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PRE-CONTEXT

ISRAEL-PALESTINE PEACE EFFORTS

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 8.

News: "A call for chaos."

Peace efforts and Continuing Conflict

- **Camp David Accords (1978): Israel and Egypt.**
 - **Facilitated by:** USA.
 - **Key provisions:**
 - **Sinai Peninsula:** Israel agreed to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula, which it had occupied since the 1967 Six-Day War.
 - **Normalisation of Relations:** Established diplomatic and economic relations between the two countries.
- **Madrid Conference (1991):**
 - **Facilitated by:** USA and Soviet Union.
 - **Parties Involved:** Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), etc.
 - **Key provisions:**
 - **Multilateral Negotiations:** Provided a platform for direct negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbours.
- **Oslo Accords (1993 and 1995): Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).**
 - **Key provisions:**
 - **Mutual Recognition:** Israel and the PLO recognized each other and agreed to negotiate a **two-state solution**.
 - **Autonomy for Palestinians:** with limited self-governance in parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- **Wye River Memorandum (1998): Israel and the Palestinian Authority.**
 - **Key Provisions:**
 - **Implementation of Oslo Accords:** Detailed steps for implementing previous agreements, particularly regarding security and Palestinian autonomy.
- **Abraham Accords (2020):**
 - **Parties Involved:** Israel, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco.
 - **Key Provisions:**
 - **Normalization of Relations:** Established diplomatic relations, including exchange of ambassadors and opening of embassies.
 - **Regional Stability:** Aim to enhance cooperation against common threats and promote peace in the Middle East.
 - **Palestinians exclusion from accords:** they felt excluded, seeing accords as a betrayal of the Arab consensus to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- **Ceasefire deal 2025:**
 - Mediated by **Qatar, Egypt and the U.S.**
 - If it holds, it would provide a desperately needed relief for Gaza, the tiny strip along the Mediterranean Sea.
 - **Why Ceasefire now?**
 - Israel now believes its regional standing has become stronger due to:
 - Israel Defence Forces has killed most of the leaders of Hamas.
 - The fall of the **Assad regime in Syria** has further weakened Iran's so-called 'axis of resistance' in West Asia. Mr. Assad's Syria was the land bridge between Iran and Hezbollah.

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- **Hezbollah** is a militant group and political party that emerged in **Lebanon**.
- Israel carried out a massive air strike in Iran in October, targeting the Islamic Republic's air defences.
- **Houthis of Yemen** could stop attacking Israel and the ships passing through the Red Sea.

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GS II

SYLLABUS: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES PERTAINING TO THE FEDERAL STRUCTURE.

FINANCE COMMISSION

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 15.

News: "Odisha joins States' pitch for 50% share of divisible tax pool."

Constitutional body under **Art. 280**, constituted by the **President** to provide suggestions on centre-state Finance relations.

Framework:

- Constituted for every **5 years**.
- **Composition:** 5 members.
- Constitution has not mention the qualifications of members.
- **Finance Commission Act 1951** specifies qualifications:
 - **Chairman:** person having experience in Public Affairs.
 - **4 other members:** High court Judge, Special knowledge in Govt. Finance Accounts etc.
- **Powers of commission** decided by **Parliament**.
- Can determine its own Procedure.
- **Nature of Recommendation:** **Advisory**.
- **Reports submission:** To President.

Duty or functions: To make following recommendations to **President** related to following:

1. Distribution on **net tax proceeds** between Centre & States based on Formula.
2. Governing **Principles for giving grants-in-aid to states** out of Consolidated Fund of India.
3. Guiding State Finance commission for **devolution of finances to local bodies**.
4. Other matters referred by President.

Recommendations to President :

Tax Distribution:

- **Vertical devolution:** shows what percentage States get from total divisible pool of tax collected. Eg. 15th Finance Commission recommended 41% to states.
- **Horizontal Devolution:**
 - Once vertical devolution is fixed (i.e 41%), this share is distributed among individual states based on formula/ criteria (with weightage) as shown below:
 - **Income Distance** - 45%- Lower Per capita income get higher share.
 - **Geographic Area of State**-15%.
 - **Population(2011 census)**-15%.
 - **Demographic performance**- 12.5%- recognising population control measures made by States.
 - **Forest & Ecology**- 10%. Inline with forest conservation efforts made by States
 - **Tax & Fiscal efforts**-2.5%- rewarding states with higher tax collection efficiency.

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Issues with Finance Commission:

- **Demand to remove tax effort criterion by States:** States with lower economic development find difficult to meet such criteria.
- **Demand of Inclusion of Cess and Surcharges to divisible pool of taxes:** States are pointing that there is loss of revenue that could be used for healthcare, education etc.
- **Conditional grants to local bodies:** Eg: 60% of grants-Sanitation, Water services-This infringes states & local bodies to determine their priorities.
- **Based on 2011 census Data:** goes against States which have successfully undertook population control measures.
- **States demand for larger loans:** for immediate fiscal strain and to address shortfall in revenue.
- **Non-lapsable Defence fund:** States question the rationality of sharing Defence & Security burden.
- **Center's non acceptance of recommendations of Finance Commission :** Eg: 14th FC recommended 42% of vertical devolution but 15th FC 41% tax share to states.

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PYQs

GS III 2022: How have the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission of India enabled the states to improve their fiscal position?

GS III 2018: How is the Finance Commission of India constituted? What do you understand about the terms of

POLITY

PRE-CONTEXT

JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS, REMOVAL.

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 11.

News: "On the appointment of ad-hoc judges to High Courts."

Appointment of Ad hoc (temporary) Judges:

- **At Supreme Court:**
 - **Art. 127:** A **High Court Judge** can be appointed as ad-hoc judge in the supreme court by the **CJI** (with the previous consent of the **President** and after consultation with the **Chief Justice of the High Court concerned**).
 - The High Court judge **must be qualified for appointment as a judge of the Supreme Court**.
 - Ad hoc judges are appointed if there is a lack in quorum(minimum number) of the Permanent judges in Supreme court.
- **At High Court:**
 - Art. 224A of the Constitution provides for the appointment of **retired High Court judges** as Ad hoc judges.
 - Such appointments made by **Chief justice of High Court require the consent of both** the **retired judge** and the **President of India**.
 - Ad-hoc judges can **only hear criminal appeals**.
 - Ad hoc judges can be appointed to State High Courts **only if their judicial vacancies crossed 20%** of the sanctioned strength.
 - **Number of ad hoc judges must not exceed 10% of the sanctioned judicial strength of a High Court.**

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Qualifications for Judge of the Supreme Court:

- **According to Constitution of India:**
 - A person must be a **citizen of India**.
 - Have been a **High Court judge** for at least five years.
 - Have been a **High Court advocate** for at least 10 years.
 - Be considered a **distinguished jurist** by the President.

Collegium System:

- For **appointment and transfer of judges** in the higher judiciary in India.
- **For Supreme Court (SC) appointments:** collegium consists of **CJI plus 4 senior-most Supreme Court judges**.
- **For High Court appointments:** collegium consists of CJI plus 2 senior-most Supreme Court judges.
- CJI after consultation with collegium **recommends to President** for an appointment.
- Supreme Court Judges retire upon attaining the **age of 65 years**.
- The **strength of the Supreme Court of India** is **determined by the Parliament of India**.
 - **Current strength is 33.**

Evolution of Collegium:

- **The Constitution provides that:**
 - **Judges to the Supreme Court** are to be appointed by the **President of India in consultation with the CJI** and such other judges that he or she deems fit.
 - **Judges to the High Courts** are to be appointed by the **President in consultation** with the **CJI**, the **Governor** of the State and the **Chief Justice of that court**.
 - **In the case of transfers**, the President may move a judge from one High Court to another, but **only after consulting the CJI**.
- **1st judges case (1982):** the word '**consultation**' only implies exchange of views.
- **2nd judges case (1993):**
 - Word '**consultation**' = **concurrence**, advice by CJI (plus 2 judges) is binding on President.
 - If collegium reiterates, judicial appointments must be cleared (a healthy convention).
- **3rd Judges case: Collegium** (4 Judges + CJI).
- **99th CAA 2015: NJAC** (3 judicial members & 2 executive appointees): Declared Unconstitutional by SC.

Removal of Judges:

- **According to Judges Inquiry Act, 1968:**
 - A **removal motion** signed by 100 members (in case of Lok Sabha) or 50 members (in case of Rajya Sabha) is to be given to the Speaker/Chairman.
 - If the motion is admitted, then a **three-member committee** to investigate into the charges is constituted.
 - If the committee **finds the judge to be guilty of the charges (misbehaviour or incapacity)**, the House in which the motion was introduced, can take up the consideration of the motion.
 - **Special majority:** Majority of total membership of the House & majority of not less than two thirds members present and voting.
 - Once, the House in which **removal motion was introduced passes it with special majority, it goes to the second House which also has to pass it with a special majority**.
 - After the motion is passed, an address is presented to the President for removal of the judge.
 - The **President** then passes an order removing the judge.

Note:

- Till now, **only two judges so far have been found guilty** for their "misbehaviour" by the three-member committee.
- **No judge has been impeached** in India till date.

Other country Practices:

- **Canada:** power resides with the Federal Govt.
- **Germany:** Elected by Executive and Legislature.
- **USA:** Nominated by President & confirmed by Senate.
- **UK:** Selection Commission of 15 members of different backgrounds.

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ENVIRONMENT

PRE-CONTEXT

SO₂ EMISSIONS

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 8.

News: "The saga of regulating India's thermal power emissions."

SO₂ Emissions in India:

- **India Global Rank in Coal Consumption:** 2nd (after China).
- India ranks among the **top global SO₂ emitters**.
- **Sources:** Primarily from coal-fired power plants (contributing ~52%), industrial units (e.g., refineries, smelters), and biomass burning.
- **Hotspots:** Singrauli (MP), Korba (Chhattisgarh), Neyveli (TN), Talcher (Odisha), and Chandrapur (Maharashtra).
- **Impacts:**
 - **Health:** Respiratory illnesses (asthma, bronchitis), aggravated cardiovascular diseases.
 - **Environment:** Acid rain (damages soil, water bodies, forests), corrosion of monuments (e.g., Taj Mahal).
- **Desulphurisation Technologies:**
 - **Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD).**
 - **Wet FGD:** Uses limestone slurry (removes ~90% SO₂); by-product gypsum used in cement/plaster. Common in India.
 - **Coal washing (reduces ash & Sulphur).**
 - Switching to low-sulphur coal.
 - Biomass co-firing.
- **Regulations:**
 - **In 2015 MoEFCC norms mandate SO₂ limits** (≤ 600 mg/Nm³); deadline for FGD installation extended to 2026.
 - In 2024 December, Ministry of MoEFCC issued **deadline for thermal plants to comply with sulphur dioxide (SO₂) emission norms by three years** without any reasons being given.
 - **Fly Ash Utilisation:** Mandated 100% utilization in construction & road projects.
 - **Energy Efficiency Norms: PAT** (Perform, Achieve, Trade) Scheme under BEE.

Types of Coal in India:

- **Anthracite:** **Highest carbon** (80-95%), **Highest calorific value**, rare in India (Jammu & Kashmir).
- **Bituminous:**
 - **Primary type** (Gondwana coal, ~200 million years old).
 - **High calorific value**, moderate sulphur (0.5-1.5%).
 - Found in Jharkhand (Jharia), Odisha (Talcher), Chhattisgarh.
 - **Sub-bituminous:** **Lower carbon**, higher moisture; used in power plants (e.g., Singrauli).
- **Lignite:**
 - High moisture, **Low calorific value**.
 - Tertiary deposits in Tamil Nadu (Neyveli), Rajasthan, Gujarat.
 - Largest lignite reserves in India are found in: **Tamil Nadu**.
- **Note:** Indian coal is high-ash (35-45%) but low-sulfur but still causes significant SO₂ emissions.

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Major Thermal PSUs:

- **NTPC** (National Thermal Power Corporation) **Largest thermal power producer**.
- **DVC** (Damodar Valley Corporation) **Supplies power to eastern India**.
- State Power Generation Companies.

Thermal Power plants:

- **Largest Coal-Based Power Plant:** Vindhyachal (NTPC), MP.
- **First Thermal Power Plant in India:** Hussain Sagar (1920), Telangana.
- **Related Institutions:**
 - **Ministry of Power (MoP):** Overall policy and planning.
 - **Central Electricity Authority (CEA):** Technical regulations.
 - **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB):** Emission norms.
 - **Ministry of Coal:** responsible of determining policies and strategies in respect of exploration and development of coal and lignite reserves,

Coal Mining:

- Coal and Lignite are mentioned in **Schedule 1 of MMDR Act 1957**.
- **2020 Amendment to MMDR Act 1957:**
 - **Allowed commercial mining of coal** (previously restricted captive use).
 - Removal of Distinction Between Captive and Non-Captive Mines: Enabled companies to sell unused minerals from captive mines (e.g., coal).
- **Private Sector allowed.**
- **100% FDI under 'Automatic' route.**

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Thank you!