated as unlawful, they removed the content “expeditiously.”
- This immunity from liability is what may be leading to under-regulation in the context of unlawful content.
- In the absence of any definition of “expeditiously,” companies that run social media platforms do not feel the need to respond quickly.

Will Germany’s law be a solution?

- Germany’s Network Enforcement Act’s concern is only enforcement of existing laws.
- To that extent, the approach of the German law is certainly worth emulating.
- However, two further concerns are to be addressed before adopting this approach.
 - First, a much wider range of content restrictions are permitted under Indian laws than under German ones.
 - Second, there is an absence of meaningful recourse in cases of misuse by government or powerful groups.
- Nonetheless, India’s lawmakers, activists and citizens should keep an eye on Germany as it looks to address the problems of hate speech on the internet.

9. BEYOND THE SUPREME COURT

What is the issue?

The apex court is not the only democratic institution facing a crisis of credibility.

What happened with the Judges?

- A press conference held by four of the senior-most judges of the Supreme Court has reminded us that no institution is beyond questioning or reform.
- They addressed a letter to Chief Justice of India.



- The central issue raised by the judges is that politically sensitive cases were being deliberately assigned to particular benches, possibly with a specific outcome in mind.
- They express concern over the roster management of the CJI, emphasise the rules that ought to be followed.
- Though it is quiet in providing specific details about the nature of their disagreement with him, it is clear now that their disquiet was the result of a series of events, not just one.
- In the recently concluded winter session of the Lok Sabha, a mere 15 days, there was little debate or discussion on important legislations, including the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2017.
- The executive in a parliamentary democracy is supposed to be answerable to the legislature.
- Yet, the current executive has found ways to go around, such as putting non-financial matters in a money bill to ensure that it does not get blocked in the Rajya Sabha.

What are the implications?

- While some people have questioned the propriety of the senior Supreme Court judges going to the press, no one can deny the need to inject transparency and accountability into the functioning of this Court of last resort for the Indian citizen.
- Even in media every issue is reduced to a simplistic binary.
- There is no room for dialogue, for a middle ground.
- Election Commission of India, which had won a reputation for independence, has also seen an erosion of its credibility as a result of some recent decisions, such as agreeing to delay the elections to the Gujarat assembly.
- The threat to the survival of democracy in India therefore lies not just with the crisis that the Supreme Court.
- It also lies in the gradual decline in the credibility of many other institutions.
- It remains to be seen how this broken trust between four senior judges and the CJI will be fixed.
- What is relevant beyond the details is the fact that a resolution is of enormous public interest and will affect the credibility of the institution.

What are the other concerns?

- It is not just the credibility of the Supreme Court that we need to address, but also of all the institutions that uphold the democratic structure.
- Over time, the role of Parliament in debating laws has virtually non-existent.



10. MILITARISTIC NATIONALISM

Why in news?

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the Zionist leadership's proclamation of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948.

What is Zionism?

- It is the national movement of the Jewish people that supports the re-establishment of a Jewish homeland in the territory defined as the historic Land of Israel.
- Under Zionist leadership, Israel is an occupying force in Palestinian lands.
- The State of Israel refuses to treat the Palestinians as equals.
- With the support of Washington, and in the course of three wars—in 1948, 1967, and 1973—Israel has gained over time de facto possession of the entire area west of the River Jordan.
- Furthermore, it has been controlling and limiting access of the Palestinians to their lands, besides subjugating and containing them in a most brutal manner.
- This makes Zionism a colonialist ideology that justifies the dispossession and the expulsion of the indigenous population of Arabs and denies their human rights.

What is India's position?

- During 1950s, India did acknowledge the gross violations of the rights of the Palestinians who were brutally dispossessed and expelled to make way for the creation of Israel.

- But in 1991, New Delhi voted for the repudiation of the United Nations resolution that had equated Zionism with racism.
- India was supporting the resolution in the mid-1970s.

Why India changed positions?

- The real links with Israel over the last 25 years have been military ones.
- It involves Israeli weapon sales and even Israeli consultancy services on homeland security.
- India is now Israel's largest market for armaments/weapons.
- Indian battalion and intelligence agency personnel have been trained in the adoption (against Kashmiri militants) of the same counter-insurgency tactics that the Israel has been employing against Palestinian resistance fighters.