

GS II

SYLLABUS: DEVOLUTION OF POWERS AND FINANCES TO LOCAL LEVELS; CHALLENGES THEREIN.

LOCAL BODIES

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 8.

News: "The panchayati raj movement is in distress."

Importance of Panchayat System in India:

- **Grassroots Democracy:** *73rd Amendment Act (1992)* gives citizens direct access to governance. As of 2020, there are **around 2.6 lakh gram panchayats—Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR).**
- **Accountability and responsibility:** India holds elections every five years, **electing over 3 million Panchayat representatives.**
 - **Social Audits:** Eg. MGNREGA mandates social audits at the Gram Sabha level, reinforcing accountability.
- **Women's Empowerment:** 73rd CAA mandates **at least one-third reservation for women** in Panchayats. Several States voluntarily increased this quota to 50%.
 - Currently 1.3 million elected are women (MoPR data).
- **Implementation of Govt. Schemes:** Panchayats serve as nodal points for flagship programs like **MGNREGA**, Swachh Bharat Mission (**SBM**), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (**PMAY-Gramin**), etc.
- **Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP):** Introduced in 2015, GPDP emphasizes participatory planning, thereby allowing Panchayats to shape and execute projects aligned with local priorities.
- **Plays key role in implementation of:**
 - **Water conservation and renewable energy** generation at scale.
 - Bringing **scientific practices, traditional knowledge and public finances** together to **manage common property resources.**
 - Implementing community based **disaster risk management programmes.**
- **Appointment of State Finance Commission: by State govt. (once in 5 yrs)** to examine financial position of local bodies & distribution of revenues b/w state & of local Govt & b/w local govt. & urban local govt.

Sources of Funding for Panchayats:

- **Grants from State Govt & Finance commission:** 15th Finance Commission has allocated significant grants to Panchayats.
- **Local Taxes and Levies:**
 - Property Tax and Building Fees, Market fees (Haats, weekly markets etc), water cess, sanitation charges etc.
- **Public Private partnership:** Certain Panchayats in Karnataka have collaborated with private players to reduce the need for large upfront public investment in rural water supply projects—**NITI Aayog Case studies.**
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Funding.**
- **Philanthropic Organisations:** NGOs, trusts etc may offer grants for education, healthcare, etc.
- **International Funding and aid:** Organisations like the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, or UN agencies occasionally fund rural development projects Eg. World Bank funding road project in rural Odisha.

Challenges with functioning of Panchayats:

- **Functions:**
 - **Voluntary nature of provisions to transfer from 11th schedule:** Eg. Reservations, Devolution of powers, Financial powers etc.

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- **State neglecting Gram sabha role:** Eg: Tamil Nadu failed to consult the gram sabha on the 8-line Highway and the Hydrocarbon project.
- **Politicisation of Gram Panchayats:** Conflict between elected opposition & ruling party at State level.
- **Corruption and resource constraints** in schemes implementation.
- **Absence of updated computer systems**, uninterrupted Internet connection etc.
- **Frequent postpone of elections** Eg. In **Suresh Mahajan vs State of Madhya Pradesh**, the Supreme Court ruled that the delimitation of wards can't be a valid reason for the State Election Commission to fail to notify the elections.
- Rapid urbanisation that India led to decrease in rural population to around 60% from 75% in 1990s.
- **Funds:**
 - **Delay in formation of State Finance Commission.**
 - Only 0.6% of GDP allocated to panchayats—**Budget 2024.**
 - **Direct transfers to panchayats increased** from ₹1.45 lakh crore under the 13th Finance Commission (2010-15) to ₹2.36 lakh crore under the 15th Finance Commission (2021-26). **At the same time, there has been a significant reduction in untied grants**, from 85% in the Thirteenth Finance Commission to 60% in the Fifteenth Finance Commission.
 - **Over dependence on centrally sponsored schemes.**
 - Their total revenue own revenues less than 50% & allocated funds are delayed & rising dependence on State & Central govt. grants—**IHS report.**
- **Functionaries:**
 - **Understaffed** situation impacting the effective functioning of panchayat.
 - **Decline in public participation:** poor attendance of Women representatives.
 - **Skill gap:** with elected representatives and bureaucrats.
 - **Overlap functions:** Sarpanch and Secretary.
 - **SHGs, NGOs competing elected gram sabha** in addressing local challenges creating rift between elected and non elected bodies.

Recommendations: Venugopal Committee 2018.

- **Poor attendance:** Quorum should be fixed by State govt.
- **Transfer of subjects:** Ministry should pursue States to devolve subjects to LBs.
- **Funds:** State govt. should pay interest on delays. Stop funds to local bodies whose accounts are not audited.
- **Capacity Building:** Center & State should support for better GPDPs & service quality.
- **Support staff:** severe lack of support staff affecting the service delivery (Eg: Data entry operators, secretary etc).
- **Roles:** of Sarpanch, panchs, secretary should be clearly defined.
- **Best Practices:** Rajasthan in 2023 empowered its panchayats to take up livelihood programmes like poverty alleviation, Education, health etc.

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PYQs

GS II 2018: What Assess the importance of Panchayat system in India as a part of local govt. Apart from government grants, what sources the Panchayats can look out for financing developmental projects.

GS II 2017: "The local self-government system in India has not proved to be effective instrument of governance". Critically examine the statement and give your views to improve the situation.



DEFENCE

PRE-CONTEXT

DEFENCE IMPORTS

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 14.

News: "Will U.S.'s F-35 stealth fighter jets fit into IAF's future plans?"

India's Defence imports (Major) 2024:

- **Russia:**
 - S-400 Missile Defence System.
 - Sukhoi Su30 fighter jets.
 - Tanks etc.
- **France.**
 - Rafale fighter jets.
 - Scorpene class submarines.
- **USA:**
 - MQ-9B Sky Guardian drones.
 - Apache helicopters etc.
- **Israel:**
 - Barak Surface to surface air Missile systems.
 - Heron UAVs.

Note: Russia is the top arms supplier to India.

India's Defence Exports (Major) 2024:

- **United States (US), France, and Armenia** have emerged as the top three destinations for Indian defence exports,
- **Armenia have emerged as the top three destinations** for Indian defence exports, **Akash air defence missile and Pinaka multi-launch rocket systems.**
 - Currently, Armenia's is in conflict with Azerbaijan over **Nagorno-Karabakh.**
- **Philippines** confirmed deal with India for the **export of BrahMos** missiles.
- USA imports mainly components like wings, and other parts of aircraft and helicopter.

Measures taken to promote indigenous developments:

- **Liberalised FDI in defence:** 74% through **automatic** route and 100% through **MoD's approval.**
- **Budget Allocation:** for the **Ministry of Defence** for the financial year 2025-26 is ₹6.8 lakh.
- **iDEX Scheme Launch:** The Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) scheme was launched to **involve startups and MSMEs** in defence innovation.
- **Two Defence Industrial Corridors:** One each in **Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu**, to promote defence manufacturing.

UN Arms Trade Treaty:

- It aim to **regulate international trade of conventional arms**; it restricts supply of arms by country if they are used to commit war crimes.
- **India is not a signatory to this treaty.**

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SYLLABUS: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES PERTAINING TO THE FEDERAL STRUCTURE.

PRESIDENTS RULE

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 10.

News: "How does a President's rule function?"

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar hoped it would remain a "dead letter," President's rule has been imposed nearly *134 times across 29 States and UTs* since the Constitution took effect in 1950, reflecting its dual role as both.

Current situation in Manipur:

- In Manipur, the unprecedented and **horrific violence** that erupted in May 2023, continues unabated.
- **Ordinary people are forced to resort to violence** for self-protection.
- Between May 11 and November 11, 2024, **over 250 people were killed**, and more than a **lakh were displaced** due to ethnic violence.
- Recent **centre's AFSPA intervention in Manipur** has limited impact.
- **Supreme Court's intervention** was **slow and ineffective**, despite there having been 27 hearings.
- State of Manipur reflects a **classic case of the failure of the Constitutional machinery.**
- Situation **demands the immediate intervention of the President.**

Emergency Provision's under Part XVIII: Inspired from German Constitution.

- **Art.355:**
 - Duty of **Centre to protect every State** from external aggression and internal disturbance's.
 - Centre to ensure that every **State govt. operate according to provisions of the Constitution.**
- **Art.356:**
 - Imposition of President's rule, if President **is satisfied**, that State govt. is not functioning according to provisions of Constitution or **"Governor report" or "otherwise"**.
- **Art.365:**
 - Imposition of President's rule, **if State govt. does not comply with directions of Centre.**
- **Note:** Art. 355 was incorporated to check any arbitrary or unauthorised use of Art. 356—**Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.**

Important cases on president rule:

- **S.R.Bommai vs Union of India 1994: to restrict misuse.**
 - President rule is subjected to **Judicial Review.**
 - Satisfaction of President must be based on relevant material & **Centre must justify President rule.**
 - If President rule is unconstitutional, **State Legislature can be revived by court.**
 - State Legislature can be dissolved only after parliamentary approval, till then can **only be suspended.**
 - **If State follows anti-secular policy**, Art.356 can be applied.
 - **Floor test of confidence is mandatory** before dismissal of State executive.
 - Art.356 is only a measure of **last resort.**

Proper Application President Rule :

- **Hung Assembly situation:** no single party or pre-existing coalition achieves a clear majority.
- If **State goes against Constitutional direction** of Central govt.

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- **Internal subversion** Eg. Govt deliberately acting against Constitution or law.
- **Physical breakdown of govt.** law and order i.e, State endangering its security.

Misuse of Art.356:

- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar **wished that Art. 355 & 356 should remain as 'dead letters'** but they were misused on several occasions:
 - Removing elected govts.
 - Loss in Loksabha elections.
 - Deterioration of law and order in States.

Impacts of President Rule

On State Executive:

- President can **suspend** Constitutional provisions of any body of State.
- President can **dismiss Council of Ministers** headed by Chief Minister.
- Can vest State govt. executive powers with Governor or any other authority.

On State Legislature:

- **Parliament exercises State Legislature powers.**
- **State budgets & bills passed by Parliament.**
- President can promulgate **ordinances** for State.
- **Laws** made by Parliament or President **continued to operate even after President rule.** Such laws can be repealed or altered by State Legislature.
- **Parliament can dissolve State assembly only after** Parliamentary approval, till then (only suspended) — **S.R. Bommai case.**

- **On Judiciary:** No Impact.

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"A house divided against itself cannot stand." This highlights the importance of stable governance, which President's Rule often aims to restore.

Thank you!

EXAMPLES FROM TODAY'S NEWS PAPER

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 1 & (LETTERS TO EDITOR).

News: "Crowd surge and confusion overtrains led to stampede: Railways."

Instances of Stampede:

- **Year 2022:** 159 people killed in stampede at a Halloween festival in South Korea.
- **Year 2023:** nearly 90 people were killed in Sanaa, Yemen, at a charity distribution event.
- **Year 2025:** 30 people were killed in Maha Kumbh, India.

Case Study Point of View:

- **Stakeholders:**
 - **Government:**
 - **Ethical Responsibility:** Ensure crowd management, enforce safety norms.
 - **Failure:** Poor planning, inadequate infrastructure.
 - **Organisers:**
 - **Ethical Responsibility:** Follow safety protocols, limit overcrowding, VIP Culture.
 - **Failure:** Overbooking, ignoring warnings.
 - **Local Police:**
 - **Ethical Responsibility:** Active Monitor crowds, deploy emergency teams.
 - **Failure:** Delayed response, lack of coordination.
 - **Public:**
 - **Ethical Responsibility:** Follow guidelines, avoid risky behavior.
 - **Failure:** run fast, reach first' attitude, over enthusiasm, ignoring safety rules.

Ethical theories:

- **Utilitarianism:** Focus on minimizing harm and maximizing public safety.
- **Duty Ethics (Kantianism):** Authorities' duty to protect citizens' lives.
- **Rights-Based Approach:** Citizens' right to safety during public events.

Ethical Dilemmas:

- **Conflict of Interest:** Balancing event popularity (economic/religious benefits) vs. safety.
- **Transparency vs. Blame Game:** Admitting systemic failures vs. shifting responsibility.

Course of Action:

- **Immediate Measures:**
 - **Emergency Response:** Deploy medical teams, set up helplines.
 - **Compensation announcements:** Transparent compensation for victims' families.
 - **Setting up Committee** to investigate the stampede situation.
 - Setting a separate block for **'search for missing persons'**.
- **Long term Measures:**
 - **Legal Framework:** Strict penalties for negligence; enforce the National Disaster Management Guidelines.
 - **Infrastructure:** Upgrade venues with multiple entry and exits, barricades, CCTV.
 - **Crowd Management:** Use technology (AI-based crowd monitoring, QR ticketing).
 - **Training:** Regular drills for police and volunteers.

Ethical Values:

- **Empathy:** Compassion for victims and families.
- **Integrity:** Transparent investigation into causes.
- **Responsibility:** Proactive governance to prevent future incidents.
- **Justice:** Fair punishment for negligence; compensation for victims.

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