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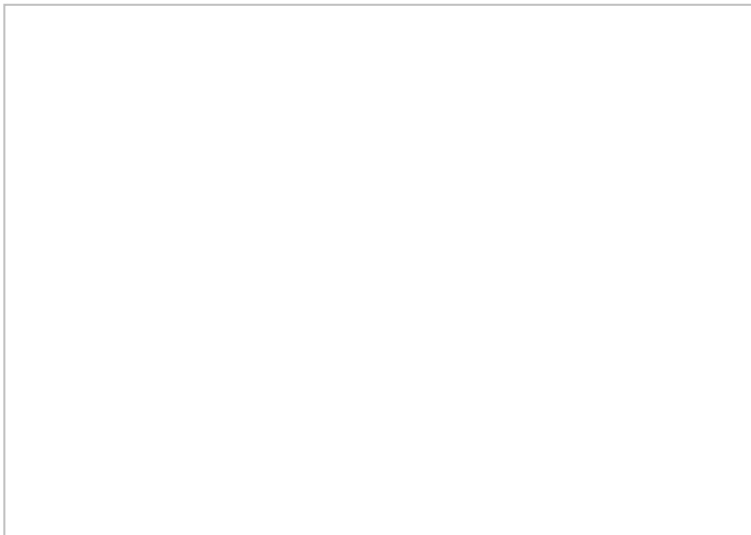
40 Years of Islamic Revolution: Iran

40 years have been completed of the **Iranian revolution** which took place in **February of 1979**.

Iran's revolution began with a **popular democracy movement** and ended with the **establishment of the world's first Islamic state**.

Background

- By the end of the second world war, the **United States, provided Iran with economic and political support** in return for their **membership in the democratic Western block**.



- As a result **Mohammad Mosaddeq's National Front** became the **first democratically-elected Iranian government in 1951**.
- Mosaddeq was a modern, secular leaning, progressive leader who was able to gain the broad support of both the secular elite and the Iranian ulama (religious scholar).
- After coming to power **Mosaddeq** made a bold move to address the **issue of**

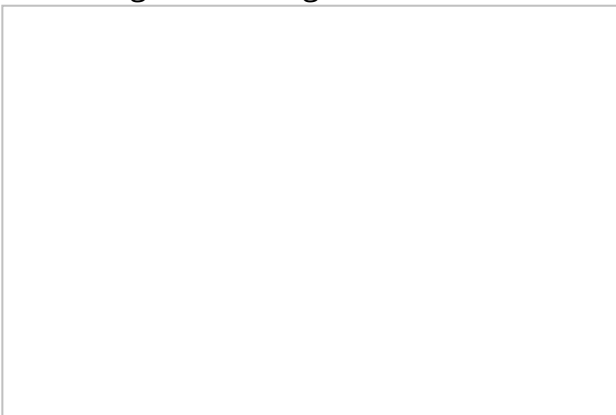
exploitation of Persian oil by Western powers through nationalising the previously British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC).

This did not work out in his favour, as it attracted **British and US economic sanctions**. This in turn **crippled the Iranian economy**.

- In **1953**, Mosaddeq was **replaced in a military coup organised by the Central Intelligence Agency(CIA) and British Intelligence**. As a result **Shah (king) Reza Pahlavi** (reigning monarch of Iran) was returned to power and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company became BP, British Petroleum, with a 50-50 divide of profits.
 - Not only did this intervention leave Iranians with a **sense of bitter humiliation and betrayal**, its impact also reverberated within the wider Muslim world.
 - It sent the message that a **democratically-elected government would be toppled if it did not fit with Western interests**. This narrative continues to be the dominant discourse of Islamist activists to this day, used in explaining world events that affect the Muslim masses.
- Between 1953 and 1977, the **Shah relied heavily on the US** in his efforts to modernise the army, Iranian society and build the economy.
- Though his economic program brought prosperity and industrialisation to Iran and educational initiatives increased literacy levels, this all came at a hefty cost.
 - Wealth was unequally distributed, there was a development of an underclass of peasants migrating to urban centres and large scale political suppression of dissent.
 - Disillusioned religious scholars were alarmed at the top-down imposition of a Western lifestyle, believing Islam was being completely removed from society.

Revolution

- Distrust of the Shah's economic policy and resentment of his autocratic style fuelled dissent against his regime.



- Under these circumstances among many protests, sustained and indirect opposition came from the religious circles led by **Ayatollah Khomeini**, a shia cleric living in exile in Paris.
- The persistent protests instigated by Khomeini's followers swelled to include all major

cities which culminated in the revolution on February 1, 1979, when Khomeini triumphantly returned to Iran.

The Impact of the Revolution

- The Iranian revolution was a **watershed event** that not only transformed Iran completely, but also had **far-reaching consequences for the world**.
- It caused a **deep shift in Cold War and global geopolitics** as US not only lost a key strategic ally against the communist threat, but it also gained a new enemy.
- The Iranian revolution **dramatically altered Middle Eastern politics**. It flamed a **regional sectarian cold war between Iran and Saudi Arabia**. The revolution challenged Saudi Arabia's monarchy and its claim for leadership of the Muslim world.

Was the Revolution a Success?

- From the perspective of longevity, **the revolution still stands**. It has managed to survive four decades, including the eight-year Iran-Iraq war as well as decades of economic sanctions. Comparatively, the **Taliban's attempt at establishing an Islamic state only lasted five years**.
- Khomeini and his supporters had promised to end the gap between the rich and the poor, and deliver economic and social progress.
 - However, the **Iranian economy is in poor shape**, despite the oil revenues that holds back the economy from the brink of collapse.
 - People are dissatisfied with **high unemployment rates and hyper-inflation**. They have little hope for the economic fortunes to turn.
- The most important premise of Islamism of **making society more religious through political power has also failed to produce the desired results**. Even though 63% of Iranians were born after the revolution, they are no more religious than before the revolution.
- Although there is **still significant support for the current regime**, a significant proportion of **Iranians want more freedoms**, and disregard religion being forced from above. There are growing protests demanding economic, social and political reforms as well as an end to the Islamic republic.
- Most Iranians blame the failures of the revolution on the never-ending US sanctions. Even though Iran trades with European powers, China, Russia and India, they believe the West does not want Iran to succeed at all costs.

Rajasthan to Scrap Education Criterion

Recently, the Rajasthan Assembly **passed two Bills** which seek to end the minimum education criterion for **panchayat and civic poll candidates**.

Background

- This **reverses the amendments** introduced by the **previous government in 2015** which required candidates contesting the Zila Parishad and Panchayat Samiti **elections to have passed Class 10** and those contesting **Sarpanch elections to have passed Class 8**.
- Further, it **disallowed those without functional toilets** in their home to contest. Following this, **Haryana** also introduced similar restrictions for contesting local body elections.
- **In December 2015**, a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court **in Rajbala v. the State of Haryana** upheld the validity of the amendments to the Haryana Panchayati Raj Act.
- The latest decision of the Rajasthan government has once again **revived the debate** on the fairness of having such restrictions.

Arguments Against the Criteria of Minimum Education Qualification

- Fundamentally, it unduly **restricts a citizen's right** to contest elections and thereby challenges the basic premise of republican democracy.
- Denying the right to contest effectively restricts the right of a citizen to vote for a candidate of her choice since more than half the population is restricted from contesting.
- Further, it disproportionately **disenfranchises the more marginal sections of society**: women, Dalits and poor.
- In a country like India with unequal access to education, it is cruel to blame citizens for the failure of the state to fulfill its constitutional obligations.
- Prescribing educational qualifications for contesting elections is based on an ill-informed assumption that those with formal education will be better in running panchayats. On the other hand, it reveals that State governments and courts place a premium on the administration over representation in case of local governments.
- This approach goes against the very objective of the 73rd and 74th Amendments that sought to make panchayats and municipalities representative institutions with adequate representation from **Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women**.
- The disqualification of candidates who don't have toilets in their home or defecate in open is clearly an example where the implementation of a Central programme like the Swachh Bharat Mission gets precedence over the need for representative government.
- Moreover, **such restrictions do not exist** for those contesting parliamentary or Assembly elections. In fact, in the present Lok Sabha, 13% of MPs are under-matriculいたes, a share higher than those of women MPs.

Arguments in Favour of the Criteria of Minimum Education Qualification

- In **Rajbala case, the Apex court** held that prescription of educational qualification is relevant for “**better administration of the panchayats**”.
The Bench consisting of **Justice Chelameswar and A.M.Sapre** held that both the rights namely “**Right to Vote**” and “**Right to Contest**” are **not fundamental Rights** but only constitutional rights of the citizen. So, the minimum qualification for contesting election can be imposed.
- With minimum education qualification, there is a reduction in the chances of getting misled by other people.
- Setting educational criteria would motivate society to be literate.
- A well-educated individual is considered as the resource for the development of the country. And if the leaders of the human resource are ill literate then there would be no proper guidelines for human resource.

Way Forward

- India prides itself as a robust democracy, at least in the procedural sense, with regular elections and smooth transfer of power.
However, the absence of elected councils in some local governments punches holes in this claim.
- The lack of alarm caused by the denial of local democracy (via the imposition of minimum educational norms) reveals our collective bias regarding the place of local governments.
- In a liberal democracy, governments must desist from putting bars on who may contest, except in exceptional circumstances, such as when a candidate is in breach of particular rules and laws.
- To mandate, what makes a person a ‘good’ candidate goes against the spirit of the attempt to deepen democracy by taking self-government to the grassroots.
- Thus, local bodies should be elected for its representative character and not for its administrative functions. Giving a voice to the people is more important than following bureaucratic procedures at the grassroots level.

Important Facts for Prelims (12th February 2019)

Buddhist Tourism Circuit

- Recently the Union Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned **five new projects** under the **Buddhist Circuit**.
- The five states where the project under Buddhist Circuit has been sanctioned are

Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh.

- The Buddhist Circuit is one among the **fifteen thematic circuits** identified for development under **Swadesh Darshan Scheme**.

Swadesh Darshan Scheme

- Swadesh Darshan, a **Central Sector Scheme**, was launched in 2014 -15 for integrated development of theme based tourist circuits in the country.
- Under the scheme, the Ministry of Tourism provides **Central Financial Assistance (CFA)** to State Governments/Union Territory Administrations for infrastructure development of circuits.
- This scheme is envisioned to **synergise with other schemes** like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Skill India, Make in India etc. with the idea of positioning the tourism sector as a major engine for job creation, driving force for economic growth, building synergy with various sectors to enable tourism to realise its potential.

World Sustainable Development Summit 2019

- Recently, the three-day **World Sustainable Development Summit 2019** was **inaugurated in New Delhi**.
- The theme of summit was '**Attaining the 2030 Agenda: Delivering on our Promise**'.
- The World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) is the annual flagship event of **The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)**.
- It has been conceptualized as a single platform to accelerate action towards sustainable development and climate change.
- The goal of the World Sustainable Development Summit is to bring together global leaders and thinkers in the fields of sustainable development, energy and environment sectors on a common platform.
- It was earlier known as **Delhi Sustainable Development Summit**.

The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)

- TERI is a **non-profit research institute**.
- It conducts research work in the fields of energy, environment and sustainable development for India and the Global South.
- It was **established in 1974 as Tata Energy Research Institute** and renamed to The Energy Resources Institute in 2003.

Light House Projects Challenge

- The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs has instituted a challenge for States/ UTs to select six sites across the country for constructing the Lighthouse projects under **Global Housing Technology Challenge (GHTC)-India**.

- The winning six States/ UTs that score the highest marks across the prescribed criteria will be awarded lighthouse projects. The States/ UTs will receive **Central Assistance** to construct these projects as per **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Urban (PMAY-U) guidelines**.
- The selected sites for lighthouse projects will be used as an **'open laboratory' for live demonstration** and will receive due attention from academia, practitioners, policy makers (Central/ State) and media apart from felicitation/ recognition in Grand Expo-cum-Conference.

Global Housing Technology Challenge

- Global Housing Technology Challenge – India is an initiative by **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Govt. of India**, with an aim to identify, evaluate and shortlist a basket of proven & potential innovative technologies from across the globe and subsequently mainstream them in Indian construction sector that are sustainable, green, disaster resilient.
 - GHTC-India has following **three components**:
 - **Component 1** - Conduct of EXPO-Cum-Conference
 - **Component 2** - Identifying Proven Demonstrable Technologies :Inducting suitable established technologies from across the globe to the Indian market through shortlisting and actual construction of Light House Projects.
 - **Component 3** - Establishment of Affordable Sustainable Housing Accelerators India (ASHA-India) for Indian technologies which have potential but not market ready yet.
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