

**GOVERNMENT POLICIES & INTERVENTIONS**

**Educational Schemes for Minorities**

- **In News:** There is a shift in Centre's policy towards minority education in the past few years. It has discontinued two key educational schemes for religious minorities and gradually cut down on the expenditure incurred on the programmes of the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

**Religious minorities in India**

- India is home to over 30 crore (20%) people from religious minority communities. These include six religions notified under Section 2(c) of the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992.
- Muslims constitute 14.2%, followed by Christians at 2.3%, Sikhs (1.7%), Buddhists (0.7%), Jains (0.4%) and Zoroastrians (around 57,000).

**Constitutional Provisions:**

- Article 29(1) of the Indian Constitution calls for the Protection of interests of minorities: Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.
- Article 30(1) grants Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions –All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

**Why were scholarships for Religious minorities introduced?**

- Some minorities face challenges in economic, health, and education. Their participation in salaried jobs is low. Many are engaged in the informal sector, characterised by low wages, weak social security and poor working conditions.
- The Rajinder Sachar Committee, 2006, concluded that the minority was deprived and neglected in almost all dimensions of development and behind the mainstream in several social and economic sectors.
- "By and large, Muslims rank somewhat above SC/ST but below Hindu OBCs [Other Backward Classes], Other Minorities and Hindu General [mostly upper castes] in almost all indicators considered," the report stated.
- Around the same time, the new Ministry was carved out of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in January 2006 to "ensure a more focused approach" towards issues affecting the notified minorities.
- Subsequently, the government revised its 15-point Programme for the Welfare of Minorities. As part of educational empowerment, the new plan included a provision for scholarships for students from minority communities.
- The highest proportion of out-of-school children in the country belong to Muslim communities (4.43%), followed by Hindus (2.73%), Christians (1.52%) and others (1.26%), according to the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan data.

**Welfare schemes for the educational empowerment of minorities:**

- **Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme:** to minority students from class 1 to 10 and ranged between Rs 1,000 and Rs 10,700 for each selected candidate. 30% of the scholarships were earmarked for girls.
- **Current status:** The scheme has been discontinued from classes 1 to 8, only covering class 9 and 10 in its revised form.
- **Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme:** for students of class 11 and above (till Ph.D.), with a scholarship ranging between Rs 2,300 and Rs 15,000. Like the pre-matric, 30% of the post-matric scheme was also earmarked for girls.
- **Merit-cum-Means based Scholarship Scheme:** Launched in 2008, this scheme targeted professional and technical courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, with 30% earmarked for girl students. Eligible candidates are reimbursed full course fees,
- **Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF):** The scheme provided financial assistance for five years to research scholars pursuing M.Phil and Ph.D.
- **Padho Pardesh:** The scheme was launched to provide better opportunities for higher education abroad, providing an interest subsidy on education loans for overseas studies to students belonging to economically weaker sections of minority communities.
- **Begum Hazrat Mahal National Scholarship:** The scholarship was for meritorious girls for higher secondary education and was provided by the Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF).
- **Naya Savera:** To provide free coaching to minority students of classes 11-12 with science subjects for entrance to technical and professional courses and competitive examinations.
- **Nai Udaan:** This was a programme which supported minority students preparing for the preliminary examinations conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), Staff Selection Commission (SSC) and State Public Service Commission's (SPSCs).

- **Scheme for Providing Education to Madrasas and Minorities (SPEMM):** Under it recognised madrasas receive financial assistance to introduce 'modern' subjects such as science, mathematics, social studies, Hindi and English in their curriculum.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK):** Since its restructuring in 2018, the PMJVK, earlier known as the Multi-sectoral Development Programme (MsDP), has provided infrastructure in identified minority concentration areas, including for education and skill development.

**How much has the budget reduced and how has it impacted beneficiaries?**

- This financial year, the Centre slashed the budgetary allocation for the Ministry of Minority Affairs by 38.3%, a drop from Rs 5,020.5 crore in 2022-23 to Rs 3,097 crore this year.
- Notably, the 2022-23 estimates were revised to Rs 2,612.66 crore, indicating an under-utilisation of nearly 48% of funds.
- The shift in policy came despite a significant drop in beneficiaries (7%) between 2019 and 2022, even as funds remained underutilised.
- During the period, the government spending on six educational schemes for religious minorities dropped by around 12.5%.
- For instance, the pre-matric scholarship, which has benefitted the maximum number of minority students, the Ministry spent Rs 43.95 crore out of the revised estimate of Rs 556 crore. Similarly, Rs 29 crore was the actual expenditure on post-matric scholarship when the budget estimate was Rs 515 crore.
- A 2022 report by the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) highlighted a "declining trend" in the share of the overall budget expenditure towards minorities. The allocation of funds for the year 2022-23 was not in line with proportional representation of minorities.

**Impacts**

- The restructuring of programmes, under-utilisation of funds, and reduced budgetary allocations have impacted the implementation and goals of educational schemes for minorities.
- As a result, gaps in education and economic parameters are expected to widen. There are other challenges in implementation as well, including poor coverage of beneficiaries and low unit costs.
- Experts worry that scrapping scholarships and limiting the scope of scholarships will adversely affect the community and impact their enrolment rate, which is already worrisome.

**Way forward**

- Education is the most powerful tool for the socio-economic development of a nation, more so for minorities.
- In its 2018 policy document, Niti Aayog suggested
- Enhancing pre-matric, post-matric and merit-cum-means scholarships as well as the Maulana Azad National Fellowships and national overseas scholarships, recommending a 15% annual increase from 2019-20.
- It also recommended increasing the number of scholarships for girls from minority communities by 10% every year.
- A recent yearbook by the Institute of Objective Students on the status of Muslim school dropouts estimated that dropout rates stand at 23.1% as compared to the national average rate of 18.96%. It was time to introspect as to why the dropout rate had not decreased even after 10 years since the introduction of the Right to Education.
- The Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability in its report, pushes for the utilisation of the 15-Point Programme to devise customised interventions for the development of minorities, by identifying development gaps in minority-concentrated localities and areas.
- Affirmative action is the need of the hour to improve the socio-economic status of religious minorities, particularly Muslims, who continue to lag behind the rest of the population in several areas.

**PRELIM FACT**

**1. India named Chandrayaan-3 landing spot as Shiv Shakti Point**

- In News-The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has announced that the point where the Chandrayaan-3 lander touched down on the lunar surface will be named Shiv Shakti.

**About**

- The point where Chandrayaan-2 left its imprints would be named as Tiranga point. Chandrayaan-1 crashed in 2008 is named as 'Jawahar Point'.
- PM Modi said this will serve as an inspiration for every effort that India makes and remind us that failure is not the end.
- The 23rd August will be celebrated as 'National Space Day' on the mark of soft landing of Chandrayaan-3 at the South Pole of the moon.

**Law regarding Ownership, Naming Sites in Space**

- As per the United Nations 1966 Outer Space Treaty, no nation can claim sovereignty over the moon - or other celestial bodies - and that the exploration of space should be carried out for the benefit of all countries.
- The 1979 The Moon Agreement states that no part of the moon “shall become property of any State, international intergovernmental or non-governmental organization, national organization or non-governmental entity or of any natural person.”
- The law clearly states that nations cannot law claim to the moon or its land, however they can carry out certain activities.
- However, there is no legislation regarding naming places on the Moon.

#### **Who decides the names?**

- The International Astronomical Union (IAU) is the leading authority in assigning official names to lunar features. India is one of the 92 members of the space body.
- The IAU has been the arbiter of planetary and satellite nomenclature since its inception in 1919.
- Many countries have been giving informal names to the spots on the moon during lunar missions. The United States gave informal names to lunar sites during Apollo missions.
- Most of the informal names assigned during the Apollo mission were later given “official” status by the IAU. In 2021, the IAU approved China's application for naming eight new features on the moon around the landing site of the Chang'e-5 probe.

#### **Process for considering names**

- The IAU's Working Groups handle the process of naming lunar spots, though its decisions and recommendations are not enforceable by any international law.
- Any attempts by India to name physical features near the landing site will require the IAU's nod.

### **2. Terai-Arc Landscape (TAL)**

- **In News-**The poop of tigers has helped a team of scientists at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) understand the prey selection patterns of the striped feline in the Indian part of the Terai-Arc Landscape(TAL).

#### **About Terai Arc Landscape (TAL)**

- It is a stretch between the river Yamuna in the west and the river Bagmati in the east, comprising the Shivalik hills, the adjoining bhabhar areas and the Terai flood plains.
- It is spread across the Indian states of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and the low lying hills of Nepal.
- It has been shortlisted by FAO as the “World Restoration Flagship” as a part of the ongoing UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration Campaign (2021-2030).
- About 22% of the wild tiger population in India is found across the TAL, living amidst some of the highest human and livestock densities on the subcontinent.
- The landscape also has a high mammalian diversity with herbivores including gaur, nilgai, sambar, northern swamp deer, wild pig, chital, goral, and some primates, carnivores such as leopard, wild dog, and hyena apart from the tiger, and omnivores including the sloth bear and Asiatic black bear.

#### **Key Findings of recent assessment**

- The assessment of the food habits of the tiger (*Panthera tigris*) was published in the latest edition of the Journal of Mammalogy, a peer-reviewed international publication.
- A team of researchers found protected areas and non-protected areas in the Terai region are more prone to livestock predation-related conflict
- The feces of the tigers also helped the scientists gather information about the hotspots of conflicts related to livestock predation across 15,000 sq. km of the animal's habitat along the foothills of the Himalayas.
- Large-bodied species - sambar, swamp deer, nilgai, chital, wild pig, and livestock – comprised about 94% of the diet, with sambar, chital, and livestock having the highest relative proportions.

#### **Suggestions**

- Given the significant role of large carnivores in maintaining ecological diversity and interactions within their respective biological communities, the scientists suggested careful management interventions with community involvement to reduce threats of livestock predation-related conflict.
- They also suggested long-term conservation plans including prey abundance estimation outside the PAs, reduction of grazing pressures, and detailed records of tiger mortalities with causal investigations to ensure future conflict-free tiger persistence across the TAL.

### **3. Climate Change and Health Hub**

- **In News- India** to open a climate change and health hub in the national capital in partnership with the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

#### **About**

- The hub will facilitate knowledge sharing, promote partnerships and innovations, and also help countries beyond the G-20, especially developing countries.

- Climate change affects all and this centre will give the opportunity to have different partners discussing this important issue and learning from each other.

**Need for the Hub**

- India also noted that climate change will continue to drive health emergencies, including the emergence and re-emergence of infectious diseases, and by increasing the severity and frequency of natural disasters, thereby threatening to overwhelm health systems' ability to deliver essential services.

**About Asian Development Bank (ADB)**

- ADB was established in 1966 as a financial institution that would be Asian in character and foster economic growth and cooperation in one of the poorest regions in the world.
- ADB assists its members, and partners, by providing loans, technical assistance, grants, and equity investments to promote social and economic development.
- From 31 members at its establishment in 1966, ADB has grown to encompass 68 members-of which 49 are from within Asia and the Pacific and 19 outside.
- **Headquarter:** Manila, Philippines.

**4. Zoning of flood plains**

- **In news:** Punjab has been reeling under floods for well over a month now and the proposed solution to this is zoning of flood plains.

**Significance of flood plains:**

- A river expands and contracts naturally over seasons and in different years.
- A flood plain is an area adjacent to the river which normally gets flooded when the river swells.
- Well maintained flood plains, free from wanton construction and concrete, are natural defences against flooding farther inland.
- They are also useful for recharging groundwater levels and maintaining the water table.

**How flood plains are identified?**

- It is done based on topographical features around rivers.
- For instance, flood plains often contain oxbow lakes – basically abandoned meandering channels of the river, where it once flowed prior to changing its course.

**Zoning of flood plains**

- Zoning of flood plains is done to regulate land use.
- Zoning involves demarcating areas around rivers likely to be affected by floods of different magnitudes and frequencies, in order to specify the types of permissible developments there.
- This is done so that whenever floods do actually occur, the damage is minimal.
- As per guidelines on floodplain zoning by the National Disaster Management Authority, the following should be located such that they are above the levels corresponding to a 100-year frequency or the maximum observed flood levels:
  - ✓ Defense installations,
  - ✓ Industries,
  - ✓ Public utilities like hospitals, electricity installations, water supply, telephone exchanges, aerodromes, railway stations, commercial centers, etc.

**Implications of lack of zoning:**

- Encroachment and mismanagement of flood plains leading to non-suitable construction activity and concretization of flood plains.
- Non-suitable constructions play a part in pushing floods further inland, increasing the area harmed and damage caused during floods.
- Concretization leads to it taking far longer for floods to subside as the water simply does not drain.
- This kind of flooding is not good for flood plains themselves, affecting the fertility and quality of the soil as well.

**ANSWER WRITING**

**Q Analyze the impact of rapid population growth on poverty and development in India. What are the potential solutions to address these challenges?**

**Introduction**

- High population growth will have several repercussions like unemployment, poverty, poor standards of living, a larger gap between the rich and the poor, lesser resources, greater exploitation of natural resources. It will have adverse effect on development.

**Impact of Rapid population on poverty**

- Increase in the population results in more family expenses. It leads to rise in unemployment pushing family into vicious cycle of poverty.
- At one end high population growth rate is one of major reasons of poverty in India.

- High population below poverty line adds to high level of illiteracy, poor health care facilities and poor access to financial resources.
- Hence high population growth affects the per capita income and makes per capita income even lower.
- Whereas on the other side for poor, one more child means two more hands to work and earn for livelihood of family, and this particular reason make poverty a strong cause for growing population.
- Lack of money and proper awareness or education about contraceptive methods is among major causes of population increase in India due to poverty.
- It leads to poor lifestyle and high mortality, particularly among children, which keeps the fertility rates high, due to uncertainty, further increasing the population upwards.
- It leads to rise in unemployment pushing family into vicious cycle of poverty.
- Increased number of people in agricultural families results in decreased portion of divided land among the family members causing lower incomes.

#### **Impact of population on development**

- **Water shortages**-Already up to 40% of the world's population face water scarcity and the risk of drought. A growing population will put pressure on scarce water supplies and this is a factor behind many minor and major conflicts with countries having to find ways around the shortage of water. If this is not addressed soon, the Indian population may become a liability.
- **Generating unsustainable waste**-We are currently generating non-biodegradable rubbish that we are struggling to process. It tends to end in landfill, causing methane emissions and other toxic problems.
- **Problem of Unemployment**-Large size of population results in large army of labour force. But due to shortage of capital resources it becomes difficult to provide gainful employment to the entire working population. Disguised unemployment in rural areas and open unemployment in urban areas are the normal features of an under developed country like India.
- **Pressure on Environment**- Population explosion leads to environmental degradation. Higher birth rate brings more pollution, more toxic wastes and damage to biosphere. Briefly speaking, population explosion hinders the economic development.
- **Education**-The low income of large family does not afford to provide education to their children. Which results into creating a problem of illiteracy and again none awareness among the class.
- **Pressure on food, clothing & housing**-A country with fast growing population has to face a serious problem of scarcity of necessary food, minimum clothing & proper housing facilities, which are basic needs of human life. Thus, it affects the life style and results slum areas, starvation etc.
- It is estimated that India is currently producing 25 million job seekers but provides jobs to only 7 million.

#### **Potential solutions to address these challenges**

- A population can be an asset if the youth of the country has access to education, skill development, increased employment opportunities, etc. however, currently; India faces a very high unemployment rate.
- The current government is bearing the burden of providing the access to clean drinking water, houses, cooking fuel, electricity, and healthcare to the whole of the Indian population and is aiming to create a \$5trillion economy. Also, India's landmass is only 35-40% of China's landmass.
- The government needs to play a pivotal role and invest in education, health and creating economic opportunities for young people, which would help us harness demographic dividend.
- This calls for forward-looking policies incorporating population dynamics, education and skills, healthcare, gender sensitivity, and providing rights and choices to the younger generation.
- India needs to invest more in children and adolescents, particularly in nutrition and learning during early childhood.
- India needs to increase female workforce participation in the economy.
- It is, therefore, important to understand that in order to have a better future for all on a healthy planet, attainment of the SDGs is critical.
- Providing adequate education and training to the young population would make them productive, effective and competent, thereby making them key contributors to economic growth.

#### **Conclusion**

- Efforts to combat the 'vicious circle' of poverty, rising population growth and environmental degradation are said to require multidisciplinary policies in all sectors. These policies need to be carefully established taking account of the need to achieving sustainable development if the resourced that are available for future generations are to be preserved .

#### **MCQ**

1. Consider the following statements with regarding to 'Right to Repair' in India.
  1. The Ministry of Consumer Affairs (MCA) has also set up a Right to Repair portal.

2. That allows citizens to get their gadgets and vehicles repaired without losing warranty.
3. The portal aggregates all the public information related to products, service, warranty, terms and conditions, etc.
- How many of the above statements is/are correct?  
a) Only one                      b) Only two  
c) **All three**                      d) None
2. Consider the following statements with regarding to The Indian Air Force (IAF).
1. The Indian Air Force was officially established on 10 October 1932.
2. Its first ac flight came into being on 01 Apr 1933 with six RAF-trained officers and 19 Havai Sepoys (air soldiers).
3. Indian Air Force has put its weight behind the indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) project.
4. IAF is expecting to receive eight LCA trainers by the end of this financial year.
5. By 2040, the IAF would have 32 or 33 fighter squadrons and would have 35 or 36 fighter squadrons by 2050 if the indigenous fighters meet the induction timeline.
- How many of the above statements is/are correct?  
a) Only one                      b) Only two  
c) **Only three**                      d) Only Four
3. Consider the following statements.
1. The tiger (Panthera tigris) is a striped animal.
2. The combination of grace, strength, agility and enormous power has earned the tiger its pride of place as the national animal of India.
3. Out of eight races of the species known, the Indian race, the Royal Bengal Tiger, is found throughout the country along with the north-western region and also in the neighbouring countries, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh.
4. On International Tiger Day (29th July 2023) the government of India released new data on tiger population at Corbett Tiger Reserve.
- How many of the above statements is/are correct?  
a) Only one                      b) Only two  
c) **Only three**                      d) Only Four
4. Consider the following statements about National Commission for Safai Karamcharis
1. The Supreme Court has sought the government's response in a plea to fill four vacancies on the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis.
2. It is a statutory body constituted in 1994 to ensure the rights of sanitation workers.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?  
a) 1 only                              b) 2 only  
c) **Both 1 and 2**                      d) Neither 1 nor 2
5. With reference to India's religious minorities communities, consider the following statements
1. These include six religions notified under Section 2(c) of the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992.
2. Among them, Christians make up the largest religious minority.
3. The Justice Rajinder Sachar Committee was constituted by the UPA government to look into the social, economic and educational standing of Muslims in India.
- How many of the above statements is/are correct?  
a) Only one                              b) **Only two**  
c) All three                              d) None
6. With reference to Naya Savera scheme, consider the following statements
1. The scheme is being implemented by Ministry of Minority Affairs
2. It was launched to provide free coaching to minority students for entrance to technical and professional courses and competitive examinations.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?  
a) 1 only                              b) 2 only  
c) **Both 1 and 2**                      d) Neither 1 nor 2
7. Which of the following statements best describe the term 'Short selling' in security market?  
a) It is the purchase of one asset with the intention of reducing the risk of loss from another asset.  
b) It is a regulatory measure that temporarily suspends trading on an exchange  
c) It is a method of executing orders using automated pre-programmed trading instructions accounting for variables such as time, price, and volume.  
d) **When an investor borrows a security and sells it on the open market, planning to buy it back later for less money.**
8. Recently, space payloads ILSA, RAMBHA and ChaSTE are in news, there are related to which space mission  
a) Voyager 2                              b) **Chandrayaan-3**  
c) Change 3                              d) Mars Orbiter Mission
9. With reference to Blow flies, consider the following statements
1. They are the first insects to dwell and colonize a dead body.
2. They belong to the family Calliphoridae of the order Diptera.
3. They are crucial for determining the post-mortem interval (PMI), or the amount of time that has passed since a person's death.
- How many of the above statements is/are correct?  
a) Only one                              b) Only two  
c) **All three**                              d) None
10. With reference to Terai-Arc Landscape (TAL), consider the following statements
1. It stretches between the river Yamuna in the west and the river Bhagmati in the east.
2. It comprises the Shivalik hills, the adjoining bhabhar areas and the Terai flood plains.
3. About 22% of the wild tiger population in India is found across the TAL, living amid some of the highest human and livestock densities on the subcontinent.
- How many of the above statements is/are correct?  
a) Only one                              b) Only two  
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