

9pm
Compilation

April, 2021 (First Week)

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General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies - 2

1. Issues with UGC's New Undergraduate History Curriculum

Source: [Click Here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to education

Synopsis: Recently a new undergraduate history curriculum suggested by UGC (University Grants Commission). It falls short to meet its desired objectives and requires reconsideration.

Background:

- The UGC released a new document on the undergraduate history curriculum, named Learning Outcomes-based Curriculum Framework (**LOCF**), 2021.
- The document has been suggested changes as per the changing domestic and international scenario.

Objectives:

- Use history as a vital source to obtain knowledge about a nation's soul.
- Create a conscious student body that is aware about India's glorious past and can compete at the global level.
- Build a new narrative about the nation through a dialogue between past and present.

About the curriculum:

- The five units of the course cover:
 - The concept of Bharatvarsha
 - Indian knowledge traditions, art, and culture
 - Indian economic traditions
 - Dharma, philosophy and 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'
 - Science, environment, and medical sciences
- First paper of course is titled 'Idea of Bharat.' It seeks to study the primitive life and cultural status of the people of ancient India.

Concerning Issues:

- The **idea of Bharatvarsha is portrayed as devoid of invasions.**
 - The origin is **associated with the pristine ancient past.** No credit is associated with Kushans, Mughals, etc. invasions in shaping the idea of Bharat.
 - Further **little role focus is paid towards the contributions of the south, east, and northeast people** towards nation-building.
 - The **struggle of the masses** in the freedom movement is also **not given its due space** in the creation of Bharat.
- The paper on medieval and early modern India (History of India, 1206-1707) shows the **Hindus and Muslims as two separate entities.** This would strengthen the belief in separate nations for Hindus and Muslims which led to the country's partition in the past.
- The **use of force is projected as the main driver of change in society.** It is shown in the case of Aryan, Mughal or any other invasion. This kind of narrative portrays **violence as the sole reason for the change.**
- It has **adopted the categorization methods of colonial historians.** This simply undermines the efforts of historians to challenge the colonial way of history-writing.
 - The colonial methods used to pose a contrast between the secular, modern Europe and the backward 'oriental' states (having irrational adherence to religion).

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- The curriculum is **biased towards the history of North India**. The rich sociocultural, economic and political changes of other regions have been given very little room. Further, some regions are only introduced as political formations.
- **Pedagogical Issues:**
 - The **style of pedagogy is more textbook-oriented**. A less emphasis is placed on archaeological artefacts, coins, visits to monuments and museums etc. that helps in better understanding.
 - The students are **not encouraged to read the diversity of opinion** which would have helped in a better understanding of history.
 - The **curriculum ignores the finest writings in Indian history**. The bulk of readings span from the 1900s to the 1980s, with a heavy dependence on the work of Indologists. This curtails their resource base.
 - The **linkage of critical 21st-century issues** like climate change, democracy, social justice etc. with the historical framework is missing.

In a nutshell, the curriculum aims to make history education space for passive rote-learning of ideas which was last popularized in the 1920s.

2. Issues of Vacancies in IIMs For Reserved Faculty Positions

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Synopsis: There are larger vacancies in IIMs for reserved faculty positions from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and the Other Backward Classes communities. The unavailability of deserving candidates is one of the reasons for that.

Introduction:

According to an RTI, older Indian Institutes of Management(IIMs) are lagging behind the newer IIMs in enforcing the quota rule. For example, **IIM-Kolkata** has no SC or ST faculty member and only two OBC faculty members.

Does IIMs oppose equality?

It is not like IIMs are not trying to fill the vacancies, there are many reasons behind that. Also, IIMs have taken many steps towards ensuring equality, such as,

1. The IIMs fulfill the government-mandated admission quotas for SC, ST, and OBC candidates.
2. Apart from that they also implement certain own inventions towards inclusion. For example, IIM-Bangalore has taken the following measures towards inclusion. Such as,
 - The IIM-B provided reservations to the students with a disability even before the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995.
 - IIM-B set up a dedicated Office of Disability Services in 2009. This functions as a nodal support point for students with disability. This helps in studying the needs of each student and proactive recommendation for disabled students.
 - All these steps resulted in global recognition with the **NCPEDP-Mphasis Universal Design Award**. The award for IIM-B highlighted the pioneering work in promoting accessibility and ensuring a life of equality and dignity.

Then, why there are large no. of vacancies on reserved positions in IIMs?

But according to the recent report the IIMs also facing certain challenges. Such as [shortage of qualified candidates from reserved categories](#). But this is not a simple thing to fill up. This is due to the following reason.

- IIMs need to balance between the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Act 2019 and the Indian Institutes of Management Act, 2017. (The IIM Act recognizes IIMs as Institutions of National Importance and demands their fulfilment to global standards.)

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- **Admitting potential students to doctoral programmes is a challenge.** The alumni discussion reveals that the reserved category students pursue MBA programmes to employ themselves in a good job. So that, they can move up the societal ladder quickly. But they don't want to pursue the Research and not showing interest in the faculty postings.

How the IIMs can tackle the challenge?

The IIMs have to launch a specific pre-doctoral programme to fulfil the following objectives.

1. Encourage under-privileged category students to take up research and Faculty positions.
2. Encourage them to do research by offering financial incentives.

This can improve the necessary talents in the long run. Further, It will also improve the social positions of the under-privileged persons. For example, IIMB in 2019 launched the N.S. Ramaswamy Pre-doctoral Programme. It is a self-funded academic and mentoring initiative. The other Higher Educational Institutions(HEI) in India have to follow the path of IIMB. It will fulfil the [large vacancies in the HEI's](#).

3. Higher Education in India – Significance of Quality Faculties

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education, Human Resources.

Synopsis: The size or location of educational institutions is not a big barrier to academic excellence. The quality and strength of faculty should improve to ensure quality higher education.

Background

- Some experts are of the belief that there should be only 10 to 12 IITs. Furthermore, the location of these institutes should be in big urban areas, and they should focus on becoming “crown jewels”.
- However, other experts do not favour this belief. Instead, they believe that the size or location of campuses can not be a barrier to academic excellence.
- The success of IIT-Mandi and other international universities such as **Cornell University** (England) and **the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University** (Japan) favors this belief.
- Thus, the focus should be on increasing the number and quality of faculties in higher education. The recruitment parameters for faculties should be strengthened to ensure quality.

Significance of faculties in higher education

There are a few best practices adopted by some IITs for improving the quality of education. However, not all the IITs are able to adopt these practices due to the shortage of faculties.

1. **First, the majority of incoming students lack language and study skills.** Thus, they require extra training and confidence-building measures in using the English language.
 - For this purpose, many IITs like IIT-Mandi introduced induction programs.
 - This program helps to break the ice between students and faculty, making it easy for the students to get in touch with their teachers.
 - However, this program is not mandatory in even some “crown jewel” IITs. One of the reasons for this is the increasing strength of the students without a proportionate increase in faculty members.
2. **Second,** Innovative curriculums to provide students with practical work experience are very helpful in exposing students to industrial requirements.

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- **For example**, IIT Mandi courses from a design and innovation stream include a mandatory socio-technical practicum.
 - These kinds of innovative curriculums need effort from faculty members.
3. **Third**, many IITs have scrapped the mandatory requirement to submit final year projects. But final year projects are important to test an individual's knowledge and skills on a concrete problem. The key reason for this is that the increase in student's strength is not in proportion to increase in faculty strength.

Issues related to the current recruitment process of faculties

There are two existing problems with recruiting and retaining faculty members.

- **First**, not enough faculty members are hired. The hired faculties are burdened with additional non-academic responsibilities such as: running the canteen, managing the placement cell, etc.
- **Second**, the issues in the current recruitment process.
 - **One**, shortlisting process is mechanical. It creates the possibility of the elimination of quality resources.
 - **Second**, shortlisting done on the basis of the number of papers taken and the size of grants won by faculties.

Suggestion to improve the recruitment process

1. First, each applicant should be asked to provide their two best research publications and their two best pedagogic materials. It should be in addition to their full curriculum vitae.
2. Second, based on the two best publications and sample pedagogic materials the external experts should prepare a shortlist. Then the local hiring committees should attempt hiring from within this shortlist.

Case Study: Remoteness will not impact Academic quality: The case of IIT Mandi

- It has as international a resident faculty body as any other IIT.
- It was seventh in the Atal innovativeness ranking published last year.
- Notably, the IIT Mandi project that developed a landslide warning system won the SKOCH award

4. Pending Issues in India Bangladesh relations

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-2: India and Neighbourhood relations

Synopsis: [India Bangladesh relations](#) is not achieving the full potential at present due to some minor issues.

Introduction:

Recently Indian PM visited Bangladesh to take part in their golden Jubilee celebrations of Independence. India also awarded [Gandhi Peace Price 2020 to Bangladesh's founding president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman](#). Both India and Bangladesh maintains a cordial relationship between them.

Significant events in the recent visit:

Apart from attending the Independence Day celebrations, PMs of both countries utilized this as an opportunity to build bilateral relations. This includes events such as,

1. Indian Prime Minister **visited the Bangabandhu (Mujib) memorial** at his hometown in Tungipara.
2. Both Indian PM and Bangladesh counterpart **paid homage to the nation's founders**. Further, they paid homage to the millions massacred by the Pakistani military regime

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in 1971 and the people who died fighting Bangladesh freedom. This includes nearly 4,000 Indian soldiers

3. Bangladesh PM mentioned **India's role in the creation of Bangladesh**. Further, She also thanked India for its aid and protection to her when her family members (Including Mujib) were assassinated.
4. Apart from that, the Indian PM wrote an editorial of the hope. In that, he outlined the *Shonali Adhyaya (Golden Chapter) in South Asia* if the Bangabandhu not get killed.

Recent Initiatives to boost India Bangladesh relations:

Both India Bangladesh took many proactive steps to improve relations. The recent steps include,

1. **Virtual meet during Pandemic:** In 2020, both the countries involved in plans to improve the connectivity and infrastructure projects. Apart from that, they also signed MoUs on sports, education and disaster management.
2. **Created a sense of trust in the relationship:** Bangladesh **shut down anti-India terror camps** operating in Bangladesh. Further, the Bangladesh government also hand over nearly two dozen criminals on India's "most wanted" list. This improved the trust in the relationship.
3. **The signing of the Land Boundary Agreement in 2015:** This is a historical foot in India Bangladesh relationship. India completely accepted the international tribunal verdict favoured Bangladesh. Further, India also went ahead and passed the Act for faster resolution of the boundary dispute. This resulted in the solving of the 40-year-old maritime dispute.

Present challenges in India Bangladesh relations:

[India Bangladesh relations](#) at present faces few challenges. This includes,

1. **Water sharing agreements** are not yet signed. This includes the water-sharing arrangement between both the countries on the **Teesta river and the other six rivers**.
2. The **killing of Bangladeshi civilians** on the Indian Border by Indian security forces also poses a challenge.
3. **There is still a misunderstanding about the sensitivities** of people in India and Bangladesh. For example, During the recent visit of the Indian PM, he highlighted the need for Citizenship Amendment Act and also addressed the minority Matua Hindus. This was misunderstood by other sections of people in Bangladesh. This resulted in violent protests and the killing of at least 11 members in Bangladesh.

So the government of India and Bangladesh need to understand the sensitivities of relations. This is more important than the celebration of success. As it would improve a better India Bangladesh relations.

5. White Revolution in India and Women Empowerment

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Synopsis: Dairy cooperatives models adopted by India during Operation Flood improved women development in India

Introduction: Women dairy farmers' contribution to India's **white revolution** is immense. That itself is a great reason for India to celebrate **Women's History Month** in March.

What is the White revolution?

1. **Operation Flood** led to the **White revolution**. It aimed to make India a self-dependent nation in milk production.

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2. National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) launched it in 1970. Dr Verghese Kurien is the father of the White Revolution in India.
3. Operation Flood **promoted the AMUL model**. Under this model, milk is procured from farmers' co-operatives. The excess milk is converted to skimmed milk powder and get utilized during the lean season. The milk is distributed through an organized retail network.
4. So far operation flood is the world's biggest dairy development program. The Operation flood made India the world's largest producer of milk.

Role of cooperatives in Operation Flood:

In India Majority of the dairy farmers own only small landholdings (households with two to five cows). But due to the development of co-operatives under Operation Flood, they were able to improve a lot. This includes,

1. The small dairy farmers were able to avoid middlemen.
2. They also started getting a guaranteed minimum procurement price for milk.
3. It enhanced the knowledge and bargaining power of small and marginal farmers.

Achievement of women dairy farmers:

Apart from the general benefits, women dairy farmers achieved many significant achievements. This includes,

1. According to the latest data, there are more than 1,90,000 dairy cooperative societies across the country. Approximately 6 million of their members are women members.
2. A study conducted on Women Dairy Cooperative Society (WDCS) members in Rajasthan shows certain striking development among women. Such as,
 - o 31% of the women dairy farmers in Rajasthan converted their mud houses to cement structures.
 - o 39% of women dairy farmers in Rajasthan constructed concrete sheds for their cattle
 - o Women-led cooperatives provide fertile ground for the **capacity building of rural women** in a leadership position.

For example, A woman dairy farmer who not even visited the school joined a Dairy cooperative. Now she is the main breadwinner in her family and bought 25 acres of land with the income she earned through dairy farming.

3. Apart from that, Women dairy farmers also broke the traditional practices of patriarchal society.

All these developments are demonstrated through the testimonials on International Women's Day. It was conducted by the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying.

Financial success of women-led dairy unions and companies:

- During the early years of Operation Flood, the National Dairy Development Board worked on setting up women-led producer enterprises. This includes companies like Shreeja Mahila Milk Producer Company. The company started with 24 women, but now it has more than 90,000 members. The company now has a turnover of approximately ₹450 crores/year.
- In 2019, Amul released a list of 10 women dairy farmers who became a millionaire by selling milk.

The women development achieved by the women dairy farmers in India is huge. They achieved this feat even without getting any formal education.

Conclusion:

A study by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) indicates that 93% of women who succeeded received both financial support and training. Instead, the success rate is only 57% if they receive financial aid alone.

So the government has to understand this and start providing training to the remaining women dairy farmers. As this will be the only way to improve women's empowerment.

6. Medical Termination of Pregnancy Bill, 2020 – Associated Issues

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- GS 2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Synopsis – The Medical Termination of Pregnancy MTP (Amendment) Bill 2020 Continues to ignore Pregnant person's rights.

Introduction-

- Recently, The Medical Termination of Pregnancy MTP (Amendment) Bill 2020 passed in the upper house by voice vote.
- The bill seeks to amend the MTP Act, 1971. It provides for enhancing the upper gestation limit from 20 to 24 weeks for special categories of women but does not specify the category.
- Although the MTP Amendment Bill does expand the gestational cap in some cases, it falls well short of becoming rights-based legislation.

Medical termination of pregnancy bill 2020 – explained

Objections raised in the Upper House

- Lack of consultation with stakeholders.
- Lack of inclusion of transgender people within the MTP framework.
- Moreover, there is a lack of emphasis on women's autonomy in pregnancy.
- Medical boards would be a breach of privacy. It would cause excessive delays in access to abortion due to a shortage of specialists.
- The time limit for decision-making by the medical board is missing. Moreover, the women's representation is unclear.

Issues in the proposed Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020

1. **Lack of consultation** with civil society and grassroots organizations. This is an example of drafting and enacting laws without consultation with the people who are most affected. The Recent Farm Bill, 2020 is a prime example of this.
2. **The provision still restricts abortion to a heteronormative framework.** Only cisgender women are considered in it, and not persons with other gender identities.
 - Under the heteronormative framework, it is a belief that there are only 2 two sexual orientations and genders i.e. male and female.
 - Cisgender is the person, who identifies herself with the sex at the time of birth. The person who undergoes gender change is not a cisgender.
3. **Issues with setting up of Medical Boards** – The MPT bill mandates the setup of a Medical Board in every state. The Medical Boards require giving opinions based on the facts regarding the termination of pregnancies.
 - This could cause severe delays in the abortion process.
 - Pregnant women living in rural areas in large parts of the country could find these Medical Boards inaccessible.
4. **The bill retains the hetero-patriarchal population control legacy.** The bill continues with the lack of control to the women, of their reproductive and sexual rights. Abortion

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will be subject to doctor approval. This is in direct contrast with the Supreme Court's precedent on reproductive autonomy and bodily integrity.

5. **The Bill's provisions continue to criminalize abortion.** It will promote negative stereotypes and stigma surrounding reproduction, sexuality, and motherhood.

Way forward

Before drafting or enacting legislation, the government must ensure the following:

- **Consultation with all stakeholders** – Consultations and deliberations with members from civil society and grassroots organizations should be held by the government since they all have an interest in the implementation of such laws based on their personal experiences.
- **Women can be responsible for their own choices-** The decision to terminate a pregnancy should be granted to the woman, not to doctors or any medical board.
 - The paternalistic notion that women need assistance in making decisions about their sexual and reproductive rights needs to change.

7. Afghan Peace Process and India's stake in it

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-2: India and Neighbourhood relations

Synopsis: India should actively involve in the Afghan Peace Process and use its influence to guarantee peace in Afghanistan.

Introduction:

India's position in the Afghan Peace process has evolved over the years. There is a subtle shift in New Delhi's approach towards the Afghan crisis. For example,

- In the 1990s and 2000s, India constantly opposed any dealings with the Taliban.
- In 2018 during the time when Russia hosted Afghan and Taliban talks, India had sent a diplomatic delegation to Moscow.
- During the [9th Heart of Asia Conference](#) in Tajikistan, the External Affairs Minister said that India supports talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

How the countries participating in the Afghan peace process?

1. **Firstly**, the new Afghan **peace process by the Joe Biden administration** of the US includes two important proposals:
 - Establishment of a **single transition government** between the warring parties.
 - UN-led multilateral conference of ambassadors from India, China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, and the US. India has supported this UN-led process.
2. **Secondly, the U.S. has signed a deal with the Taliban.** Under this, the American troops are scheduled to pull back from Afghanistan by May 1.
3. **Thirdly, the Participation of Other countries in Afghan peace process:**
 - **China** had communicated with the Taliban long ago.
 - **Russia** has hosted several rounds of talks with the Taliban.
 - **European powers** have also shown interest in funding talks.
4. **Fourthly, the participation of India:** The inaugural session of Intra-Afghan peace talks occurred in Doha in September 2020. The External Affairs Minister was present at the inaugural session. This is in conformity with the long-held Indian position on the Afghan peace process. That is, **any peace process should be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, and Afghan-controlled.**

Why India needs to improve its participation in the Afghan peace process?

India's economic, strategic and security ties could be disturbed if the Taliban takes over. Recently, India has improved its relations with Afghanistan in the following ways.

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1. India has built deep ties with the Afghan people and the government by investing in multiple projects. These projects deal with education, power generation, irrigation, and other infrastructure development, etc.
 2. **India has sent Afghanistan its first batch of vaccines** in February.
 3. Recently, India had signed an agreement to build the **Shahtoot dam near Kabul**.
- So, **India has to be more flexible and adapt to the new strategic reality.**

Suggestions to improve India's participation:

- India needs to figure out how to help Afghanistan to end the violence without total submission of power to the Taliban.
- India joining the peace process could strengthen the hands of the Afghan government. As the government is negotiating from a position of weakness.
- Apart from that, India should use its regional influence to deepen ties with both the U.S. and Russia to achieve double peace. (Both inside Afghanistan and in the region.)

8. The New EPF Tax Rules Should be Re-examined

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 – Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes

Synopsis: A limit on tax-free income under [EPF \(Employees Provident Fund\) contributions](#) is under the proposal. The intended objective is to prevent abuse of process by HNIs (High net individuals), however, there are some concerns that demand re-examination.

Background

- Before the budget announcement, the EPF contributions were taxable beyond the permissible tax-free limit (1.5 lakh per annum) under Section 80C of the Income Tax Act.
- However, there was **no tax on interest income** earned on such contributions except in the case of premature withdrawals (before 5 years).

What changes have been made?

- The finance bill 2021 was passed with 127 amendments.
- This included a proposal to tax the interest earned on EPF contributions beyond Rs. 2.5 lakh rupees.
- The limit is 5 lakh in cases where employers do not make contributions to the provident fund.

Rationale behind the proposal:

- It intends to prevent abuse of process by HNIs who was getting the benefit of tax exemption at all stages — contribution, interest accumulation, and withdrawal.
 - **Example:** More than 20 accounts in EPF hold a balance of around 800 crores which is completely tax-free.
- Further, the move will not harm other contributors as 90% of them contribute less than 2.5 lakh.

Concerns with new EPF rules:

- **Complexity** – Earlier the process was simple and easy to understand. But now the taxation of interest makes it difficult to ascertain the retirement amount.
 - It is also unclear if the interest on such excess contributions is to be taxed once during the year of contribution or throughout the term of investment in EPF.

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- The mechanism of tax communication from the EPFO to the member also remains uncertain.
- **Double Taxation:** Contribution above 1.5 lakh is already taxable under the Income Tax act. Taxing interest over 2.5 lakh contribution can lead to double taxation.
- **Regressive View:** The government is treating more investment by the rich as a regressive move that would do only evil.
 - A greater contribution is helpful considering the medical cost, inflation, volatile interest rate cycles, and minimal choices for post-retirement investments.
 - Further, corporates earn from a mix of government securities and market instruments. The government gives them no subsidy towards EPF.
- **Ignore the safety potential:** The new rules ignore the safety of investment under EPF. It is the government backing that induces greater investment rather than a desire to abuse the tax concessions under the instrument.

Way Forward:

- Reconsideration of tax proposals is desired so that EPF remains the primary retirement saving instrument for people owing to its attractive nature and not by compulsion.
- Further systems at EPFO will require changes as taxation of the annual interest rate is a new concept for the organization.

EPF (Employees Provident Fund):

- EPF is a social security scheme under the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952
- **Managed by:** The scheme is managed under the aegis of Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO).
- **Coverage:** EPF accounts are mandatory for employees earning up to ₹15,000 a month in firms with over 20 workers.
- **Contribution:** Under the scheme, an employee has to pay a 12% contribution towards the scheme. An equal contribution is paid by the employer. The employee gets a lump sum amount including self and employer's contribution with interest on retirement.
- The employees can transfer contributions from one employer to another with the support of the Universal Account Regime. Withdrawal is possible only after permanent cessation of employment.

9. Critical Analysis of 15th Finance Commission Recommendations for Local Bodies

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Devolution of Powers and Finances up to Local Levels and Challenges Therein.

Synopsis: Critical analysis of the recommendation of the 15th Finance Commission on grants to the local bodies.

Background

- The primary task of the Union **Finance Commission (FC)** is to rectify the vertical and horizontal imbalances between the Union, the States, and the Local bodies.
- **Part IX** and **Part IX-A** of the Constitution mandate the FC to supplement the resources of panchayats and municipalities. It should be on the basis of the recommendations of the **State Finance Commission**.
- Local governance in India consists of nearly 2.5 lakh local governments and over 3.4 million elected representatives.

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- The significance of Local governments was highlighted during the Pandemic. The **Gram Sabha** and other participatory institutions were instrumental in containing the crisis and delivering social protection in India.

What were the lacunas in the recommendation of 15th FC for the local government?

While there are some critical lacunae, it has several positive features too,

Positives:

- **First**, the **Grants to local bodies** is high compared to the previous Finance Commission. **For example**, Finance Commission has granted Rs 4,36,361 crore from the central divisive tax pool to local governments.
- **Second**, it will strengthen **cooperative federalism**. Out of the total grants earmarked for Panchayati raj institutions, 60 percent is earmarked for national priorities. (drinking water, rainwater harvesting, sanitation, etc.).

Concerns:

1. **First**, the 15th FC has failed to provide **Performance-based grants** for the Panchayati raj. While only 8000 crores (for incubation of new cities) has been allocated to Urban local bodies.
 - The performance-linked grants were thoughtfully introduced by the 13th Finance Commission.
 - It earmarked 35% of local grants specifying six conditions for panchayats and nine for urban local governments. **For example**, the establishment of an independent ombudsman, notifying standards for service sectors such as drinking water and solid waste management, etc.,
 - Performance-linked conditionality is vital for improving the quality of decentralised governance, especially in underperforming local bodies.
 - By neglecting the Performance-based grants, 15th FC has failed to acknowledge the transformative potential in it.
2. **Second**, there are no entry-level criteria specified for **Gram Panchayats** to avail grants.
 - Whereas, the **14th FC**, has recommended measures to standardize the accounting system and update the auditing of accounts.
 - Without reliable data on Financial performance, it will be difficult to ensure Good governance.
3. **Third**, the 15th FC has missed the opportunity to '**restructure the public finance**' for greater **fiscal decentralisation** in providing basic services. It will ensure comparable minimum public services to every citizen irrespective of her choice of residential location.
 - The **11th and 12th schedules** demand better public services and delivery of 'economic development and social justice at the local level.
 - To fulfill this mandate we need **fiscal decentralization**. Public finance is an integrated whole and there needs to be an integrated, local government-centric approach as envisioned in the **Alma-Ata declaration** of the World Health Organization
4. **Fourth**, the 15th FC has used the criteria of the population (2011 Census) with 90% weightage and area 10% weightage for determining grant to local governments. However, it ignores **equity and efficiency criteria**.

We need to fiscally empower local governments to deliver territorial equity and to empower local people.

10. The NCT of Delhi Act, 2021 Enhances Cooperative Federalism

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure

Synopsis: The accusation made on the Government regarding the passage of the Government of the NCT (National Capital Territory) of the Delhi Act is groundless.

Background of the NCT of Delhi Bill

- Last week, both Houses of Parliament voted in favor of the amendments to the **Government of the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi Act**.
- Many criticized the passage of the bill that the government is undermining the federal structure of the country. Some have equated the passage of the bill as the [death of democracy and Federalism](#).
- But the government mentioned the Bill as a necessary change vital for the following things,
 - Ensuring clear-cut roles and responsibilities.
 - To remove ambiguities in the governance of the NCT of Delhi
 - To facilitate a clear chain of command among stakeholders

Why the accusation against the NCT of Delhi Bill is groundless?

The [Evolution of The GNCT of Delhi bill](#) has to be examined carefully to understand the issues against the accusations of the GNCT bill.

- **First**, the aim of the amendments was to clear the ambiguities in the roles of various stakeholders. Since various court judgments have observed the ambiguities and lack of clarity. The government through the recent amendment brought consistency in the definition of the term “Government”.
 - The amendment clearly stated that the term ‘government’ refers to the Lieutenant Governor. By doing this, the government has only formalised the definition of a term that the **Delhi Assembly itself had already accepted**.
 - For example, in 2015 the Legislative Assembly of Delhi passed the **Delhi Netaji Subhas University of Technology Bill**. It was sent for the President’s assent.
 - However, it was returned to the Delhi assembly as it had defined the term “Government” as the “Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi.
 - Later, the Delhi assembly sent a modified version of the Bill for the President’s assent. This time the definition of “government” was described as “Lieutenant Governor of NCT Delhi appointed by the President.”
- **Second**, the government has proved itself as **a torch-bearer of Federalism**. For example, the government provided equal opportunities for States in the following events. Such as,
 - The creation of NITI Aayog,
 - During the establishment of the Goods and Services Tax Council,
 - The acceptance of the Fifteenth Finance Commission’s recommendations for greater devolution.
- **Third**, the amendments will ensure that there is no encroachment in legislative matters in the union’s jurisdiction. NCT Delhi has no legislative competence in matters pertaining to the police, public order, and land. However, the current proposals for providing statehood to Delhi Legislative Assembly involve one major risk. That is the encroachment of the Delhi assembly on these subjects.
- **Fourth**, Delhi is of unique importance to India. It hosts the Parliament, the seat of the Union Government, Supreme court, Foreign embassies, and other institutions of national importance. In such instances, ensuring the opinion of the Lieutenant Governor can only ensure the smooth functioning of the government.

So, the [NCT of Delhi \(Amendment\) Bill](#) balances the proper functioning of the Delhi Assembly and the cooperative federalism in India.

11. Appointment of Ambassadors – in US and India

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 – Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

Synopsis: The US administration needs to make a choice between appointing career diplomats or big contributors for appointing the new ambassadors. In India as well, there is a practice of appointing diverse people as ambassadors.

Background:

- The US administration under Joe Biden will be appointing new ambassadors as per the spoil system.
 - The system allows the president to give government jobs to its supporters, friends, and relatives as a reward for working toward victory.
- It is assumed that many ambassador posts would be given to wealthy contributors.

Why are wealthy contributors made ambassadors?

- It is a token of **reward** for making hefty contributions towards the party and assuring future contributions.
- Further, their appointment has become a **tradition** in US politics. Minimum 30% to a maximum of 57% (under Mr. Trump) posts of ambassadors were offered to them.
- The **US Constitution** doesn't forbid their appointments.
 - Article II provides that the President can appoint ambassadors with the advice and consent of the Senate.
- There exists a notion that long careers in the Foreign Service are not necessary to be effective ambassadors.

Why shouldn't they be appointed?

- **Incompetent:** Many wealthy contributors are not aware of the history and geography of the country in which they get posted.
- **Undermines Diplomatic potential:** They treat ambassadorship as an extended holiday and seldom focus on strengthening bilateral relations. For instance, an ambassador wanted to get a private jet on his diplomatic mission.

Appointments of ambassadors in India

- India appoints politicians and other renowned people (Former Maharajas, Judges etc.) for ambassadorship as a recognition of their hard work and talent. The appointments are not based on the quantum of donation towards a political party.
- The Government apparently has the discretion of appointing political ambassadors in up to 30% of the posts. Apart from this, other positions are filled by career diplomats.
 - Earlier career diplomats were not appointed to very strategic locations like London, Moscow, or Washington.
- Currently, the number of political ambassadors is very small and career diplomats are given top posts in every foreign embassy.

Positive role of Political Ambassadors:

- Dr. K.S. Shelvankar, D.P. Dhar and I.K. Gujral were appointed at the Moscow embassy at different time periods.
 - They played a pivotal role in strengthening bilateral relations.
 - Career diplomats used to do much of the work, leaving the political ambassadors to deal with high policy.

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- Kushok Bakula Rinpoche was appointed to Mongolia. He helped in strengthening Indo-Mongolia relations as Mahayana Buddhism provided a common platform for convergence.

Way Forward:

- A balance can be established by appointing some wealthy contributors as ambassadors provided they are familiar with basic history and geography of the nation.
- The senate should conduct due investigation and prohibit the appointment of truly incompetent persons.
 - A potential candidate for ambassadorship of Fiji had to withdraw after a senate investigation or else face FBI charges.

A divergence from tradition will ensure a greater number of career diplomats are made ambassadors. This will boost the credibility of Biden diplomacy but may dry up future political funding.

12. Why the Places of Worship Act, 1991 has been challenged?

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Indian Constitution—Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions and Basic Structure.

Synopsis: The enactment of the Places of worship act, 1991 is an act of colourable legislation. Further, it is against the liberty of belief, faith, and worship to all.

Background

- Sections 3 and 4 of the [Places of Worship Act, 1991 has been challenged in the supreme court](#) as being unconstitutional, void and against the Basic Structure of the Constitution of India.

What is Colourable Legislation?

The government can enact a law within the power of the legislature. When the government enacts a law, It can hide a provision (illegal provision) within the provisions under the government's legislative competence. This legislation is called Colourable Legislation.

The SC in the **State of Bihar vs Kameshwar Singh case**, used a **doctrine of Colourable legislation**. Under this, the court held that **whatever is prohibited directly is prohibited indirectly also**.

Why the Places of Worship Act, 1991 is said to be unconstitutional?

1. **First**, The Places of Worship Act, 1991 is against the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution. Because it restricts the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court. Also, it nullifies the Fundamental Right(s) guaranteed by the Constitution of India as per Article 32.
 - According to **Ambedkar**, Article 32 is the very soul of the Constitution. It states that “enforcement of fundamental rights” cannot be suspended except as stated in the Constitution.
 - Under **Article 32** of the Constitution of India, the Supreme Court has the power to issue writs for enforcement of all the Fundamental Rights.
 - Also, the SC on several occasions ruled that no Act of Parliament can exclude or curtail the powers of the Constitutional Courts with regard to the enforcement of fundamental rights”.
 - Hence, the act is appropriately called an **Act of colourable legislation**. As it limits the powers of constitutional courts though there is no scope for such powers.

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2. **Second**, the **Places of Worship Act**, 1991 is against the liberty of belief, faith, and worship to all citizens.
3. **Freedom of religion** is guaranteed to all citizens under Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution.
4. It also includes Rights to pray and perform the religious practice. Therefore, prohibiting citizens from approaching appropriate courts with respect to handover the land of any temple of certain essential significance is arbitrary.

What is the way forward?

- The exclusion of the Mathura and Varanasi disputes as being additional exceptions from the Act of 1991 is unacceptable.
- The Act provides an exception to the “Ram-Janmbhoomi matter”. The need and importance of resolution of such a controversy.
- The Supreme Court can increase the number of exceptions in Section 5 of the Places of Worship Act, 1991, to three.
 - Including, the Gyanvapi Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi and the Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple in Mathura along with Ram-Janmbhoomi
 - It can be done through the use of the Supreme Court power under Article 142 of the Constitution.
- Under Article 142, the Supreme court can pass any order to carry out for doing complete justice being in the public interest, while upholding the Constitution of India.

13. Right To Education Act still has some arbitrariness

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS:2 – Indian Constitution: evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Synopsis: The **Right To Education Act** evolved so much in the past. But there is still some arbitrariness in the RTE Act.

Introduction:

Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act or RTE Act is a horizontally enforceable Fundamental Right. That is, the Right is enforceable against the State and Individuals. But the Right To Education Act have some arbitrary discrimination against private institutions and favours minority educational institutions.

Evolution of Right To Education as a Fundamental Right:

Earlier, Article 45 mentions the right to education as a part of the Directive Principles. It mentions that the state should provide free and compulsory education to children up to the age of 14. The provision also mentions a timeline for this achievement (within a decade).

Mohini Jain v. State of Karnataka case 1992: In this case, the Supreme Court held that the Right to education is a part of the right to life recognised in Article 21.

Unnikrishnan JP v. State of Andhra Pradesh case 1993: In this case, the Supreme Court held that the state was duty-bound to provide education to children up to the age of 14. Further, the SC also mentions that the state alone cannot fulfil the task. Private educational institutions, including minority institutions, have to assist the State in that.

86th constitutional amendment of 2002: The government provided a **status of a fundamental right** to the right to education. The government inserted Article 21A into the constitution.

Evolution of Right To Education Act:

P A Inamdar vs State of Maharashtra 2005 case: In this case, the court held that there shall be **no reservation in private institutions, minority and non-minority institutions.**

93rd constitutional amendment of 2005: This amendment included Clause (5) to Article 15. Under this, the State can provide for admission in institutions, including private institutions for the advancement of “backward” classes. This purposefully omitted both the aided and unaided minority educational institutions.

In 2009, the government enacted the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act or RTE Act. The Act provides for 25 per cent reservation in private institutions.

Society for Unaided Private Schools of Rajasthan v. Union of India case. Private schools challenged the 25% percent reservation in the RTE Act. The court, on the other hand, upheld the validity of the legislation. But the court exempted the unaided minority institutions from providing reservation.

The arbitrariness in Right To Education Act:

The amendment to the Right to Education Act 2012: The amendment mentions that the RTE Act will subject to Articles 29 and 30. In other words, It protected the administrative rights of both unaided and aided minority educational institutions.

But in the **Pramati Educational Trust vs Union of India case 2014**, the court held that the RTE Act is applicable to both **non-minority aided** and **unaided Private schools.**

This **created an arbitrariness** in the Act. This has the following [problems in the RTE Act](#),

1. Onus on private unaided schools is higher than the government schools
2. Minority institutions both aided and unaided were exempt.
3. According to Article 21, there is no discrimination between minority and non-minority institutions. But, the RTE Act has.
4. There is no explicable or rational explanation for leaving minority institutions, especially the unaided ones.

Suggestions to improve the Right to Education Act

In the **Sobha George v. State of Kerala case**, 2016 the court held that the [no-detention policy](#) will apply to minority schools also. Further, the court also held that the minority institutions will not subject to the RTE Act. But they are **subject to the fundamental rights of the Constitution.** The Court demands two fundamental questions on Section 16(no-detention policy).

- o Whether the provisions such as Section 16 of RTE are statutory right or Fundamental Right?
- o If it is the Fundamental Right, then the minority institutions will not claim the exemption under the **Pramati Educational Trust case.**

So, the government has to relook the **Right to Education Act** to fulfil the view of the **Sobha George v. State of Kerala case.** Until then the Supreme court may overrule its judgement on the **Pramati Educational Trust case.**

14. A friendly India Pakistan Relation is Much Needed

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs2: India and its Neighborhood- Relations.

Synopsis: The positive signs in the India-Pakistan relation are again turning negative. Pakistan recently took an u-turn after the announcement to open trade with India.

Background:

- Recently, Pakistan reversed a two-year old decision to suspend all trades with India. Followingly, Pakistan allowed for the import of cotton and sugar from India.

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- However, the decision to allow the import of cotton and sugar from India has been withdrawn within a fortnight.
- It has been stated that restoration of J&K's special status will be the precondition for opening up trade with India.

Why Pakistan was ready to resume trade with India?

Because of the following reasons, the government of Pakistan was ready to resume trade with India,

1. First, the economy of Pakistan is very weak, and it has been sustained by IMF loans.
2. Second, the action by **Financial Action Task Force** over possible blacklisting on terror financing is affecting the ordinary citizens.
3. Third, the Pandemic has also impacted the financial health of the country.
4. Fourth, a steep fall in the cotton yield has kept the prices of the commodity high. This has caused a crisis in the country's main manufacturing and export industry.

What is the way forward?

India needs the cooperation of Pakistan to maintain peace on the western front. Especially after the standoff with China at the LAC in eastern Ladakh.

To maintain friendly relation, India needs to be supportive of Pakistan by helping them to overcome the financial crisis by

- Lifting the 200 percent tariffs on Pakistani imports imposed after the Pulwama attack.
- Restoring the hugely popular cross-LoC trade and bus service. This will also help to strengthen the peace across the border.

15. Examining UNHRC Resolution against Sri Lanka

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Important International Institutions, agencies, and fora – their Structure, Mandate.

Synopsis: The [UNHRC \(United Nations Human Rights Council\) resolution against Sri Lanka](#) is a victory for victims of abuses. It will help them obtain information, accountability, and justice.

Background

- Recently, the **UNHRC** adopted the resolution titled 'Promotion of Reconciliation Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka.'
- The resolution accused Sri Lanka of war crimes. It promises to bring responsible personnels to the international courts along with imposing targeted sanctions on them.
- The resolution decided to create capacity at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). It will collect, preserve and consolidate evidence.
- Evidences can be not only on war crimes but also on other gross violations of human rights and serious violations of humanitarian law.
- India along with several other Muslim countries abstained from voting. Whereas, China and Pakistan voted against the resolution.

What are the Main Factors that led to the adoption of the UNHRC resolution against Sri Lanka?

There are mainly three factors responsible for this, they are

1. **First**, the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Special Rapporteurs and procedures gave strong support to the resolution. For

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example, the Report of the High Commissioner on “Promoting Accountability and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka” made the resolution inevitable.

2. **Second**, in addition to the work of OHCHR, the Tamil groups were active, nationally and globally. The effort by Tamil diaspora throughout the world mounted pressure on Human rights watchdogs.
3. **Third**, the most important reason for the adoption of resolution was mainly due to the abstinence of Muslim countries. Despite efforts from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and China, and Rajapaksas personal calls to OIC members, the majority of Muslim countries abstained.
4. **Fourth**, the efforts by **international civil society** to stand up for a global cause. They are very active members of the Human Rights Council.

What led to the resolution?

1. In 2014 Sri Lanka faced a hostile Human rights Council. It led to the Resolution of the Human Rights Council in 2015 (resolution 30/1) that was co-sponsored by Sri Lanka.
2. Co-sponsorship means that Sri Lanka will accept international standards while keeping control of the national process. i.e., the legislation to be enacted and the personnel to be appointed.
3. After that, As per the 2015 resolution, Sri Lanka accepted international best practices. An office for missing persons, an office for reparations, a truth commission and a judicial process for those guilty of serious crimes established.
4. Thus, the resolution 30/1 became a great success. After that, Sri Lanka was not on the international punitive agendas. It became eligible to GSP plus incentives from the EU, and UN peacekeeping missions.
5. But, Sri Lanka withdrew from the resolution arbitrarily. This allowed the Human Rights Council to create a new mechanism to collect and preserve evidence. This process is now independent of the Srilankan government.

How this resolution is viewed by different stakeholders?

- For Sinhalese, they see it as an attack by western countries on Sri Lanka for its closeness to China. They see this as a process of Imperialism and neocolonialism in the 21st century.
- But for members of the minorities, victim groups, and civil society activists see this resolution as a check on the surveillance state.

General Studies Paper - 3

General Studies - 3

1. Sustainable Agriculture demands Optimum Water Management

Source: [Click Here](#)

Syllabus: GS 3 – Major crops-cropping patterns in various parts of the country, – different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage

Synopsis:

The declining availability and accessibility of water necessitate strengthening the water management measures. In this regard, the focus should be drawn on Sustainable Agriculture.

Background

- On March 22 (World Water Day), Prime Minister launched the ‘**Catch the rain Campaign**’ under Jal Shakti Abhiyan.
- The campaign focuses on robust rainwater conservation including the use of MGNREGA funds to conserve water.
- These types of campaigns are desired as water demand is going to rise in future – 843 billion cubic metres (BCM) by 2025 and 1180 BCM by 2050.

Current Situation of Water:

- **National Estimates:**
 - NITI Aayog’s Composite Water Management Index (2019) shows 75% of Indian households don’t have access to drinking water on their premises.
 - The Central Water Commission’s reassessment of water availability using space inputs (2019) shows India **utilises only 18%** of its annual precipitation. This means 699 billion cubic metres (BCM) is utilised, out of the total 3880 BCM received.
- **International Estimates:**
 - **UN’s report on Sustainable Development Goal-6 (SDG-6)** on “Clean water and sanitation for all by 2030” states that India achieved only 56.6 per cent of the target by 2019.
 - The **Water Quality Index** has placed India at the 120th position amongst 122 countries.
 - India is identified as a **water-stressed country**. As the per capita water availability declined from 5,178 cubic metre (m³)/year in 1951 to 1,544 m³ in 2011. It is expected that it will reach 1,140 cubic metre by 2050.

Why do we need to focus on the agriculture sector?

1. **High Usage of water:** The Agriculture Sector uses 78% of freshwater resources and the rest is used by industry and households.
2. **Skewed Irrigation Distribution:** Only about half of India’s gross cropped area (198 million hectares) is irrigated. Groundwater contributes about 64 per cent, canals 23 per cent, tanks 2 per cent and other sources 11 per cent to irrigation.
3. **Inefficient usage of water:** Groundwater is the primary source of irrigation. Various subsidies and incentives are given to support it. However, it has led to over-exploitation of water especially in the north-west region.
 - This helped the region to leverage maximum benefits of the green revolution at subsidized water and power tariffs.
 - But today the region is amongst the three highest water risk hotspots of the world along with northeastern China and the southwestern USA (California).

4. **Two Crops use maximum water:** As per a NABARD-ICRIER study on **Water Productivity Mapping**; rice and sugarcane alone consume almost 60 % of India's irrigation water.

Figure 1: LAND AND APPLIED IRRIGATION PRODUCTIVITY FOR RICE

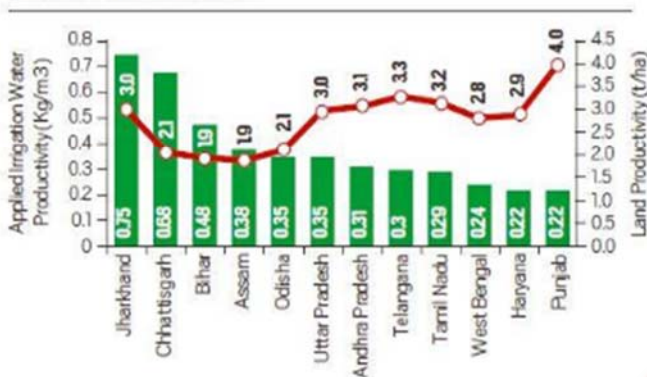
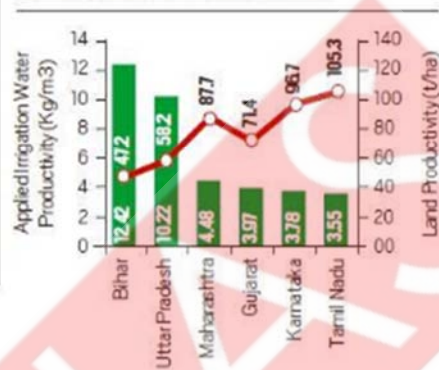


Figure 2: LAND AND APPLIED IRRIGATION PRODUCTIVITY FOR SUGARCANE



Source: Indian Express

- Punjab performs well inland productivity of rice but takes the last spot in terms of irrigation water productivity. This shows inefficient usage.
- Similarly, irrigation water productivity of sugarcane in Karnataka and Maharashtra is only 1/3rd of Bihar and U.P.
- Land Productivity means output produced per unit of land.
- Irrigation water productivity means output produced per unit of irrigation water used.

Therefore, there is a need to realign the cropping patterns based on per unit of applied irrigation water productivity.

Way Forward

- **Technologies** like **Drip irrigation**, Direct Seeded Rice (DSR), drip with fertigation etc. can be adopted.
 - Jain Irrigation has demonstrated the potential of water conservation by growing 1 kg paddy with 842 litres using drip irrigation. This is way less than the traditional flood irrigation method that uses 3065 litres.
 - Similarly, drip with fertigation method for sugarcane has given a benefit-cost ratio of 2.64 in Karnataka.
 - Netafim, an Israel based company, has shown the potential of a family drip irrigation system at Ramthall, Karnataka.
- **Pricing policies for agricultural inputs like water and electricity** should be sustainable.
 - The **“Paani Bachao Paise Kamao”** initiative of the Punjab government along with the World Bank and J-PAL can be a good initiative in this regard.
 - It encourages rational use of water amongst farmers by providing them monetary incentives for saving water in comparison to their traditional usage.
- Further, from highly subsidised policies, a paradigm change towards direct income support and greater agricultural investment is desired.

The focus should be on conserving, using and managing the water in such a way that the objective of per drop more crop is duly achieved.

2. Suggestions for Inclusive growth in India

Source: [The Hindu](#)

GS3: Inclusive Growth and issues arising from it.

Synopsis: India lags behind many Human development indicators. India's economic growth is not benefitting the poor. There is a need to create a new framework for measuring the inclusiveness of growth.

Why India's Economic growth is not inclusive?

1. **One, Rising hunger**, according to the **Global Hunger Index 2020** India ranks **94th** amongst 107 countries.
2. **Two**, Indian citizens are amongst the least happy in the world. According to the **World Happiness Report of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network**, India ranks **144th** amongst 153 countries.
3. **Three**, the Pandemic has increased the inequality gap further by pushing many poor people into poverty. According to a **World Bank report**, during the pandemic the very rich became even richer. Whereas the number of poor people in India (with incomes of \$2 or less a day) is estimated to have increased by 75 million.
4. **Four, unsustainable economic growth**. According to global assessments, India ranks **120** out of 122 countries in **water quality**, and **179** out of 180 in **air quality**.

Suggestions for more inclusive growth

1. **First**, India needs a new strategy for growth, founded on new pillars. Because the older economic growth strategy of relying on Foreign capital has made “**ease of living**” difficult, while the “**ease of doing business**” improved. The new economic strategy should be based on the following two pillars,
 - o **One**, Economic growth must no longer be at the cost of the environment.
 - o **Two, the** benefits of Economic growth should be made equitable. Thus creating more incomes for its billion-plus citizens
2. **Second**, there is a need for **local solutions to measure the wellbeing of people**, rather than relying on universal, standard progress measure frameworks.
 - o While GDP does not account for vital environmental and social conditions that contribute to human well-being.
 - o Many countries are developing universally acceptable frameworks.
 - o They are trying to incorporate the health of the environment, public services, equal access to opportunities, etc. to make it universal, more scientific, and objective.
 - o However, experiences have shown that this ‘scientific’ approach does enable objective rankings of countries. For example, **World Happiness Report misses the point that happiness and well-being are always ‘subjective’**.
 - o Standard global solutions will neither make their conditions better nor make them happier. So, local communities need to find their own solutions within their countries, and in their villages and towns to measure their well-being.
3. **Third**, We need to start recognizing the role of societal conditions that are responsible for the difficulties of the poor. **For example**, Caste system, Patriarchy, indifferent attitude towards the disabled, transgender, etc.,
 - o This way of looking at things also equally contributes to the increasing Inequality.
4. **Fourth**, move away from centralised Governance model **towards decentralized form of governance**. Because Governance of the many by a few politically and economically powerful persons may work for a few.
 - o Whereas, decentralized system of governance will allow communities to find their own solutions to complex problems.

India's growth should be measured on its sustainability and the improvements made in the lives of hundreds of millions of its citizens. It should be based on the size of GDP, the numbers of billionaires, the numbers of Indian multinationals

3. Importance of Land Record Modernisation

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS – 3: [Land Reforms](#)

Synopsis: The importance of land records became more evident during the pandemic. For access to formal loans and government relief programmes, land records are important. However, the poor availability of clear and updated land titles remains a problem.

Background

The land is both an **asset and a source of livelihood** for poor people in rural areas. Many informal jobs in the urban areas were lost due to the coronavirus pandemic in 2020. This resulted in **reverse migration**, leading to greater demands for household resources in rural areas.

How the government is improving the land records?

- The government of India's **Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DI-LRMP) scheme** is the most recent effort to update land records.
- The poor state of land records is due to the failure of the Indian administration to evolve from British-era land policies.
- Further, the Land record regulations and policies vary widely across Indian states/union territories.
- DI-LRMP provides a common framework for reporting the progress of land record management by states/UTs. But the diverse nature of regulations/guidelines for land record management in India makes the progress non-uniform.

Observations by NCAER Land Records and Services Index:

1. NCAER (National Council of Applied Economic Research) made an innovative effort by launching **NCAER Land Records and Services Index (N-LRSI)** in 2020. The index evaluates states' performance on digitisation and quality of land records.
2. States/UTs have made various efforts to make improvements in various parameters of the N-LRSI index. These improvements are clearly recorded in the N-LRSI 2021 findings.
 - Bihar jumped from the 23rd to 8th position in the index. It achieved significant progress in the digitisation of maps, textual records and the registration process.

Challenges in land records pointed out by the N-LRSI study:

1. **Firstly, The lack of skilled manpower in the departments of land records. It is one of the major barriers in ensuring regular updating of land records.**
2. **Secondly, the N-LRSI study has brought out poor cooperation** across land record departments. These are,
 - **Revenue department** as the custodian of textual records,
 - **The survey and settlement department** managing the spatial records
 - **The registration department** is responsible for registering land transactions.
3. **Thirdly, the information from the sources reveals that no state/UT has the facility for online modification of records** on the same day as the registration.
4. **Fourthly, there is a weak linkage between the revenue department and the survey and settlement department.** This creates a huge difference between the land area

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reported by the textual and spatial record. This can increase the chances of legal disputes over the definition of boundaries and the extent of a land plot.

All these challenges **create hindrances in achieving updated and accurate land records.**

Suggestions to improve Land records in India:

- **Strengthening of various institutions concerned with Land records.** It will achieve the desired quality of land records. This can be attained by removing structural rigidities in the system.
- The **easing of the land transactions can also be tried for improvement in land records.** For example, Maharashtra **lowering stamp duties** to meet its increasing demand for housing, infrastructure. These efforts are going to be helpful for the health of India's rural economy.

4. Carbon neutrality is against the interest of Developing countries

Source: [Indian Express](#)

GS3: Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment

Synopsis: **Developed countries are using** the call for [net zero emissions](#) or carbon neutrality by 2050, to evade the historical responsibility. Further, they are using such targets to transfer their burdens to developing countries.

Background

- Many countries are supporting the idea of becoming Carbon neutral (net-zero emissions) by 2050.
- However, the idea of developing Carbon neutrality has the following issue,
 - One, the feasibility and efficacy of such a strategy for all countries is doubtful
 - Two, it is against the basic tenets of the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**. **Common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC)** based on historical responsibility have been the bedrock of climate actions under the UNFCCC.
 - CBDR-RC is also the central pillar of India's claim for climate justice.

Climate justice in India

- India is a shining example of climate justice. While the rich were nudged to move towards sustainable living. The poor on the other hand, were provided with safety nets to fight climate change.
- **The climate sensitivity** principle was introduced in domestic policies through interventions like energy for all, housing for all, health insurance, and crop insurance.
- Further, the mission "**Clean India**" and "give it up" campaigns also aim towards Climate Justice. Also, the efforts to popularise yoga and sustainable lifestyle practices will ensure climate justice to the vulnerable and poor sections.

How developed countries are deferring their climate justice responsibilities?

Aristotle has distinguished three forms of justice, namely **distributive, commutative and corrective**. An assessment of climate justice based on these three aspects of justice reveals the following,

First, Distributive justice. It says resources should be distributed in terms of principles of equality, equity, and merit. In the context of Carbon neutrality, the current efforts made by developed countries do not ensure **Distributive climate justice**. This is for the following reasons,

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1. One, industrialization in the developed countries is responsible for a large part of climate change issues. However, people of the developing countries are suffering disproportionately more from its impacts,
2. Two, while the developed countries have used much of the carbon space for their development, they are arguing to cut their emissions emanating from even basic needs of the developing countries.
3. Three, according to Climate Action Tracker reports, the climate action of major developed countries is incompatible with the goals of the Paris Agreement.
4. Therefore, to ensure distributive climate justice the global communities need to ensure ambitious climate action by developed countries in the near term.

The second, Commutative justice. It refers to the honoring of past commitments such as agreements or commitments, and other kinds of social contracts in good faith. In the context of Carbon neutrality, the current efforts made by developed countries do not ensure Commutative climate justice. It is because of the following reasons,

1. **One**, the second commitment period of Kyoto Protocol commits developed countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 18 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2020. However, it entered into force just one day before its expiry.
2. **Two**, the effort made by developed countries to deliver finance, technology transfer, and capacity-building support to developing countries is also ineffective. They have **failed to mobilise at least \$100 billion per year** by 2020 that they agreed for.

Third, corrective justice. It means efforts made to correct the wrongs. Based on this, developed countries need to repay the climate debt by taking greater responsibility in mitigation. Further, they should also provide finance, technology and capacity-building support. However, the developed countries are not talking about corrective actions. Instead, they are now focussing on a new concept like Carbon neutrality.

5. Governance Issues facing Private Education Institutions

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS 3 – Effects of liberalization on the economy

Synopsis: The private educational institutions are failing to deliver optimum results. Thus, the role of the state in providing accessibility in educational institutions can't be ignored.

Background:

- The two renowned faculties of Ashoka university (Pratap Bhanu Mehta and Arvind Subramanian) have recently resigned. Allegedly, the owners of the institution were cautious of their outspoken criticism of the government.
- This instance questions the ability of private institutions to withstand government's pressure and deliver optimum results in the field of education.

Rationale behind privatisation:

- They promise to possess **greater academic freedom** as the government plays no role in the appointment of faculty and staff. Further they are not dependent on government aid for carrying out day-to-day activities.
 - For instance, JNU's freedom has been curtailed by the appointment of a favourable Vice-Chancellor by Govt. Stricter norms, budget cuts, and frequent student clashes have been seen after the appointment.
- They promise **better academic performance** of students by providing better infrastructure and good quality teachers. They use this as a crucial factor for attracting parents towards them.
- Likewise, they **complement the government schools and universities** that don't have the capacity to solely accommodate the huge Indian population.

Concerns with Privatisation:

- **Rising Inequalities:** Private institutions create a class divide. They are costly and expensive thus beyond the scope of many people. Further gender and caste inequalities are also prevalent in them.
 - The boys and students from upper-caste backgrounds are overwhelmingly represented in private institutions relative to public ones.
- **Profit Motive:** Many private institutions are established by Businessmen who also need to protect their business interests. This leads to moulding of the institution's policy in line with the government's interest or the popular sentiment in society.
 - For instance, historian Ramachandra Guha had to decline to join Ahmedabad University after a religious group's protest over his appointment.
- **Overnight Closures:** Many private institutions promise good quality education at low rates. Less fees results in poor infrastructure and inefficient teachers, thereby threatening their survival and leading to overnight closures. This puts many children out of the education map.
- **Security of Tenure:** This is not available in private institutions due to which teachers have to surrender towards the wishes of private management.
 - For instance, even with frequent clashes between VC and teachers, no full-time faculty was forced to resign from JNU.
- **Flawed Results:** Better results are generated due to the privileged children studying in them and not the quality of resources offered by them.

Way Forward:

- There should be **democratic decision-making** within the private universities. This will provide greater resilience against the government's pressure and strengthen academic freedom. For instance, Vice-Chancellors in the private universities should be made part of the decision-making process.
- Recommendations of **the Central Square Foundation report on private participation** can be implemented. It's recommendations includes:
 - Reviewing the non-profit mandate for the education sector and existing fee regulations
 - Opening corporate governance structures to private schools
 - Classifying private schools as micro, small, or medium enterprises
- There should be **proper implementation of Right to Education act**. So that, at least 25% of students in private institutions come from diverse backgrounds.

Apart from reforming the private sector, the role of state can't be ignored for maintaining a just and equal educational system.

6. Need of Continuing with Inflation Targeting

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS- 3 Economy

Synopsis: Inflation is still a big worry for policymakers. That is why the government is still willing to retain the inflation targeting.

Introduction

The Finance Ministry will continue with the inflation-targeting framework. It will guide the interest rate decisions of the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee over the five-year period.

- The Department of Economic Affairs notified that the inflation target for the next five years ending on March 31, 2026, will be 4%. The upper tolerance level will be 6% and a lower tolerance level will be 2%.
- It means no change has been introduced to the framework.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of April (First week), 2021

How will the announcement by the department of economic affairs be perceived?

The announcement indicates that price stability will be the base for all macro-economic development.

1. **Firstly, the announcement is a relief** as inflation pressure is rising. The recent Consumer Price Index data show retail inflation increased by almost 100 basis points in February. Food and fuel costs remain volatile till now.
 - o As per IHS Markit India Business Outlook survey companies are planning to raise selling prices in the coming 12 months to cope with rising costs of raw materials.
2. **Secondly, the RBI's officials have emphasised on the need to preserve the flexible inflation** targeting framework. In a paper titled 'Measuring Trend Inflation in India', Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra, and a colleague highlighted the importance of guaranteeing the inflation target.
3. **Thirdly, there has been a steady decline in trend inflation** to a 4.1%-4.3% band since 2014. The officials said that a target lower than the trend had the risk of imparting a deflationary bias. This bias would reduce economic momentum.
 - o A goal much above the trend could cause expansionary monetary conditions that would likely lead to inflation shocks.

The conclusion

The RBI's researchers Report on Currency made it clear that the framework had served the economy well. The government's economic officials have noticed that it will certainly reassure investors and savers that inflation remains a central concern for all policymakers.