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THE HINDU

The state against its students, lessons to remember

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

Mains: General Studies 2

Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

Why in Focus?

- Recent **NEET-UG paper leak** and **exam evaluation controversies** have triggered large-scale **student protests**.
- The incidents have raised concerns over the **credibility, transparency, and accountability** of India's public examination system.

Key Highlights

- The **NEET-UG paper leak** and **exam evaluation controversies** triggered large-scale **student protests** across the country.
- Use of force** against peaceful student protests can intensify public discontent rather than resolve grievances.
- Historical events such as the **Indian Association (1876)**, the **Soweto Uprising (1976)**, and the **Emergency (1975-77)** show that suppressing student movements can have long-term political consequences.

- Treating student grievances with contempt, using **dehumanising language**, or relying on **force** instead of dialogue can strengthen protest movements and weaken the **legitimacy of the State**.
- Student protests often arise when **institutional grievance redressal mechanisms** fail and **accountability** remains weak.
- Fair and transparent public examinations** are a **constitutional concern** affecting millions of students.

Indian Association (1876): Founded by **Surendranath Banerjee** after the **British Government** reduced the maximum age for the **ICS examination** from **21 to 19 years**, transforming a student grievance into India's **first pan-Indian political mobilisation**.

Soweto Uprising (1976): Students in **Soweto, South Africa**, protested against the imposition of **Afrikaans** as the medium of instruction. The protest was met with **police firing**, turning it into a major movement against **apartheid**.

Emergency, India (1975-77): During the **Emergency**, **student unions were suspended** and many **student leaders were detained under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA)**, but the movement later shaped **India's post-1977 political leadership**.



Implications

- **Paper leaks** and **evaluation errors** undermine the credibility of public examinations.
- Excessive use of **force** against student protests can erode public trust.
- **Weak institutional accountability** and **inadequate grievance redressal mechanisms** increase student dissatisfaction and protests.
- Delays in addressing systemic issues in recruitment and entrance examinations **undermine the credibility of the examination system**.

Way Forward

- Ensure **transparent** and **proper** conduct of public examinations.
- Strengthen the **independence** and **accountability** of examination authorities.
- Establish effective **grievance redressal mechanisms** for students.
- Promote **dialogue** and peaceful resolution of student concerns instead of coercive measures.
- **Credible investigations, examination reforms, and accountability** are essential to restore public trust in examination systems.

Mains Question

“Transparent and accountable public examination systems are essential for maintaining public trust and democratic governance.” Discuss in the context of recent examination-related controversies in India. (250 Words)

Strong health systems for all with better public spending

Prelims: General Studies Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies 2

Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Why in Focus?

- **Declining global health aid, rising public debt and limited government funds** have increased the need to use available health resources more effectively.

Key Highlights

- According to the World Bank, public spending on Universal Health **Coverage (UHC) in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) is only about half of the required minimum**.
- The WHO says that although the health spending gap (as a share of GDP) has reduced, **the per person spending gap between rich and poor countries has become much wider**.
- Health aid (Development Assistance for Health - DAH) has fallen after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** estimates that **global health funding may decline by up to 60%** from its 2022 peak.
- In 2025, major donor countries reduced foreign health aid:
 - ◆ U.S. – 67%
 - ◆ U.K. – 39%
 - ◆ France – 35%
 - ◆ Germany – 12%
- **Global public debt reached US\$102 trillion in 2024, forcing many developing countries to spend more on debt repayment** and less on health.
- Many countries do not fully use the money allocated for health.
- In India (2024–25), **only about two-thirds of the health infrastructure budget and 26% of National Health Mission (NHM) funds** for disease programmes were spent.

Implications

- **Declining external health aid and increasing debt servicing** constrain public health financing.
- **Underutilisation of allocated funds** weakens healthcare delivery and infrastructure development.



- **Greater emphasis on curative care limits investments** in preventive and primary healthcare.
- **Weak governance, corruption and inefficient public financial management** reduce the effectiveness of health expenditure.

Way Forward

- **Improve budget execution and ensure timely utilisation** of health allocations.
- **Prioritise preventive and primary healthcare** alongside disease surveillance, vaccination and sanitation.
- **Strengthen governance, transparency, procurement systems** and public financial management.
- **Ensure flexible and responsive budgeting** to address future public health emergencies.

Mains Question

“Increasing public expenditure alone is insufficient to strengthen health systems. Discuss the importance of efficient resource utilisation, preventive healthcare and good governance in improving public health outcomes in India.” (250 Words)

Why are govt. schools shutting down?

Prelims: General Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance.

Mains: General studies 2

Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Why in Focus?

- A recent **NITI Aayog report** highlights large-scale closure of government schools and declining enrolment, raising concerns about **access, equity, and quality of education**.

Key Highlights:

- Around **94,000 government schools closed** in the last decade, with enrolment falling by **2.26 crore students**.

- The share of government schools in total enrollment declined from **71% (2005) to 49.24% (2024-25)**, indicating a **shift towards private education**.
- Closures are driven by **school rationalisation (merging or closing under-enrolled schools to optimise resources and improve efficiency)** under **National Education Policy 2020**, often ignoring the **neighbourhood school principle**.

Neighbourhood school principle: Every child should have access to a school within a **reasonable distance from their home**, ensuring easy, safe, and inclusive access to education as mandated under the **Right to Education Act 2009**.

- **UDISE+ (Unified District Information System for Education Plus)** data shows government schools declined (11.07 lakh to 10.17 lakh), while private schools increased.

UDISE+ was launched in **2018-19** under the **Ministry of Education** to collect and manage data about schools, students, and teachers in India.

- Worst affected States include **Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir**.
- In J&K, school mergers force children to travel **4-6 km**, violating **Right to Education Act 2009 (RTE) norms**.
- Government schools mainly cater to **poor, SC, ST, and minority children**, making closures socially unequal in impact.

Implications:

- The closure of nearby schools reduces **physical access to education**, especially in rural areas, forcing children to travel longer distances and increasing **dropout rates**, particularly among girls.
- It deepens **social inequality**, as government schools primarily serve **marginalised groups (SCs, STs, minorities, and poor households)** who have limited alternatives.
- The process often violates **RTE norms** related to neighbourhood schools, **pupil-teacher ratio (PTR- number of students per teacher in a school)**, and minimum infrastructure standards.
- Many children become **invisible in the system**, as large numbers remain untracked or



fall into “at-risk” categories without effective intervention.

- **Centre-State coordination issues** and weak implementation of **School Management Committees (SMCs)** reduce accountability and enforcement.

Way Forward:

- Rationalisation should be implemented carefully, ensuring that **neighbourhood school access is not compromised**, in line with RTE provisions.
- Strengthen **data-driven monitoring systems like UDISE+** to track enrolment, identify dropouts, and ensure timely reintegration of children.
- Provide targeted support such as **transport facilities, hostels, and scholarships** for vulnerable groups, especially girls and migrant children.
- Improve **teacher availability and distribution**, ensuring proper **pupil-teacher ratio (PTR)** and avoiding excessive multi-grade teaching.
- Empower **School Management Committees (SMCs)** and local communities to enhance accountability and participation in school governance.
- Increase investment in **public education infrastructure and quality**, so that government schools remain a viable and trusted option.

Mains Question:

“Large-scale closure of government schools in India has serious implications for equitable access to education.” Discuss the causes, impacts, and suggest measures to address this issue in line with the Right to Education Act. (15 mark, 250 words)

Why does Kerala report a high leptospirosis burden?

Prelims: General Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance.

Mains: General studies 2

Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Why in Focus?

- Leptospirosis cases in Kerala have surged, causing around 50 deaths in July.
- It remains a major **public health concern** with high mortality in the State.

Key Highlights:

- **Leptospirosis** is a **zoonotic disease (disease transmitted from animals to humans)** caused by **Leptospira** bacteria.
- Kerala has reported cases since 1989 and the disease is now **endemic (regularly occurring)** for over three decades.
- **Favourable conditions:** heavy monsoon, floods, high humidity, and waterlogging help bacteria survive in soil and water.
- **Transmission** occurs through contact with contaminated water entering via cuts, abrasions, or mucosal surfaces.
- **High-risk groups:** farmers, sanitation workers, construction labourers (including migrant workers), and even urban residents through gardening.
- **Symptoms** range from mild fever and myalgia (muscle pain) to severe complications like **pulmonary haemorrhage and multi-organ failure** (5-10% cases).

Implications:

- **Late diagnosis** due to symptom overlap with other tropical fevers leads to delayed treatment.
- **Rapid disease progression** (within 4-5 days) reduces the therapeutic window and increases mortality.
- **Diagnostic limitations:** ELISA (Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay) is unreliable in early stages; PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) not widely accessible.
- **Health system gaps:** lack of emergency care, ICU facilities, and trained manpower in secondary hospitals (District/Taluk Hospital).
- **Low compliance** with prophylactic doxycycline and public health advisories.
- **Environmental and occupational vulnerability** due to poor sanitation, rodent proliferation, and unsafe working conditions.

Way Forward:

- Strengthen **early detection systems** through wider availability of PCR and improved surveillance.
- Promote **preventive healthcare**: ensure doxycycline prophylaxis compliance in high-risk groups.
- Provide **protective gear** (gum boots, gloves) to farmers and labourers to reduce exposure.
- Improve **health infrastructure** at secondary level with ICU support and trained personnel.
- Launch **risk communication campaigns** targeting vulnerable populations to increase awareness and behavioural change.

Mains Question:

Leptospirosis has emerged as a significant public health challenge in tropical regions like Kerala. Examine the environmental and socio-economic factors contributing to its spread and suggest measures to reduce mortality and improve disease management. (15 mark, 250 words)

KEYWORDS

Geotagging

- Geotagging is the **process of adding geographical coordinates** (latitude and longitude) to digital content such as photographs, videos, documents, or maps.
- Geotagging **helps improve transparency and accountability by enabling authorities** to verify the exact location of assets, projects, or field activities.
- It is **widely used in India for monitoring infrastructure projects**, forest boundaries, land records, and public asset management.
- Geotagged information is **commonly collected using GPS-enabled smartphones, tablets, drones, or satellite-based positioning systems**.
- It is also used in disaster management and biodiversity conservation.

Species In News

Lepidoptera

- **Lepidoptera** is the insect order that includes **moths** and **butterflies**.
- The name "**Lepidoptera**" means "**scaly wings**", referring to the tiny **overlapping scales** covering the wings and body.
- It is the **second largest order of insects** after the **beetles**.
- Most **larvae (caterpillars)** feed on **plants**, while **moths** are usually active at **night** and **butterflies** during the **day**.
- **Lepidoptera** undergo **complete metamorphosis (holometabolous development)**, passing through different **larval (caterpillar) stages** before becoming adults.



Places in News

Mettur Dam



- Mettur Dam, also known as the **Stanley Reservoir**, is built across the **Kaveri (Cauvery) River** in Salem district of Tamil Nadu.
- It is **one of India's largest masonry gravity dams** and was commissioned in 1934 during British rule.
- The dam plays a **vital role in irrigation, drinking water supply, hydroelectric power generation**, and flood moderation in Tamil Nadu.
- The **storage level and release of water from Mettur Dam** are closely linked to inflows from upstream reservoirs in **Karnataka**, including the Krishna Raja Sagara (KRS) Dam and Kabini Dam.

Manasbal Lake



- **Manasbal Lake** is located in **Ganderbal District, Jammu and Kashmir**.
- Its name is believed to be derived from **Lake Manasarovar**.
- It is regarded as the **deepest lake in India**, with a maximum depth of about **13 metres (43 feet)**.
- The lake is often called the **"Supreme Gem of all Kashmir Lakes"** by the **Mughal emperors** for its **crystal-clear waters** and scenic beauty.
- It is famous for its **lotus flowers**, which bloom extensively during **July and August**.
- The lake also has **Mughal garden ruins** built by **Nur Jahan**, adding **historical significance** to its natural beauty.

Madura Island



- It is an **Indonesian island** located off the **northeastern coast of Java**, separated by the narrow **Madura Strait**, and administratively forms a part of the **East Java province**.
- The island is traditionally nicknamed the **"Island of Salt" (Pulau Garam)** owing to its historical and ongoing economic significance as a major center for **salt panning and production**.
- Geologically, Madura features a relatively flat topography consisting of an extension of the **northern limestone mountains of Java**, which results in an **arid landscape** with generally **infertile soil** compared to the main island.
- Culturally, the island is renowned for **Karapan Sapi**, a traditional and highly competitive **bull-racing festival** that attracts large crowds and reflects the local **cattle-raising economy**.