



## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 28-02-2026**

### **Mapping Perspective**

1. Kenya

### **Prelims Perspective**

2. Chicory
3. SUJIVIKA Portal

### **Mains Perspective**

4. NOTA (None of the above) option in elections
5. Blockchain-based Digital Governance

## Kenya

### Syllabus: Prelims Bits – Mapping.

#### Context:

- The **1st Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting on Agriculture** between **India and Kenya** was held **virtually**.
- Focus areas:
  - Agricultural technology exchange
  - Capacity building & research collaboration
  - Food security and value-chain development
  - Farm mechanisation and climate-resilient agriculture

#### About Kenya



#### Location

- Situated in **Eastern Africa**
- **Equator passes almost through the middle** → equatorial & tropical climatic features

#### Borders

- **Somalia** — North-East
- **Ethiopia** — North

- **South Sudan** — North-West
- **Uganda** — West
- **Tanzania** — South

### Maritime Boundary

- **Indian Ocean coastline** in the south-east

### Capital

- **Nairobi**
  - Headquarters of **UNEP** and **UN-HABITAT** → only UN HQ city in the Global South after New York/Geneva/Vienna

### Lakes

- **Lake Victoria** (shared with Uganda & Tanzania) — Africa's largest freshwater lake
- **Lake Turkana** — world's largest desert lake

### Rivers

- **Tana River** — longest river
- **Athi-Galana-Sabaki system**
- **Mara River** — supports Serengeti-Masai Mara ecosystem

### Mountains & Highlands

- **Mount Kenya** — **2nd highest peak in Africa** (after Kilimanjaro)
- **Aberdare Range**
- **Mau Escarpment** — critical watershed

### Islands

- **Lamu Island** (Lamu Archipelago) — UNESCO cultural heritage region

### Natural Resources

- Titanium (coastal sands); Zircon; Iron ore; Lead; Mica; Diatomite; Gypsum; Coal & emerging oil reserves

### Tribes / Communities

- **Maasai** — pastoralists, savannah region
- **Samburu** — semi-nomadic pastoral community
- **San (Bushmen)** — hunter-gatherer groups (more dominant in Southern Africa but culturally referenced)

### Masai Mara National Reserve

- Located in **south-western Kenya**
- Extension of **Serengeti ecosystem (Tanzania)**
- Famous for **Great Wildebeest Migration**
- Grassland savannah with high predator density

## **Chicory**

### Syllabus: Prelims Bits – Species in news.

#### Context:

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) issued an **advisory** mandating that **coffee powder manufacturers must prominently display chicory content on the front of the package from 1 July.**
- Objective:
  - Ensure **consumer awareness and transparency**
  - Prevent misleading labelling regarding coffee purity
  - Standardize declaration of coffee–chicory blends

#### About Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*)



#### Botanical Classification

- Scientific name: ***Cichorium intybus***
- Family: **Asteraceae**

- A **perennial herbaceous plant** widely cultivated in **temperate regions**

### Key Characteristics

- Multiple varieties used globally for **medicinal, culinary and nutritional purposes**
- Considered a **wild edible plant**
  - **Leaves** – used as vegetable/salad
  - **Flowers** – edible and medicinal
  - **Roots** – roasted and powdered (commercial importance)

### Role as Coffee Additive

- Roasted chicory root is blended with coffee because it:
  - Enhances **dark colour and body**
  - Provides **earthy and woody flavour**
  - Is **naturally caffeine-free**
  - Acts as a **low-cost extender**, reducing coffee price

Particularly common in **South India filter coffee blends** (useful factual point for prelims).

### Nutritional & Medicinal Value

- Contains:
  - Carbohydrates and proteins
  - Vitamins and minerals
  - **Inulin (soluble dietary fibre)** – important for gut health
  - Bioactive **phenolic compounds** (antioxidant properties)

### Uses

- **Livestock forage**
- **Traditional/folklore medicine**
- **Vegetable and salad ingredient**
- Coffee substitute and additive
- Prebiotic dietary fibre source

## **SUJIVIKA Portal**

**Syllabus: GS-3: Science and Technology – Schemes**

**Context:**

- Launched by the Union Minister of Science & Technology during the **40th Foundation Day of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT)**.
- Aims to strengthen **India's biotech ecosystem and import intelligence**.

### About SUJVIKA Portal

- **AI-driven Biotech Product Data Portal**.
- Developed by the **Department of Biotechnology (DBT)** in collaboration with **Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises (ABLE)**.
- Functions as a **Trade Statistics Digital Intelligence Platform**.
- Provides **authenticated biotechnology import data** in a structured and user-friendly format.

### Major Features

#### 1. Sectoral Insights

- Covers:
  - Biochemical products
  - Industrial enzymes
  - Other biotechnology imports

#### 2. Strategic Decision Support

- Helps stakeholders:
  - Identify **high-value and high-volume imports**
  - Assess **import dependency**
  - Prioritise **indigenisation and R&D**

#### 3. Innovation & Industry Support

- Assists **researchers, startups, and industry** in market intelligence.
- Encourages **evidence-based planning**.
- Promotes **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)** in biomanufacturing.

#### 4. Self-Reliance Objective

- Supports **Atmanirbhar Bharat in biotechnology** by guiding domestic production strategies.

### Department of Biotechnology (DBT) — Key Facts

- Established: **1986**
- Functions:

- Nodal agency for **life sciences research and biotechnology development**
- Promotes **R&D, innovation, and commercialization**
- Supports **advanced biofuels and waste-to-energy technologies**
- Facilitates **biomanufacturing and translational research**

## **NOTA (None of the above) option in elections**

**Syllabus: GS-2: Indian Polity – Elections.**

### **Context:**

- **NOTA** enables voters to formally register **dissent against all contesting candidates** while still participating in the democratic process.
- The **Supreme Court observed** that even after a decade of its introduction, **NOTA has not significantly influenced candidate selection** by political parties.

### **Legal & Institutional Background**

- **2013 Judgment:** In **People’s Union for Civil Liberties vs Union of India**, the **Supreme Court directed the Election Commission of India** to introduce **NOTA** on **EVMs**.
- **Objective:**
  - Uphold **freedom of expression under Article 19(1)(a)**.
  - Ensure **secret ballot for negative voting**.
- **First Implementation (2013 Assembly Elections):**
  - Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi.

### **Significance of NOTA**

- Strengthens **participatory democracy** by allowing informed rejection.
- Acts as a **pressure mechanism** on political parties.
- Provides data on **voter dissatisfaction and political alienation**.
- Enhances **legitimacy of electoral participation** (reduces abstention).

### **Key Challenges / Limitations**

#### **1. No Electoral Consequence**

- Even if **NOTA** receives the **highest votes**, the candidate with the next highest votes is declared elected.

- Hence, NOTA remains a **symbolic instrument**.

## 2. Uncontested Elections

- NOTA cannot be meaningfully exercised where **only one candidate contests**.

## 3. Limited Impact on Criminalisation

- Political parties continue to prioritise **winnability, caste arithmetic and financial strength** over ethical credentials.

## 4. Lack of Deterrence for Political Parties

- No legal compulsion for parties to **change candidate selection strategy**.

## Supreme Court Observation

- The Court highlighted that **NOTA has not materially altered political behaviour**, especially candidate nomination patterns.

## Comparative Practice

- **Colombia:** If NOTA secures **majority votes**, re-elections are conducted and earlier candidates are barred from contesting.

## State-Level Innovations (Local Body Elections)

- **Maharashtra and Haryana State Election Commissions**
  - Treated NOTA as a **fictional candidate**.
  - Ordered **re-elections when NOTA secured majority votes** in certain local body polls.

## Way Forward

### Majority NOTA Rule (50% + 1)

- Conduct **fresh elections** if NOTA secures majority.
- **Debar previous candidates** to ensure meaningful voter choice.

### Legal Backing for Electoral Consequences

- Amend the **Representation of the People Act, 1951** to give NOTA binding effect.

### Candidate Selection Reforms

- Strengthen **internal party democracy** and transparency.

### Link with Decriminalisation Measures

- Combine NOTA reform with **fast-track courts for criminal candidates** and disclosure norms.

### Voter Awareness

- Increase awareness that NOTA is a **democratic pressure tool**, not electoral abstention.

### Conclusion

- NOTA represents a **normative democratic innovation**, but without electoral consequences its impact remains largely symbolic.
- Granting **limited binding effect** while balancing electoral stability can transform NOTA into a **genuine instrument of political accountability**.

### Practice Qs:

Q. "The introduction of the NOTA (None of the Above) option was intended to deepen democratic participation, yet its practical impact on electoral outcomes remains limited." Critically examine the effectiveness of NOTA in India and suggest reforms to make it a meaningful instrument of electoral accountability. (15 marks)

## **Blockchain-based Digital Governance**

**Syllabus: GS-3: Science and Technology – Information Technology.**

### Context:

- **Launched by:** Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC)
- **Objective:**
  - Encourage **Indian startups** to develop and pilot **blockchain-based digital governance solutions**
  - Promote **secure, transparent, and tamper-proof public service delivery**
  - Strengthen India's **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** ecosystem

### What is Blockchain?

- **Definition:** A **decentralized, distributed ledger technology (DLT)** enabling secure and immutable record-keeping.
- **Key Principles**
  - **Decentralization:** No single authority controls the ledger
  - **Immutability:** Once recorded, data cannot be altered
  - **Consensus mechanism:** Validates transactions across nodes
  - **Cryptographic security:** Ensures authenticity and integrity

- **Transparency & auditability:** Enables real-time verification

## Role of Blockchain in Governance

### Certificates and Documents

- Addresses **fake certificates, data tampering, and verification delays**
- **NIC's Certificate Chain**
  - Secure storage and retrieval of educational and government records
  - Enables instant verification by authorities

### Healthcare & Logistics

- **Karnataka - Aushada System**
  - Tracks medicines from manufacturer to hospitals
  - Ensures **quality verification, expiry tracking, and provenance**
  - Helps curb **spurious drugs** and improves transparency

### Judiciary

- **Inter-Operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS)**
  - Integrates police, courts, prisons, and forensic systems
  - Blockchain can ensure **tamper-proof case records and evidence chain**

### Property & Land Records

- **Blockchain-based Property Management Systems**
  - Immutable record of ownership, rights, and liabilities
  - Reduces **land disputes, fraud, and litigation**
  - Speeds up transaction verification

### Other Emerging Use-cases

- Remote voting
- GST fraud monitoring
- Blood bank traceability
- Public Distribution System (PDS) transparency

### Key Government Blockchain Initiatives

#### National Blockchain Framework (NBF) - MeitY

- Provides **standardized architecture** for government blockchain deployment

➤ **Key components**

- **Vishvasya Stack:** India's national blockchain technology stack
- **NBFLite:** Lightweight permissioned blockchain platform
- **Praamaanik:** Blockchain-enabled mobile app for document verification

**Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Blockchain**

- Offers **Blockchain-as-a-Service (BaaS)** infrastructure
- Supports **research, pilot projects, and capacity building**

**Land Records Blockchain Pilots**

- **States:** Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra
- Focus on **title security, fraud reduction, and faster property transactions**

**Advantages for Governance**

- Enhances **trust and transparency**
- Reduces **corruption and fraud**
- Improves **efficiency and interoperability**
- Enables **secure data sharing across departments**
- Strengthens **citizen-centric service delivery**

**Challenges**

- Scalability and high energy consumption
- Legal and regulatory uncertainty
- Data privacy concerns
- Integration with legacy systems
- Limited technical capacity in departments

**Way Forward (Exam Enrichment)**

- Develop **clear regulatory framework**
- Promote **public-private innovation ecosystem**
- Capacity building in government
- Combine blockchain with **AI, IoT, and DPI**
- Focus on **permissioned blockchain** suited for governance