

**GOVERNANCE****Review of Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan**

The Union Education Minister chaired a review meeting on Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA).

**Key Points****About the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan:**

**Aim:** It aims at providing strategic funding to higher education institutions throughout the country.

The scheme is being operated in mission mode for funding state universities and colleges to achieve the aims of equity, access and excellence.

**Funding:** It is a centrally sponsored scheme launched in October 2013.

Since 2016-17, the government has spent an average of Rs. 1,500 crore every year on RUSA.

**Objectives:**

- Improve the overall quality of state institutions by conforming to the prescribed norms and standards.
- Adoption of accreditation (certification of competency) as a mandatory quality assurance framework.
- Promoting autonomy in state universities and improving governance in institutions.
- Ensure reforms in the affiliation, academic and examination system.
- Ensure adequate availability of quality faculty in all higher educational institutions and ensure capacity building at all levels of employment.
- Create an enabling atmosphere for research in the higher education system.
- Correct regional imbalances in access to higher education by setting up institutions in unserved and underserved areas.
- Improve equity in higher education by providing adequate opportunities to the disadvantaged.

**Highlights of the Meeting:**

**Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER):** Need to draw plans on educating additional 3.5 crore students to increase GER to 50% by 2035.

**GER:**

- India's higher education enrollment is calculated in terms of GER, which is the ratio of population in the 18-23 age group to the number of people enrolled in higher education.
- According to All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), the GER in higher education has increased from 25.8% in 2017-18 to 26.3% in 2018-19, while in absolute terms the enrolment increased from 3.66 crores to 3.74 crore students.

**Focus on Local Skills:** A total of 7 crore students with employable skills that suit local conditions should pass out from colleges and Universities. Education should lead to local employment. Education in Degree College should be aligned with the "One district one product (ODOP)" plan.

**Monitoring:** The University Grants Commission will monitor the progress of work done by Institutions which received funding under the RUSA Scheme.

**INDIAN ECONOMY****Revising National Food Security Act, 2013: NITI Aayog**

NITI Aayog, through a discussion paper, has recommended reducing the rural and urban coverage under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, to 60% and 40%, respectively.

It has also proposed a revision of beneficiaries as per the latest population which is currently being done through Census- 2011.

**National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013**

**Notified on:** 10th September, 2013.

**Objective:** To provide for food and nutritional security in the human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantities of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity.

**Coverage:** 75% of the rural population and upto 50% of the urban population for receiving subsidized foodgrains under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).

Overall, NFSA caters to 67% of the total population.

**Key Points****Number of Beneficiaries at Present:**

- Approximately 2.37 crore households or 9.01 crore persons, as in February 2021 under Antyodaya Anna Yojana.
- While approximately 70.35 crore persons are under the priority households.

**Significance of the NITI Aayog's Recommendations:**

- If the rural-urban coverage ratio remains the same (67% of all population), then the total number of people covered will increase from the existing 81.35 crore to 89.52 crore - an increase of 8.17 crore (based on the projected 2020 population).
- This will result in an additional subsidy requirement of Rs. 14,800 crore.
- If the national coverage ratio is revised downward, the Centre can save up to Rs. 47,229 crore.
- This amount of savings can be utilised by the Government in other important areas of concern such as health and education.

**Challenges of the Move:**

- In the times of Covid-19 pandemic, it will be a double burden (Unemployment and Food insecurity issues) on the poor section of the society.
- The move may be opposed by some of the states.

**Other Recommendations:**

HLC (High Level Committee) under Shanta Kumar had recommended reducing the coverage ratio from 67% of the population to 40%.

According to it, 67% coverage of the population is on the much higher side, and should be brought down to around 40%, which will comfortably cover BPL families and some even above that.

The Economic Survey- 2020-21 had recommended a revision of the Central Issue Prices (CIP) of foodgrains released from the central pool, which have remained unchanged for the past several years.

**INTERNATIONAL RELATION**

**India-USA Bilateral Trade**

According to annual reports of US Trade Representative (USTR), India's recent emphasis on import substitution through the 'Make in India' campaign is one the several challenges facing the bilateral trade relationship.

**Key Points**

**Bilateral Trade between India and USA:**

- In 2019-20, the bilateral trade between the USA and India stood at USD 88.75 billion.
- The USA is one of the few countries with which India has a trade surplus.
- India's trade surplus with the USA increased to USD 17.42 billion in 2019-20 from USD 16.86 billion in 2018-19.
- For the USA, India was the sixth largest supplier of services imports.
- India's large market, economic growth, and progress towards development make it an essential market for USA exporters.

**Issues in the Trade Relationship:**

**Tariffs:** Both the countries cite market barriers including both tariff and non-tariff barriers, as well as multiple practices and regulations that disadvantage foreign companies.

**Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) Programme:** Effective from June 2019, the USA decided to withdraw duty-free benefits to Indian exporters under the GSP programme.

**Services:** A key issue for India is the USA's temporary visa policies, which affect Indian nationals working in the United States.

- India also continues to seek a "totalization agreement" to coordinate social security protection for workers who split their careers between the two countries.

**Agriculture:** Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) barriers in India limit USA agricultural exports.

Each side also sees the other's agricultural support programs as market-distorting.

**Intellectual Property (IP):** The two sides differ on how to balance IP protection to incentivize innovation and support other policy goals, such as access to medicines.

- India remains on the "Special 301" Priority Watch List for 2020, based on concerns owing to its treatment of patents, infringement rates, and protection of trade secrets.

**"Forced" Localization:** The United States continues to press India on its "forced" localization practices.

Initiatives to grow India's manufacturing base and support jobs include requirements for in-country data storage, domestic content (such as laws protecting India's solar sector), and domestic testing in some sectors.

- India's new data localization requirements for electronic payment service suppliers such as MasterCard, Visa, etc.

**Investment:** US concerns about investment barriers remain nevertheless, heightened by new Indian restrictions on how e-commerce platforms such as Amazon and Walmart owned Flipkart conduct business.

**Defense Trade:** The United States urges more reforms in India's defense offsets policy and higher Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) caps in its defense sector.

**Generalized System of Preferences:** The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) is a USA trade program designed to promote economic growth in the developing world by providing preferential duty-free entry for up to 4,800 products from 129 designated beneficiary countries and territories. GSP was instituted on 1st January, 1976, by the Trade Act of 1974.

#### **Way Forward**

There is a huge potential to boost bilateral trade between the countries especially on account of increasing anti-China sentiment in both the nations.

Thus, the negotiation should focus on the resolution of various non-tariff barriers and other market access improvements as early as possible.

### **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

#### **TLR 7/8: Covaxin's Key molecule developed by Indian lab**

The Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT), a Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) lab helped in the development of key molecule for COVAXIN.

#### **Key Point**

- Covaxin is the indigenous vaccine developed by the Bharat Biotech International Limited.
- It is a highly purified, whole virion, inactivated SARS-Cov-2.
- It has been formulated with 'Algel-IMDG', which contains chemically absorbed TLR7/8 as an adjuvant onto aluminium hydroxide gel to generate the requisite type of immune responses without damaging the body.

### **AGRICULTURE**

#### **Formation & Promotion of 10,000 FPOs**

Recently, the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare celebrated the first anniversary of the Central Sector Scheme titled 'Formation & Promotion of 10,000 Farmer Produce Organizations (FPOs)'.

#### **Key Points**

##### **Launch:**

- In February 2020, at Chitrakoot (Uttar Pradesh) with a budgetary provision of Rs. 6865 crore.

##### **About:**

- More than 2200 FPOs produce clusters have been allocated for the formation of FPOs in 2020-21.
- Implementing Agencies (IAs) are engaging Cluster-Based Business Organizations (CBBOs) to aggregate, register & provide professional handholding support to each FPO for a period of 5 years.
- CBBOs will be the platform for an end to end knowledge for all issues related to FPO promotion.

##### **Financial Assistance:**

- Up to Rs. 18.00 lakh per FPO for a period of 3 years.
- Provision has also been made for matching equity grant up to Rs. 2,000 per farmer member of FPO with a limit of Rs. 15.00 lakh per FPO.
- Provision of a credit guarantee facility up to Rs. 2 crores of project loan per FPO from the eligible lending institution to ensure institutional credit accessibility to FPOs.

##### **Significance:**

**Increase Farmers Income:** It will promote the selling of farmers' produce from the farm gate of farmers thereby enhancing farmers' income.

This will shorten the supply chain and accordingly marketing costs will get reduced resulting in better income for farmers.

**Create Employment:** It will accelerate more investment in marketing and value addition infrastructure near to farm gates creating more employment opportunities for rural youth.

**Make Farming Viable:** It will make farming more viable by aggregating land.

##### **Other Initiatives for Farmers:**

- National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture.
- Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana.
- Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY).
- Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) Programme.
- Rashtriya Gokul Mission.
- Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana.
- Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana.

### **ODISHA DEVELOPMENT**

#### **NHRC Issues Notice in Hirakud Displacement Case**

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) issued notices to the Chief Secretaries of Odisha and Chhattisgarh over the action taken to alleviate the sufferings of people displaced by the construction of the Hirakud dam over the Mahanadi river about six decades ago.

About 111 villages were submerged due to the construction of Hirakud Dam and around 22,000 families were affected, while about 19,000 families were displaced.

**Key Points**

**Hirakud Dam Project:**

**Establishment:**

- It is a multipurpose scheme conceived by Er. M. Visveswaraya in 1937, after recurrence of devastating floods in Mahanadi river. Its first hydro power was commissioned in 1956.

**Location:**

- The dam is built across river Mahanadi at about 15 km upstream of Sambalpur town in the state of Odisha.

**Objectives:**

**Irrigation:** The project provides 1,55,635 hectares of Kharif and 1,08,385 ha of Rabi irrigation in the districts of Sambalpur, Bargarh, Bolangir and Subarnapur.

The water released through the power house irrigates further 4,36,000 ha of regions in Mahanadi Delta.

**Power Generation:** The installed capacity for power generation is 347.5 MW through its two power houses at Burla, at the right bank and Chiplima, at 22 km downstream of the dam.

**Flood Control:** The project provides flood protection to Mahanadi basin including 9500 sq. km of delta area in districts of Cuttack and Puri.

**Mahanadi River:**

- The Mahanadi River system is the third largest of peninsular India after Godavari and Krishna, and the largest river of Odisha state.
- The catchment area of the river extends to Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand and Maharashtra.
- Its basin is bounded by the Central India hills on the north, by the Eastern Ghats on the south and east and by the Maikala range on the west.

**Source:**

- It rises from a place near Sihawa in Bastar hills in the state of Chhattisgarh to the south of Amarkantak.

**Major Tributaries of the Mahanadi river**

- Seonath River
- Hasdeo River
- Mand River
- Ib River
- Jonking River
- Tel River

**Mahanadi River Dispute:** The Central Government constituted Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal in 2018.

**ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY**

**Right to Repair: European Union**

Companies that sell refrigerators, washers, hair dryers or tele-visions in the European Union (EU) will need to ensure that those appliances can be repaired for up to 10 years.

- The “**Right to Repair,**” as it is sometimes called, came into force across the 27-nation from March 2021.

**Key Points**

**About:**

- The Right to Repair electronics refers to government legislation that is intended to allow consumers the ability to repair and modify their own consumer electronic devices, where otherwise the manufacturer of such devices require the consumer to use only their offered services.
- Idea of Right to Repair originally originated from the USA where the Motor Vehicle Owners' Right to Repair Act 2012, required the manufacturers to provide the necessary documents and information to allow anyone to repair their vehicles.

**New Rules:**

- Under the new EU rules, manufacturers will have to ensure parts are available for up to a decade, though some will only be provided to professional repair companies to ensure they are installed correctly.
- New devices will also have to come with repair manuals and be made in such a way that they can be dismantled using conventional tools when they really can't be fixed anymore, to improve recycling.

**E-Waste Generation in Europe:**

- As per the Global E-Waste Monitor 2020, Europeans produce more than 16 kilograms (kg) of electrical waste per person every year.
- **Asia and Africa were much lower:** 5.6 and 2.5 kg respectively.
- **Global E-Waste Monitor:** It is a collaboration of the Global E-waste Statistics Partnership (GESP), formed by United Nation University (UNU), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA), in close collaboration with the United Nation Environment Programme (UNEP).
- About half of that junk is due to broken household appliances, and the EU recycles only about 40% of it, leaving behind huge amounts of potentially hazardous material.

**Significance:**

- It will help reduce the vast mountain of electrical waste (e-waste) that piles up each year on the continent.
- It will save consumers money.
- It will contribute to circular economy objectives by improving the life span, maintenance, re-use, upgrade, recyclability and waste handling of appliances.

**It would tackle two manufacturing trends:**

- Cavalier attitude towards planned obsolescence.
- Tendency on the part of manufacturers to control the repair and maintenance network.

**Problem with Repair of Modern Appliances:**

**Need Special Tools:** Modern appliances are often glued or riveted together, if you need specialist tools or have to break open the device, then you can't repair it.

**Lack of Spare Parts:** Lack of spare parts is another problem, campaigners say. Sometimes a single broken tooth on a tiny plastic sprocket can be challenging work.

**Concerns For Manufacturers:** Manufacturers have pushed back against a broader "right to repair" as that would hurt their ability to sell new products more frequently, and would push them to become a service provider rather than a product maker.

- They also say allowing the consumer to repair high-technology products is a risk, think of lithium-ion batteries in cars.

**E-waste in India**

**Official Data:** According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), India generated more than 10 lakh tonnes of e-waste in 2019-20, an increase from 7 lakh tonnes in 2017-18.

**E-Waste Management Rules, 2016:** The rules aim to enable the recovery and/or reuse of useful material from e-waste, thereby reducing the hazardous wastes destined for disposal and to ensure the environmentally sound management of all types of waste of electrical and electronic equipment.

**E-Waste Clinic:** Aimed at segregating, processing and disposal of waste..

**IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**

**Channapattana toy makers**

The Channapattana toy makers were in news recently.



**Important value additions**

- Channapatana is a city in Karnataka, India.
- The city is famous for its wooden toys and lacquerware.
- Channapatna is also called Town of toys (“Gombegala nagara”).
- The origin of toys is dated back to Tipu Sultan’s reign.
- These toys have been given Geographical Indication tag.

**DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Qns. The frequent promulgation of ordinances is an assault on the democratic structure of the Constitution. Critically analyse. (250 words)**

Ans:

Article 123 of the Constitution grants the President certain law-making powers to promulgate ordinances during the recess of Parliament. These ordinances have the same force and effect as an Act of Parliament but are in the nature of temporary laws.

Likewise, the Governor of a state can issue ordinances under Article 213 of the Constitution, when the state legislative assembly (or either of the two Houses in states with bicameral legislatures) is not in session.

The ordinance making power is the most important legislative power of the President and the Governor. It has been vested in them to deal with unforeseen or urgent situations.

**Need for the promulgation of ordinances**

**Immediate action requirement:** Temporary law making power has been conferred on the President and the Governor under the Constitution of India to meet the unforeseen and extraordinary situations which require immediate action to which the ordinary law prevailing at that time cannot handle.

**Legislature not in session:** An ordinance can be issued only when both Houses of Parliament, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, are not in session. But it is not possible to pass a law immediately to grip the suddenly arisen circumstances due to procedural formalities, President/Governor may prorogue the Legislature and issue an ordinance.

**Issues with frequent promulgation of ordinances**

**Deliberate bypassing of the legislature:** At times there are instances that legislature is being deliberately bypassed to avoid debate and deliberations on contentious legislative proposals. This is against the ethos and spirit of democracy. Repromulgation of ordinances: As observed by the Supreme Court, re-promulgation of ordinances is a “fraud” on the Constitution and a subversion of democratic legislative processes, especially when the government persistently avoids placing the ordinances before the legislature.

For example, a series of ordinances were issued by the Bihar Governor between 1989 and 1992 regarding the taking over of private Sanskrit schools by the state.

**Infringement of principle of separation of powers:** The power of the executive to issue ordinances goes against the principle of separation of powers as lawmaking is the domain of legislature.

**The satisfaction of the President:** Ordinance can be promulgated only when the President is satisfied that circumstances exist for the same thus providing the scope of misuse of the power.

When ordinances are frequently issued and re-issued, it violates the spirit of the Constitution and result in an ‘ordinance raj’. In D.C. Wadhwa vs State of Bihar 1987, the Supreme Court strongly condemned this practice and called it a constitutional fraud.

Since independence, numerous ordinances have been issued which clearly shows that this power has been used quite regularly instead of being the last resort.

**For example:** The Securities Laws (Amendment) Ordinance, 2014 was re-promulgated for the third time during the term of the 15th Lok Sabha.

The Indian Medical Council (Amendment) Ordinance, 2010 was re-promulgated four times. This happened despite the SC verdict in 1986 condemning such action.

The promulgation of Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2019 was seen as a politically motivated action.

More recently the BJP led government has released three ordinances: The Farmers’ Produce Market Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020, The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020 which appear to be an abuse of power.

**Conclusion**

Our Constitution has provided for the separation of powers among the legislature, executive and judiciary where enacting laws is the function of the legislature. The executive must show self-restraint and should use ordinance making power only in unforeseen or urgent matters and not to evade legislative scrutiny and debates.

**DAILY QUIZ**

1. Consider the following statements about the Mahanadi river:

1. It is the largest peninsular river system of India.
2. The catchment area of river lies in the states of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.
3. India's tallest dam is built on the Mahanadi river.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 only**
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

2. Consider the following statements about India-US Bilateral Trade:

1. India has a trade surplus with the USA.
2. India is the largest service importer to the USA.
3. India is not a beneficiary of the duty-free benefits provided under the US Generalised System of Preferences.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 3 only**
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

3. With reference to the National Food Security Act (NFSA), consider the following statements:

1. Foodgrains under NFSA are made available to beneficiaries free of cost.
2. NFSA caters to the food demands of the families under Below Poverty Line (BPL) only.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2**

4. With reference to the Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan, consider the following statements:

1. It provides fundings to higher education institutions throughout the country.
2. It is a centrally sponsored scheme.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2**
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

5. Which of the following are correct about the satellites of PSLV-C51?

1. Amazonia 1 has been placed in a geo-synchronous polar orbit.
2. UNITYsat satellites have been deployed to provide radio relay services.
3. SDSAT is a nano satellite.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1, and 3 only
- b) 2 and 3 only**
- c) 1 and 2 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3