10th National Voters’ Day

Syllabus subtopic: Appointment to various Constitutional Posts, Powers, Functions and Responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

Prelims and Mains focus: about the event and its key highlights; about SVEEP

Context: The 10th National Voters’ Day (NVD) was celebrated across the country today. President of India presided over the national level event held at New Delhi.

Key highlights of the event

1. The theme for NVD 2020 was ‘Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy’ reiterating the commitment of Election Commission of India (ECI) towards electoral literacy for all to ensure maximum participation and informed & ethical voting.
2. This year marks an important milestone in the history of Indian democracy as Election Commission of India (ECI) completes 70 years of its journey.
3. The President gave away the National Awards for the Best Electoral Practices to Officers for their outstanding performance in the conduct of elections in different spheres.
4. The district administrative and Security Officers were lauded for their efforts to ensure enrollment of new eligible voters with sustained efforts, launch of SVEEP Apps to facilitate polling experience, conduct of elections with innovative means, facilitating Persons with Disabilities at polling booths as also working amidst challenging circumstances such as severe cyclonic storm or coordinating security grid mechanisms.
5. In addition, awards were also conferred on CSOs, Govt. Departments and Media Houses for their outstanding contribution in the field of voter awareness and outreach.
6. Two books were launched by Union Minister Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad and presented to the Hon’ble President. The first book was Belief in the Ballot-II, an anthology of 101 human stories from across the nation about Indian elections. An amalgamation of daring, interesting and
inspiring stories of both, election officers and voters, this anthology presents experiences of courage, sacrifice and dedication of the election personnel as well as the enthusiasm and commitment of the voters.

7. The second book launched was The Centenarian Voters: Sentinels of Our Democracy. This collection enumerates the stories and experiences of 51 centenarians across India, who braved difficult terrain, poor health and other challenges to come out and vote.

8. Chief Election Commissioners and senior officials from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Tunisia graced the occasion.

9. Reputed international organisations working in elections such as AWEB, IFES and International IDEA were also a part of the occasion. Members of Political Parties, Members of Parliament besides Diplomats from various countries and representatives from national and international organizations working in the area of democracy and elections also attended the national function.

Achievements of Election Commission in strengthening electoral democracy

1. Interventions taken up by ECI for the successful conduct of the 17th Lok Sabha Election in a free, fair and transparent manner.
2. The initiatives for reaching out to voters in the remotest corner to include their names in the electoral roll and to encourage them to exercise the Right to Vote, resulting in the historic voter turnout of 67.47%.
3. The special efforts undertaken by Election Commission of India to ensure that the gender gap was reduced to less than 0.1% in the last Lok Sabha General Election.
4. The Electoral Literacy Clubs’ efforts and use of vernacular language in reaching out to even in the remotest areas.

About the National Voters’ Day (NVD)
1. The National Voters’ Day (NVD) is celebrated all over the country on January 25 every year since 2011 to mark the Foundation day of Election Commission of India, which was established on this day in the year 1950. This year, the celebrations were spread over three days to mark the 70 illustrious years of ECI establishment.

2. On 23rd January, the Commission organized the first ever annual lecture series in memory of the first Chief Election Commissioner of India, Shri Sukumar Sen. Hon’ble former President of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee, delivered the keynote lecture. On 24th January, an International Conference on “Strengthening Institutional Capacity” was organised.

3. The main purpose of the NVD celebration is to encourage, facilitate and maximize the enrollment, especially for the new voters. Dedicated to the voters of the country, the Day is utilized to spread awareness among voters for promoting informed participation in the electoral process.

**Systematic Voters Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP)**

1. SVEEP is a programme of multi interventions through different modes and media designed to educate citizens, electors and voters about the electoral process in order to increase their awareness and participation in the electoral processes.

2. SVEEP is designed according to the socio-economic, cultural and demographic profile of the state as well as the history of electoral participation in previous rounds of elections and learning thereof.

3. Now it includes enhanced interaction with the citizens through social media, online contests and voters’ festivals; awareness about new initiatives of linking EPIC with AADHAAR and National Voters’ Service Portal and a regularised yearly plan of activities.
4. In addition to target groups of women, youth, urban voters and the marginalized sections, the inclusion of groups like service voters, NRIs, persons with disabilities, prospective voters/ students is of primary focus.