

POLITY

Minority Educational Institutions and Right to Education

Recently, the Supreme Court has refused to entertain a petition questioning the exclusion of madrasas and Vedic schools (Minority Educational Institutions (MEI)) from the ambit of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009. The exclusion of these institutions was specifically inserted into the 2009 Act by an amendment of August 2012.

Earlier, a report by the NCPCR showed the disproportionate number of minority institutions or dominance of non-minority category in Minority institutions.

What are Legal Provisions regarding MEI and RTE?

- Right to Education under Article 21A: It describes modalities of the importance of free and compulsory education for children aged between 6-14 years in India under Article 21 (A) of the Constitution of India (86th Amendment).
- The Act mandates 25% reservation for disadvantaged sections of the society where disadvantaged groups include:
 1. SCs and STs
 2. Socially Backward Class
 3. Differently abled
- Article 29 and 30 of Indian Constitution contain provisions securing rights of minorities and minority-run institutions. Minority institutions have the fundamental right under Article 30 of the Constitution to establish and administer their educational institutions according to their choice.
- In this context, RTE was amended to add in Sections 1(4) and 1(5) of the Act.
 1. Section 1(5) of the RTE Act states, "Nothing contained in this Act shall apply to madrasas, Vedic pathshalas and educational institutions primarily imparting religious instruction.
 2. Section 1(4) of the RTE states that "Subject to the provisions of Articles 29 and 30 of the Constitution, the provisions of this Act shall apply to conferment of rights on children to free and compulsory education.

What are the Arguments of Petitioners?

- **Avoiding Religious Connotation in Formative Years:** Sections 1(4) and 1(5) fail to consider that children aged between 6 and 14 years are in their formative years and such education brings about a religious connotation in the mind of children.
- **Level Playing Field:** Introduction of common syllabus and common curriculum would enable every child to be placed on a level playing field for the challenges of the future. Right of a child should not be restricted only to free education, but must be extended to have equal quality education without discrimination on the ground of child's social economic and cultural background.
- **Adhering to Constitutional Values:** It would meaningfully contribute in achieving the great golden goals as set out in the preamble, particularly fraternity, unity and national integration.
- Therefore, the court may declare Sections 1(4) and 1(5) of the 2009 Act arbitrary and irrational.

Way Forward

- There is a need to review the exemption made under RTE with respect to minority institutions.
 1. Article 30 of the Indian constitution ensures the right of minorities to open their own institutions for cultural, linguistic and religious protection.
 2. However, it should not contravene with Article 21(A) which protects a child's fundamental right to education.

GOVERNANCE

Intensified Mission Indradhanush 4.0

Recently, Maharashtra has signaled that it may opt out of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana Scheme. Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Telangana, Bihar, Gujarat, Punjab and West Bengal - all predominantly agriculture states - have already opted out of the scheme.

What are the Major Provisions of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)?

- Launched in 2016 and is being administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. It replaced the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) and Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS).
- **Aim:** To provide a comprehensive insurance cover against the failure of the crop thus helping in stabilising the income of the farmers.
- **Scope:** All food & oilseed crops and annual commercial/horticultural crops for which past yield data is available.
- **Premium:** The prescribed premium is 2% to be paid by farmers for all Kharif crops and 1.5% for all rabi crops. In the case of annual commercial and horticultural crops, the premium is 5%.

1. Premium cost over and above the farmer share was equally subsidized by States and GoI.
2. However, GoI shared 90% of the premium subsidy for North Eastern States to promote the uptake in the region.
- **Implementation:** By empanelled general insurance companies. The selection of the Implementing Agency (IA) is done by the concerned State Government through bidding.
- **Revamped PMFBY:** The revamped PMFBY is often called PMFBY 2.0, it has the following features:
 1. **Completely Voluntary:** Enrolment 100% voluntary for all farmers from 2020 Kharif. Earlier, it was compulsory for loanee farmers availing Crop Loan/Kisan Credit Card (KCC) account for notified crops.
 2. **Limit to Central Subsidy:** The Centre has decided to limit the PMFBY premium rates - against which it would bear 50% of the subsidy - to a maximum of 30% in un-irrigated and 25% in irrigated areas.
 3. **More Flexibility to States:** The government has given the flexibility to states/UTs to implement PMFBY and given them the option to select any number of additional risk covers/features.
 4. **Investing in ICE Activities:** Insurance companies have to now spend 0.5% of the total premium collected on Information, Education And Communication (IEC) activities.

What are the Issues in PMFBY?

- **Financial Constraints of States:** The financial constraints of the state governments and low claim ratio during normal seasons are the major reasons for non-implementation of the Scheme by these States.
 1. States are unable to deal with a situation where insurance companies compensate farmers less than the premium they have collected from them and the Centre.
 2. The State governments failed to release funds on time leading to delays in releasing insurance compensation.
 3. This defeats the very purpose of the scheme which is to provide timely financial assistance to the farming community.
- **Claim Settlement Issues:** Many farmers are dissatisfied with both the level of compensation and delays in settlement. The role and power of Insurance companies is significant. In many cases, it didn't investigate losses due to a localised calamity and, therefore, did not pay the claims.
- **Implementation Issues:** Insurance companies have shown no interest in bidding for clusters that are prone to crop loss. Further, it is in the nature of the insurance business for entities to make money when crop failures are low and vice-versa.
- **Identification Issues:** Currently the PMFBY scheme doesn't distinguish between large and small farmers and thus raises the issue of identification. Small farmers are the most vulnerable class.

Way Forward

- **Improving PMFBY:** If the farmer is not enthused by crop insurance despite the 95-98% subsidy on premium, it means that the product per se needs improvement.
 1. In this context, Insurance companies should bid for a cluster for about three years, so that they get a better chance to handle both good and bad years.
 2. The bids should be closed before the onset of the kharif/rabi season.
- **Adopting Beed Model:** In Maharashtra 'Beed model is being followed', where a company assumes liability only up to 110% of the premium collected or shares gains in a good year with the State government. This model can emerge as a way out from the current mess.

GEOGRAPHY

River Devika Project: Jammu and Kashmir

River Devika project, built at the cost of over Rs 190 crore, will be complete by June, 2022.

What is the River Devika project?

- The work on the project was started in March 2019 under the National River Conservation Plan (NRCP).
- Under the project, bathing "ghats" (places) on the banks of the Devika River will be developed, encroachments will be removed, natural water bodies will be restored and catchment areas will be developed along with cremation ground.
- The project also includes the construction of three sewage treatment plants, sewerage network of 129.27 km, development of two cremation ghats, protection fencing and landscaping, small hydropower plants and three solar power plants.
- On completion of the project, the rivers will see reduction in pollution and improvement in water quality.

What is the importance of the Devika River?

- Devika river originates from the hilly Suddha Mahadev temple in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir and flows down towards western Punjab (now in Pakistan) where it merges with the Ravi river.
- The river holds religious significance as it is revered by Hindus as the sister of river Ganga.
- In June 2020, Devika Bridge was inaugurated in Udhampur. Apart from taking care of traffic congestion, the Devika Bridge was also meant to help smooth passage of Army convoys and vehicles.

What is the National River Conservation Plan (NRCP)?

- NRCP is a centrally funded scheme launched in 1995 aimed at preventing the pollution of rivers.
- Programs for river conservation are being implemented under National River Conservation Plan (NRCP) and NGRBA (National Ganga River Basin Authority). The National Ganga Council, also known as the National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection, and Management of River Ganga, has replaced the NGRBA.

Which Activities are covered under NRCP?

- Interception and Diversion works to capture the raw sewage flowing into the river through open drains and divert them for treatment.
- Sewage Treatment Plants for treating the diverted sewage.
- Low Cost Sanitation works to prevent open defecation on riverbanks.
- Electric Crematoria and Improved Wood Crematoria to conserve the use of wood and help in ensuring proper cremation of bodies brought to the burning ghats.
- River Front Development works such as improvement of bathing ghats.
- Public awareness and public participation.
- Human Resource Development (HRD), capacity building, training and research in the area of River Conservation.
- Other miscellaneous works depend upon location specific conditions including the interface with human population.

PRELIMS FACT**Initial Public Offering (IPO)**

Recently, the government-owned Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) filed its Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) for its mega Initial Public Offering (IPO) with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). The Government, which owns 100% of LIC, will be offloading 5% of its stake through the IPO. All the proceeds from the IPO, which is in the form of an offer for sale and is expected to total up to at least Rs. 60,000 crore, will go towards meeting the Government's disinvestment target for FY22.

LIC is fully owned by the government. It was set up in 1956. It has the biggest share in India's insurance business.

What is an IPO?

- It is the process by which a privately held company, or a company owned by the government such as LIC, raises funds by offering shares to the public or to new investors.
 1. Following the IPO, the company is listed on the stock exchange. Stock exchange is an organized market for the sale and purchase of securities such as shares, stocks, and bonds.
 2. A listed company can raise share capital for growth and expansion in the future through a follow-on public offering or FPO.
- While coming up with an IPO, the company has to file its offer document with the market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
 1. The offer document contains all relevant information about the company, its promoters, its projects, financial details, the object of raising the money, terms of the issue, etc.
 2. SEBI is a statutory body established in 1992 in accordance with the provisions of the Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992.

What is an Offer for Sale?

- Under the offer for sale method, securities are not issued directly to the public but are offered for sale through intermediaries like issuing houses or stock brokers.
- In this case, a company sells securities en bloc at an agreed price to brokers who, in turn, resell them to the investing public.

What is DRHP?

- A Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) is a legal preliminary document. It serves as an important communication link between the IPO-bound company and its investors and stakeholders.

Who is allowed to invest in an IPO?

- Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) is a category of investors that includes Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs), mutual funds, commercial banks, insurance companies, pension funds, etc. QIBs are those institutional investors who are generally perceived to possess expertise and the financial capacities to evaluate and invest in the capital markets.
- All individuals who invest up to Rs 2 lakh in an issue are classified as retail investors.
- Retail investors investing above Rs 2 lakh are classified as high net worth individuals.

Which companies can come out with an IPO?

- In order to protect investors, SEBI has laid down rules that require companies to meet certain criteria before they can go to the public to raise funds.
- Among other conditions, the company must have net tangible assets of at least Rs 3 crore, and net worth of Rs 1 crore in each of the preceding three full years, and it must have a minimum average pre-tax profit of Rs 15 crore in at least three of the immediately preceding five years.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. The issue of shortage of land to increase forest cover could be overcome by increasing tree cover outside forests. Discuss in the light of Agro-forestry and social forestry. (250 words)

Introduction

Agroforestry is a sustainable management for the land that increases overall production, combines agricultural crops, tree crops, forest plants and animals simultaneously and applies management practices that are compatible with the cultural patterns of the local population. Agroforestry can be classified into Agrosilvicultural systems, Silvopastoral systems and Agrisilvopastoral systems.

Social forestry can be described as “Forestry of the people, by the people and for the people”. Social forestry means management and protection of the forests as well as afforestation of barren lands aimed at helping in environmental, social and rural development as against the traditional objective of securing revenue.

Body

Forest cover in India

- The recently released India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2021 shows the total forest and tree cover in India is 80.9 million hectares, which is 24.62 per cent of the geographical area of the country.
- Between 2019 and 2021, the forest and tree cover rose by 2,261 sq km.

Scope of Agro and social forestry in India

1. Reduction of pressure on natural forests.
2. More efficient recycling of nutrients by deep rooted trees on the site
3. Better protection of ecological systems
4. Reduction of surface run-off, nutrient leaching and soil erosion through impeding effect of tree roots and stems on these processes
5. Improvement of microclimate, such as lowering of soil surface temperature and reduction of evaporation of soil moisture through a combination of mulching and shading
6. Increment in soil nutrients through addition and decomposition of litterfall.
7. Improvement of soil structure through the constant addition of organic matter from decomposed litter.

Challenges

Challenges faced by Agroforestry in India

1. There is lack of uniformity in the policies and regulations relating to felling and transporting farm-grown timber and other products in different states.
2. The agroforestry produce is lacking coverage under agricultural insurance schemes and are finding it difficult to marketing support.
3. The banks are also reluctant towards granting loans to farmers for agroforestry.
4. The non-availability or scarcity of saplings of suitable tree species required for agroforestry.
5. There is seasonal occurrence of plant and animal diseases and inadequate compensation for damaged crops.
6. There is lack of knowledge regarding agroforestry among the stakeholders and farmers use inadequate harvesting and processing techniques.

Way forward:

- Encourage and expand tree plantation in complementarity and integrated manner with crops and livestock to improve productivity, employment, income and livelihoods of rural households, especially the small holder farmers.
- Protect and stabilize ecosystems, and promote resilient cropping and farming systems to minimize the risk during extreme climatic events.
- Meet the raw material requirements of wood based industries and reduce import of wood and wood products to save foreign exchange.

- Supplement the availability of agroforestry and social forestry products (AFPs), such as the fuel-wood, fodder, non-timber forest produce and small timber of the rural and tribal populations, thereby reducing the pressure on existing forests.
- Complement achieving the target of increasing forest/tree cover to promote ecological stability, especially in the vulnerable regions.
- Effective implementation of National Agricultural Policy.

Conclusion

To realize the vision of doubling farmers' income (DFI) by 2022, agro-forestry can play an extremely supportive role by improving livelihoods of poor communities.

DAILY QUIZ

- Q1. *Acinetobacter baumannii*, *Enterococcus faecalis*, *Escherichia coli* are
- Agents of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)
 - Pathogens that have the ability to develop resistance to antibiotics.**
 - Drugs administered to livestock as painkillers/anti-inflammatory drugs.
 - Vectors that cause Malaria
- Q2. Which one of the following tiger reserves became the first in India to officially introduce a mascot – 'Bhoorsingh the Barasingha'?
- Keoladeo
 - Buxa
 - Kanha**
 - Dampa
- Q3. In which one of the following States is Raimona National Park located?
- Arunachal Pradesh
 - Manipur
 - Meghalaya
 - Assam**
- Q4. With reference to the 'Gram Nyayalaya Act', which of the following statements is/are correct?
- As per the Act, Gram Nyayalayas can hear only civil cases and not criminal cases.
 - The Act allows local social activists as mediators/reconciliators.
- Select the correct answer using the code given below.
- 1 only
 - 2 only**
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
- Q5. Consider the following statements about Gram Nyayalayas:
- The Gram Nyayalayas are presided over by a Judicial Magistrate of First Class.
 - A Gram Nyayalaya have jurisdiction over an area specified by a notification by the Supreme Court of India.
 - Both the Central and the State Government can add or remove items in the Schedule of the Gram Nyayalayas Act, 2008.
- Which of the given above statements is/are not correct?
- 1 and 2 only**
 - 3 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 1, 2 and 3