

## 26 Sep 2023: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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### B. GS 2 Related

#### Category: GOVERNANCE

#### **1. What are the findings of the Parliament panel on NEP?**

*Syllabus: Government policies and interventions aimed at development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

*Prelims: About National Education Policy (NEP)*

*Mains: Government policies and interventions in the Education sector, National Education Policy*

Context

The Parliament Standing Committee on Education has presented a report on the implementation of the [National Education Policy \(NEP\) 2020](#) in higher education, addressing critical issues and proposing recommendations.

## Introduction

- The Parliament Standing Committee on Education presented a report on the "Implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in Higher Education" during a special session of Parliament.
- This report examines the progress and salient features of NEP's implementation in higher education, based on interactions with various stakeholders.

## State-Centric Higher Education

- The report highlights that 70% of the 1,043 universities in India are under the State Act, with 94% of students enrolled in State or private institutions and only 6% in Central higher educational institutions.
- Emphasises the pivotal role of States in providing higher education.

## Key Issues Discussed

- The committee addressed various issues including rigid separation of disciplines, limited access to higher education in disadvantaged areas, lack of local language instruction, insufficient faculty, limited institutional autonomy, inadequate focus on research, ailing regulatory mechanisms, and subpar undergraduate education.
- A vision for 2030: Each district should have at least one multidisciplinary higher education institution, and the Gross Enrolment Ratio should rise from 26.3% in 2018 to 50% by 2035.

## Recommendations

- Urges the Union and State Governments to allocate adequate funds for Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) in education.
- Encourages setting clear targets for higher Gross Enrolment Ratio for SEDGs, enhancing gender balance, and offering financial assistance and scholarships to SEDGs in public and private institutions.
- Advocates inclusive admission processes, curriculum, and employability-focused programs.
- Recommends developing more degree courses in regional languages and bilingual formats.
- Suggests specific infrastructure improvements for physically challenged students and strict enforcement of anti-discrimination and anti-harassment rules.

## Positive Example: Jammu and Kashmir

- Commends Jammu and Kashmir for being among the first regions to implement NEP in all its higher education institutions starting from the academic session of 2022.
- Highlights positive outcomes, such as a shift in teaching methods towards lifelong learning opportunities.

## Funding Enhancements

- Proposes enhancing the effectiveness of the Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) by diversifying funding sources, including partnerships with private sector organisations, philanthropic foundations, and international financial institutions.

- Recommends reviewing and adjusting interest rates on HEFA loans to ensure affordability and competitiveness for higher education institutions.

### Concerns about MEME System

- Expresses concerns about the practicality of implementing the multiple entry and multiple exit (MEME) system in India.
- Suggests that MEME may disrupt the pupil-teacher ratio and create uncertainties in student enrollment.

***Nut Graf:** The report of the Parliament Standing Committee on Education assesses NEP 2020's progress in higher education, emphasising the role of states, highlighting key issues, and offering recommendations to improve access, quality, and inclusivity in India's higher education landscape.*

### Category: SOCIAL JUSTICE

#### 1. Why the Northeast cannot be treated as a 'single homogenous' territory

***Syllabus:** Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector, Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and the States.*

***Mains:** Issues related to the development and management of social sectors particularly in the context of marginalised communities in the Northeast.*

#### Context

The article discusses the diverse and marginalised Northeast region of India, emphasising the need to understand its heterogeneity, social issues, and the challenges faced by migrants.

#### Introduction

- The Northeast region consists of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura.
- The region is home to various ethnic communities with Indo-Chinese Mongoloid racial backgrounds.
- The idea of a homogenous Northeast is problematic, given its linguistic, cultural, and ethnic diversity.

#### Historical Perspective: Colonial Influence

- British colonial rule governed the Northeast as a single entity, influencing its perception.
- This historical construct continues to affect the region's governance by the Indian state.

#### Diverse and Heterogeneous

- Northeast India is as diverse as the entire country in terms of language, culture, and ethnicity.

- A seminar on 'Identity and Marginality in Northeast India' in 2017 highlighted the need to recognize heterogeneity. There is a need to highlight the elements of heterogeneity of the different groups and their experiences, contestations and conflicts.

### Key Issues in Northeast India

- Indigeneity: Indigenous rights and recognition are significant concerns, with implications for land ownership and cultural preservation.
- Policy and Economy: Economic development policies need to address the region's specific needs and challenges.
- Migration: Northeastern migrants face marginalisation and discrimination in other parts of India.
  - Racial discrimination against Northeastern migrants in Delhi is a classic example of this issue.
  - The Bezbaruah Committee, established in 2014 to address the concerns of northeastern citizens residing across the nation, proposed the use of social media as a means to connect with people from the Northeast. Consequently, a dedicated helpline (1093) was integrated with the existing emergency helpline (100).
- Land Rights: Land is a critical livelihood factor, and disputes over land ownership are common.
- Insurgency: Ongoing insurgent movements in some states contribute to instability.
- Militarization: The presence of military forces affects daily life and security in certain areas.
- State Violence: Instances of state violence raise human rights concerns.
- Laws like AFSPA: The [Armed Forces Special Powers Act](#) has implications for civil liberties and security.
- Reservation: The debate over reservation policies for marginalised communities in the region.
- Discrimination: Discrimination against outsiders living in Northeast India also exists.

### Impact of Conflict on Women

- In conflict-prone areas like Manipur, Nagaland, and Assam, ethnic violence has displaced communities.
- Women often become primary breadwinners due to displacement or the loss of male family members.
- Displacement also results in health challenges, including malnutrition, post-traumatic stress, and increased risk of communicable diseases.
- Land disputes during conflicts affect women's economic security.

### Complexities Within Marginalised Groups

- Even within marginalised communities, there are complexities in addressing issues.
- For example, some Naga tribal bodies oppose women's reservation, citing the protection of customary laws.
- In matrilineal societies like Khasi, power dynamics can still be patriarchal.

### Conclusion

- Understanding the complexities of Northeast India, including its diversity, identity, and key issues, is vital for promoting unity and addressing marginalisation effectively in the region.

***Nut Graf:** Northeast India, a region rich in diversity, faces issues of marginalisation and discrimination. This article delves into its complexity, from historical roots to contemporary challenges.*

## C. GS 3 Related

**Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY****1. Newly minted NRF has a chance to bridge India's science, society gap**

*Syllabus: Recent developments and their applications and effects in everyday life, Indigenisation of technology and developing new technology. Government policies and interventions aimed at development of science and technology.*

*Mains: Government initiatives for scientific research- National Research Foundation (NRF)*

*Prelims: About National Research Foundation (NRF)*

**Context**

The article explores the establishment of India's National Research Foundation (NRF) and the ongoing debate about its funding philosophy, emphasising the need for research aligned with societal challenges.

**Introduction**

- The National Research Foundation (NRF) is a recently approved research funding agency in India.
- It has a budget of ₹50,000 crores over five years.
- NRF aims to boost research and innovation by providing funding, streamlining processes, and fostering collaboration between academia, industry, society, and government.

**Debates on Research Funding Rationales**

- Scientists are discussing what kind of research NRF should fund to yield innovative solutions to practical challenges.
- One viewpoint emphasises that research should not be prescriptive but driven by curiosity, as discoveries often emerge unexpectedly.
- Another perspective stresses the importance of collaboration between scholars, industries, and government from the outset of problem-solving.
- Some experts highlight involving societal stakeholders in defining research directions for science, technology, and innovation (STI).

**The 'Curiosity-Driven' Argument**

- This argument, based on Vannevar Bush's 1945 paper, suggests that innovation should be driven by "the free play of free intellects" following curiosity.
- It assumes that new knowledge naturally leads to technological advances and economic growth.
- Examples include genome sequencing and medical diagnostics.

**Challenging the 'Curiosity-Driven' Notion**

- Daniel Sarewitz's 2016 essay argues that many key inventions in the U.S. were driven by the technological demands of the Department of Defense (DOD) rather than curiosity.



- DOD investments influenced the development of computers and computer science, leading to innovations like the World Wide Web.
- Even the discovery of penicillin had a target-driven effort and industrial involvement.

### The Emergence of New Innovation Models

- The 'national innovation system' model, popularised in the 1980s, emphasises interconnectedness, learning, and entrepreneurship.
- Japan and South Korea's economic growth is attributed to such systems.
- A third model focuses on sustainability and societal transformation, involving citizen science and stakeholder participation.
  - Denmark's wind power success is an example of this model.

### Revisiting India's STI Policies

- Historically, India has favoured the 'pipeline model,' letting curiosity guide STI.
- NRF offers an opportunity to reconsider this model and explore newer approaches.
- The emphasis now shifts towards innovation driven by social challenges and stakeholder participation for a more just and sustainable future.

### Conclusion

- The NRF's establishment marks a pivotal moment for India to reshape its STI policies and embrace innovative models that address societal challenges, ensuring a more sustainable and inclusive future.

***Nut Graf:** As India launches the National Research Foundation (NRF) with a substantial budget, discussions arise on whether research should be curiosity-driven or problem-focused, reflecting a shift towards collaborative and impactful innovation models.*

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. G20 diplomacy and a shifting world order

*Syllabus: Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.*

*Prelims: G20 Summit in India, BRICS, NATO, Non-Alignment, Bali Declaration*

***Mains: Changing World Order and Impact on India, Emergence of two blocs in global politics, Threats to India's Strategic Autonomy***

### **Context**

The G-20 summit has highlighted the changing dynamics of international politics and the declining space for non-alignment in the current geopolitical landscape.

### **India and G-20**

- India achieved diplomatic success at the [G-20](#) meeting in Delhi.
- Despite challenges, the New Delhi Declaration secured a consensus declaration on nearly 100 issues.
- It addressed various topics, including terrorism, climate change, renewable energy, sustainable development, and multilateral development banks.
- Initiatives like digital public infrastructure and [Unified Payments Interface](#) were also highlighted.
- The declaration emphasized compromise over conflict and supported Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of "One Earth, One Family, One Future."
- The agreement on the Ukraine conflict was also reached when the West agreed to refrain from blaming Russia and accepted a resolution rather than condemning it.
- This contrasts with the Bali Declaration of November 2022, which condemned Russia for its actions in Ukraine. Russia and China strongly criticized the Bali declaration.
- The outcomes of the G-20 meeting reflected the aspirations of the larger global community.
- As the host country, India can take credit for the successful outcome.

### **Is China's perception of multilateralism changing?**

- China has welcomed the Delhi Declaration, but feels the G-20 is being used as geopolitical and security tools.
- It also warned against the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor Plan due to concerns of being used as a political tool.
- Others have expressed scepticism about the effectiveness of the G-20 in addressing global issues.
- The world is currently facing a period of multiple crises including geopolitical competition, inflation, ongoing conflicts and climate change.
- The West's acknowledgement of India's growing economic strength and India's membership in the [Quad](#) (a group seen as a key player in containing China) require India to exercise caution.
- India should avoid being caught in the crossfire of the growing tensions between the West and China.

### **Emergence of two blocs:**

- The role of the G-20 has shifted in recent years, with a greater focus on global political conflicts rather than economic issues.
- The world faces emerging disorder, the return of two antagonistic blocs, and shrinking space for non-aligned countries.
- Analysts suggest two opposing blocs, led by the West and China-Russia, are competing to change the balance of power.
- The US is strengthening and expanding NATO to counter "Russian expansionism" and non-NATO allies are being convinced to join a US-led alliance to counter authoritarianism represented by Russia and China.

- Russia and China are deepening their strategic alignment, with countries like North Korea cementing relationships with this bloc.
- China is challenging US naval power in the Pacific Ocean, while Russia is seeking to expand its footprint in Africa.

### Is the space for non-alignment shrinking?

- The current geopolitical landscape is making it difficult for countries to maintain their non-alignment status. For example, forums like [BRICS](#) (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) are finding it challenging to stay neutral.
- Rival camps with different visions for the international order are becoming more prominent and security agreements between nations within a bloc have limited the space for non-alignment.
- The G-20 summit in New Delhi and mentions of the Global South's significance might not change this reality and global powers may still treat other countries as pawns in international politics, without much say in shaping the future.

***Nut Graf:** The G-20 summit in Delhi has highlighted the growing geopolitical tensions between the West and China, with the world increasingly divided into two blocs. This is shrinking the space for non-alignment and making it difficult for countries to maintain their strategic autonomy. India, as a rising power, needs to exercise caution to avoid being caught in the crossfire.*

## Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

### 1. Children, a key yet missed demographic in AI regulation

***Syllabus:** Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the Protection and Betterment of these Vulnerable Sections.*

***Prelims:** Artificial Intelligence, Digital India Act, UNICEF*

***Mains:** Impact of AI on Children, Ethical Framework for Global expansion of AI*

#### Introduction

- India is set to host the first-ever global summit on Artificial Intelligence (AI) in October.
- AI is also expected to contribute \$500 billion to India's economy by 2025
- In this context, the Prime Minister has called for a global framework for the ethical expansion of AI.

#### Protecting Children's Interests in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

- The impact of AI on children's privacy, security, and well-being raises concerns.
- Without proper regulation, AI-based digital services may use opaque algorithms and dark patterns to exploit vulnerable youth.
- This can result in tech-based distortions of ideal physical appearances, leading to body image issues, as well as other negative effects like misinformation, radicalization, cyberbullying, sexual grooming etc.



- Children and adolescents must be equipped with tools to manage the unintended consequences of their online presence, including AI-powered deep fake capabilities that can be used to create and distribute morphed sexually explicit content.
- Intersectional identities, including gender, caste, tribal identity, religion, and linguistic heritage, must be considered in AI regulation to prevent biases and discrimination against marginalized communities.
- India's current data protection framework for children is insufficient, placing too much responsibility on parents to protect their children's interests and failing to facilitate safe platform operations and design.
- The upcoming Digital India Act (DIA) should better protect children's interests when interacting with AI by improving upon these existing approaches.
- India has the opportunity to pioneer efforts in mitigating the effects of artificial intelligence (AI) on young people, as many state-of-the-art AI applications, while not intentionally created for children, remain readily available to them via digital platforms.
- Regulation of AI must ensure that incentives are aligned to address issues such as addiction, mental health, and safety.

### **The Role of Parents and Guardians**

- Parents and guardians play a vital role in safeguarding their children's online experiences. They are responsible for educating them about online safety, and making informed decisions about the apps and platforms their children use.
- However, this approach places an unfair burden on parents, who may lack the technical expertise or resources to effectively manage their children's online activities.
- Moreover, it fails to recognize the reality that children often assist their parents in navigating complex digital interfaces and user experiences.

### **UNICEF's Guidance for Policymakers**

- To address these concerns, UNICEF has developed guidelines for policymakers on AI and children.
- These guidelines focus on creating a child-centred approach that promotes well-being, inclusion, fairness, non-discrimination, safety, transparency, explainability, and accountability.
- The guidelines advocate for an enabling environment that encourages the development of AI systems that cater to children's diverse needs and promote their best interests.

### **Age-Appropriate Design Code**

- One effective strategy for ensuring child-friendly AI is the implementation of an Age-Appropriate Design Code.
- California's Age-Appropriate Design Code Act serves as a useful model.
- The code requires digital services to configure default privacy settings that prioritize children's privacy, assess algorithms and data collection methods for potential harm to children, and utilize clear, age-appropriate language for user-facing information.
- Similarly, India should develop an Age-Appropriate Design Code for AI that caters to the unique needs of its children.

### **Institutionalizing Dialogue with Children**

- In addition to regulatory measures, it is essential to establish institutions that foster regular dialogue with children.

- Mechanisms such as Australia's Online Safety Youth Advisory Council, which includes members between the ages of 13 and 24, can provide valuable insights into the threats and benefits that young people encounter when interacting with AI systems.
- Such institutions will enable regulations to respond more effectively to emerging challenges and preserve the benefits that children derive from digital services.

## Conclusion

- As India moves forward with its plans to introduce a new law to regulate harms on the internet, it is imperative that the interests of children remain at the forefront.
- By embracing standards, strong institutions, and best practices that promote openness, trust, and accountability, we can ensure that AI development and deployment benefit both children and society as a whole

**Nut Graf:** *A comprehensive legal framework to regulate the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on children's privacy, security, and well-being is the need of the hour. The upcoming Digital India Act (DIA) should improve upon existing approaches to protect children's interests. By embracing standards, strong institutions, and best practices that promote openness, trust, and accountability, we can ensure that AI development and deployment benefit both children and society as a whole.*

## F. Prelims Facts

### 1. Philippines removes China's barrier in disputed shoal

**Syllabus:** GS 2 - International Relations

**Prelims:** Scarborough Shoal

- The Philippine coast guard has removed a floating barrier placed by China's coast guard in the South China Sea.
- Chinese coast guard ships erected a 300-metre-long obstruction, supported by buoys and nets when Philippine fishing vessels approached the area.
- The barrier was set up in order to stop Filipino fishing boats from accessing a contested lagoon located at Scarborough Shoal.
- Officials from the Philippines view this barrier as a breach of both international law and their nation's sovereignty.
- The Philippine Coast Guard successfully removed the barrier in a "special operation" following the order of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.
- Philippine officials insist their actions align with international law and protect their territorial rights.
- China claims the shoal and its adjacent waters as its own territory and says the Philippine vessel trespassed without permission.
- This dispute adds to long-standing territorial conflicts in the resource-rich South China Sea, involving multiple nations, including the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, Taiwan, and China.

## G. Tidbits

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

**Q1. Consider the following statements, with reference to the National Research Foundation (NRF) :**

1. NRF has a budget of ₹50,000 crore over five years to boost research and innovation in India.
2. NRF funds are used for research in natural sciences, humanities, social sciences, and art.
3. The Union Minister of Science & Technology is the ex-officio President of the NRF Governing Board.

**How many of the statements given above are incorrect?**

1. Only one
2. Only two
3. All three
4. None

Answer: a

**Explanation:** The Prime Minister serves as the Board's ex-officio President due to NRF's broad impact across ministries, with Union Ministers of S&T and Education as ex-officio Vice-Presidents.

**Q2. The 'Scarborough Shoal' recently in the news, is situated in which of the following areas?**

1. Atlantic Ocean
2. Indian Ocean
3. Arabian Sea
4. South China Sea

Answer: d

**Explanation:** It's a disputed territory claimed by the Philippines, China, and Taiwan in the South China Sea.

**Q3. With reference to the Bezbaruah Committee, which of the following statements is correct?**

1. The Bezbaruah Committee focuses on environmental conservation in the northeastern region.
2. The Bezbaruah Committee is responsible for formulating economic policies for northeastern States.
3. The Bezbaruah Committee was established to address the concerns of citizens from northeastern States living in various parts of the country.
4. The Bezbaruah Committee was formed to investigate corruption in the northeastern States.

Answer: c

**Explanation:** The Bezbaruah Committee was set up in 2014 to address the concerns of citizens from northeastern States living in various parts of the country.

**Q4. Consider the following statements, with reference to the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) :**

1. The NEP for schools categorizes the curricular structure and teaching style into four stages: foundational, preparatory, middle, and secondary.
2. The Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) will serve as the umbrella regulator for legal and medical education.
3. It aims for the universalization of education by 2030, targeting 100% Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) from pre-primary to secondary.

**How many of the statements given above are correct?**

1. Only one
2. Only two
3. All three
4. None

Answer: b

**Explanation:** Statement 2 is incorrect as HECI will be set up as a single overarching umbrella body for the entire higher education, excluding medical and legal education.

**Q5. Consider the following statements, with reference to the Convention on the Rights of the Child:**

1. It was adopted in 1989, to protect and fulfil the rights of children worldwide.
2. It is an international agreement that is legally binding on the members.
3. India is not a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**How many of the statements given above are correct?**

1. Only one
2. Only two
3. All three
4. None

Answer: b

**Explanation:** Statement 3 is incorrect as India is indeed a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. [AI deployments are not designed specifically for children but are nevertheless accessed by them. In this context, examine the challenge faced by lawmakers in forming effective AI regulations. \(250 words, 15 marks\) \[GS: II - Governance\]](#)
2. [Identify the challenges faced by India's higher education institutes. How far can funding go in solving these challenges? \(250 words, 15 marks\) \[GS: II - Education/Governance\]](#)

