



THE DESERVING INDIA

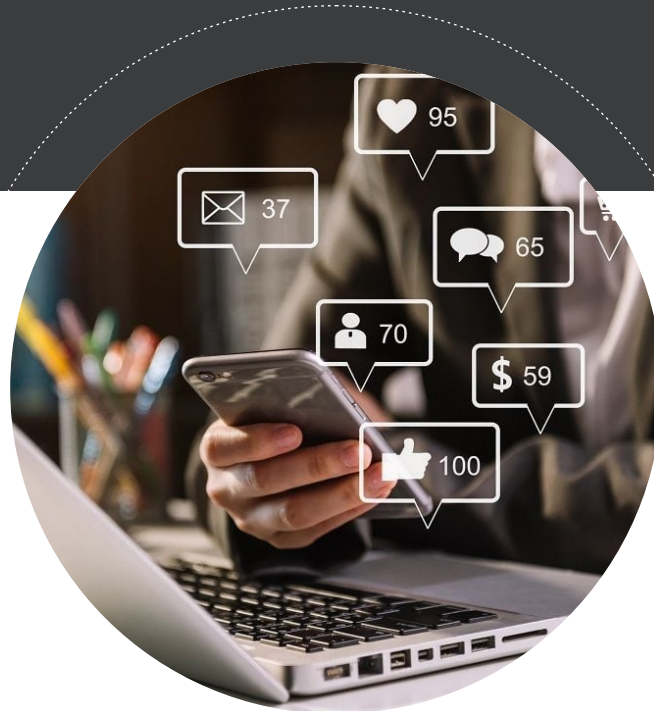


WEEKLY EDITORIALS

16-09-2024 to 21-09-2024

DIGITAL CAMPAIGNING

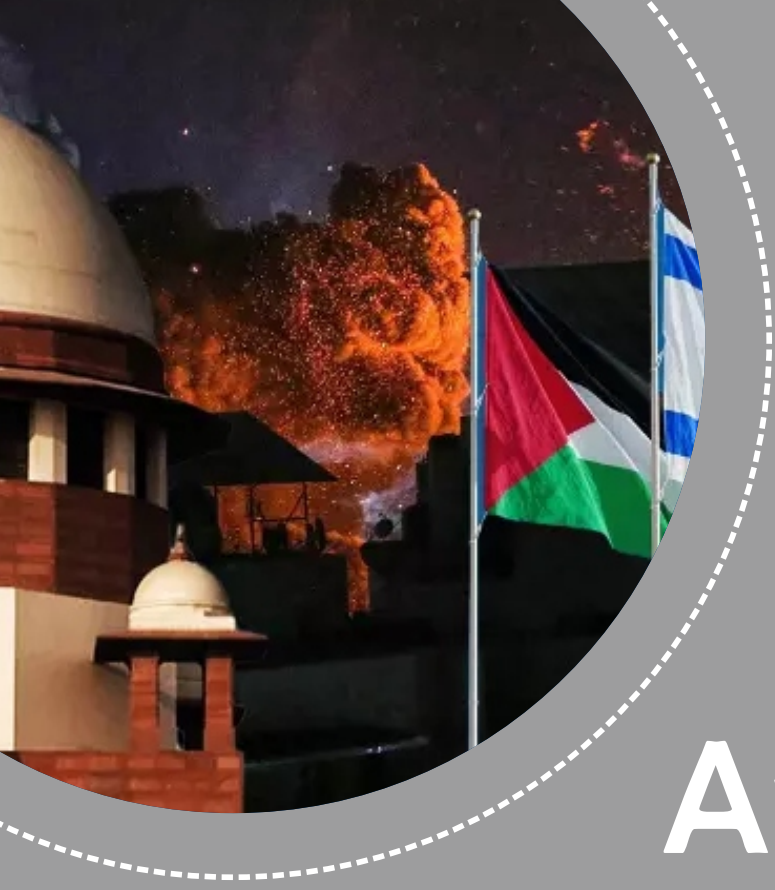
The article discusses the growing influence of digital platforms in shaping electoral outcomes and political narratives.



Digital platforms have transformed election campaigns, as seen in the Brexit referendum and India's elections. These platforms enable highly targeted political messaging, often exploiting data to shape voter perceptions. In India, political parties, especially during the 2023 Karnataka elections, spent heavily on digital campaigns. The ruling party allocated a significant portion of its budget to digital propaganda, highlighting the shift from traditional campaigning methods.

The use of third-party campaigners and "offshore islands" in political advertising is a growing concern, as they remain largely unregulated and operate in the background. These entities spend large amounts of money to influence elections while staying out of the public eye, complicating the transparency of campaign financing. The unchecked role of these offshore entities undermines electoral integrity and requires regulation.

The article also calls for stronger reforms to handle the rise of digital political advertising. Clear regulations, transparency in third-party spending, and holding tech platforms accountable are necessary to ensure fairness. A more balanced approach to spending caps and addressing the power of tech companies in political discourse is critical for a more democratic and transparent electoral process.



India-Israel Arms exports

India's Supreme Court dismissed a plea to halt military exports to Israel, sparking concerns about complicity in international humanitarian law violations.

The Supreme Court of India recently dismissed a petition challenging India's military exports to Israel, filed by civil servants and activists. The petition sought to suspend licenses for military equipment exports to Israel due to ongoing war and potential violations of international humanitarian law. Though the Court did not rule on the merits, the decision highlighted questions about the judiciary's ability to intervene in foreign policy matters involving humanitarian concerns.

The petition was based on a recent International Court of Justice (ICJ) opinion, which called for halting arms exports to Israel, citing violations of the Geneva Convention and the Genocide Convention. The ICJ ruled that states supplying arms to Israel might be complicit in alleged war crimes.

India's obligations under these conventions, however, were debated. The Court ruled that the country's international legal obligations are not directly enforceable in domestic law, and dismissed the challenge. Critics fear that continuing arms sales may contribute to Israel's actions in occupied territories, potentially violating international norms on state responsibility during conflicts.

The Death Penalty Debate

The editorial critiques the continued use of the death penalty in India, especially its social and judicial implications for marginalized communities and victims of violence.



The editorial discusses the renewed debate on the death penalty in India, triggered by the West Bengal government's recent bill, which includes the death penalty for specific violent crimes. It highlights that while the death penalty remains in law across many countries, its effectiveness as a deterrent is questioned. In India, crime statistics show a rise in recorded murders, yet states like the Maldives and Sri Lanka have abolished it entirely for all crimes. India's legal reforms focus on women and child-related offenses, increasing the scope of capital punishment for crimes such as rape and murder. However, the death penalty disproportionately impacts marginalized groups, as these communities form the majority of the prison population.

The editorial emphasizes that the expansion of capital punishment has not significantly improved women's safety or reduced gender-based violence. Instead, it calls for broader societal reforms to address the root causes of violence, such as education, healthcare, and support for survivors. Legal reform alone, it argues, cannot solve deep-seated issues of inequality and justice. The piece concludes by advocating for an abolitionist approach, emphasizing the importance of focusing on reformative justice instead of retributive measures like the death penalty.

The Relevance of English

“ The editorial discusses the Supreme Court's endorsement of sub-quotas among Scheduled Castes to promote substantive equality. ”

Despite its importance for socio-economic advancement, national education policies in India have consistently neglected English language instruction. Since independence, policies like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 have sought to reduce the prominence of English, focusing instead on promoting regional languages. This has disproportionately affected economically deprived children, especially in government schools, where access to English is limited. Affluent families, however, continue to have greater access to English education, widening the socio-economic divide.

With 90% of the population not proficient in English, the linguistic divide in India is stark, and the policy does little to address this. The NEP's push towards regional languages further marginalizes English, despite its critical role in global communication and economic participation.

Post-1991 economic reforms highlighted the necessity of English for India's growth, aligning with the global reality that English is essential. Other multilingual countries, such as China, have successfully integrated English into their education systems while balancing local languages. India should adopt a pragmatic approach that balances the importance of regional languages with the global necessity of English.

A bilingual framework can ensure that English, along with regional languages, is promoted without marginalizing either. This approach would better equip citizens for both global participation and national cultural preservation.





Simultaneous Elections

The idea of holding simultaneous elections is fundamentally anti-federal and problematic for India's multi-tiered democracy.

The Union government's decision to implement simultaneous elections, as proposed by a high-level committee, poses serious challenges to India's federal structure. The plan includes synchronizing Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections, followed by municipal and panchayat polls. Two reasons for this proposal are cited: cost reduction and alleviating the burden of continuous campaigning. However, there is little data to support these benefits. Simultaneous elections could extend the already lengthy election process and create complications if Assemblies are dissolved before completing a full five-year term. This contradicts the cost-saving argument and undermines state autonomy.

India's multi-tier governance system necessitates separate elections for different levels of government, reflecting varied voter preferences. Holding all elections together diminishes the significance of local elections and local governance, and it centralizes power. Moreover, forcing states to follow the central election cycle curtails the tenure of state governments, which further erodes the principles of federalism. To protect the spirit of Indian democracy, political parties and civil society must reject the proposal.

21-09-2024

Indus Waters Treaty Conflict

India and Pakistan's rigid positions threaten the Indus Waters Treaty.

India has escalated its demand for renegotiating the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) with Pakistan, suspending all Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) meetings until Pakistan agrees to talks. The IWT, once a model for water-sharing agreements, has remained largely intact despite disputes, such as India's Baglihar Dam project in 2007 and Pakistan's Neelum project in 2013. However, tensions flared in 2016 when Pakistan escalated the Kishenganga and Ratle projects dispute, demanding arbitration. With the World Bank involved, both countries now run parallel processes—India boycotting arbitration and Pakistan withdrawing from neutral expert proceedings. Political tensions further intensified after Prime Minister Modi's 2016 Uri attack comments that "blood and water" can't flow together, signaling a shift in the IWT's non-partisan handling. The deteriorating bilateral relationship, including the fragile 2021 LoC ceasefire, complicates potential treaty talks. Pakistan's recent invitation to India for the SCO summit in October could offer a diplomatic opportunity. Climate change and energy demands necessitate revisiting the treaty, but its future hinges on resolving disputes and finding common ground amidst the strained relations. The IWT, once a bright spot in India-Pakistan relations, now hangs in uncertainty, with leaders on both sides employing more fiery rhetoric.

