

UNIFORMITY ACROSS ALL BOARDS TO SET UP 'PARAKH' FOR EXAM ASSESSMENT

In News:


- The Union government plans to create a benchmark framework for assessing students at the secondary and higher secondary levels.
- The aim is to achieve uniformity among state and central boards, which now use diverse evaluation criteria, resulting in huge differences in scores.
- The proposed regulator, **PARAKH - Performance Assessment, Review and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development**, will work to eliminate the emphasis on rote learning that the NEP envisions.

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:

Background:

- An NEP is a **comprehensive framework** to guide the development of education in the country.
- The first education policy came in **1968** on the recommendation of the Education Commission, headed by D S Kothari.
- The second education policy came in **1986**, which was replaced by the third education policy - NEP 2020.

About NEP 2020:



Learning plan
A look at the key features of the new education policy:
- R.V.S. PRASAD

SCHOOL EDUCATION

- Universalisation from age 3 to Class 10 by 2030
- Mission to ensure literacy and numeracy skills by 2025
- Mother tongue as medium of instruction till Class 5 wherever possible
- New curriculum to include 21st century skills like coding and vocational integration from Class 6
- Board exams to be easier, redesigned

HIGHER EDUCATION

- New umbrella regulator for all higher education except medical, legal courses
- Flexible, holistic, multi-disciplinary UG degrees of 3-4 years' duration
- 1 to 2 year PG programmes, no M.Phil
- College affiliation system to be phased out in 15 years

• Public spending on education by States, Centre to be raised to 6% of GDP

• Ministry of Human Resource Development to be renamed Ministry of Education

• Separate technology unit to develop digital education resources

- The NEP 2020 was drafted based on the recommendations of a panel led by former ISRO chief Kasturirangan.
- The policy is a comprehensive framework for **elementary to higher education**, as well as

vocational training in both rural and urban India.

- The policy aims to transform India's education system by 2040.

How will the NEP 2020 be implemented?

- The NEP only provides a broad direction and is not mandatory to follow.
- Since education is a **concurrent subject**, the reforms proposed can only be implemented collaboratively by the Centre and the states.
- The current government has set a goal of implementing the entire policy by **2040**.

PARAKH: Background

- Recently, the **NCERT convened a series of meetings** with representatives from state boards and SCERTs to reach an agreement on how to implement the plan, which includes the establishment of a new assessment regulator.
- During the discussions, most states endorsed the NEP proposals -
 - To hold board exams twice a year, including one for helping students improve their scores.
 - To offer two types of papers on mathematics - a standard exam and another to test higher level competency, to reduce the fear of maths among students and encourage learning.
 - To have two sets of question papers for most subjects - one with multiple choice questions (MCQs) and the other descriptive.
- As a result, the Union Ministry of Education recently invited bids to establish a regulator - PARAKH.

About:

- The benchmark assessment framework - PARAKH, has been proposed by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, to put an end to the emphasis on rote learning.
- PARAKH will act as a constituent unit of the NCERT and will be tasked with -
 - **Setting norms, standards and guidelines** for student assessment and evaluation for all recognised school boards of India.
 - Holding **periodic learning outcome tests** like the National Achievement Survey (NAS) and State Achievement Surveys.
 - If the plans are on track, the NAS in 2024 will be conducted by PARAKH.

- PARAKH team will consist of leading assessment experts with a deep understanding of the education system in India and internationally.
- PARAKH will eventually become the **national single-window source** for all assessment-related information and expertise, with a mandate to assist all forms of learning assessment, both nationally and globally, where relevant.

Significance:

- **Uniformity:** PARAKH will contribute to addressing the issue of students from some state boards being at a disadvantage during college admissions when compared to their peers from CBSE schools.
- **Standardisation:** It will establish and implement technical standards for test design, administration, analysis and reporting at all levels of schooling.
- **Skill development:** It will encourage and help school boards to shift their assessment patterns towards meeting the skill requirements of the 21st century.

CHALLENGING THE SPECIAL MARRIAGE ACT, 1954

In News:

- The Supreme Court has dismissed a writ petition challenging provisions of the Special Marriage Act (SMA), 1954 requiring couples to give a notice declaring their intent to marry 30 days before their marriage.

Special Marriage Act (SMA), 1954

Background:

- All marriages in India can be registered under the respective personal law Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, Muslim Marriage Act, 1954, or under the Special Marriage Act, 1954.
- It is the duty of the judiciary to ensure that the rights of both the husband and wife are protected.

About

- The Special Marriage Act, 1954 is an Act of the Parliament of India with provision for civil marriage for people of India and all Indian nationals in foreign countries, irrespective of religion or faith followed by either party.
- A marriage under the Special Marriage Act, 1954 allows people from two different religious backgrounds to come together in the bond of marriage.
- The Act lays down the procedure for both solemnization and registration of marriage, where either of the husband or wife or both are not Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, or Sikhs.

Key provisions

- **Prior notice to the marriage officer**
 - Section 5 of the SMA: Couples have to serve a notice with the relevant documents to the Marriage Officer 30 days before the intended date of marriage.
- **Registration process**
 - Both parties are required to be present after the submission of documents for issuance of public notice inviting objections.
 - Registration is done 30 days after the date of notice after deciding any objection that may have been received during that period by the SDM.
 - Both parties along with three witnesses are required to be present on the date of registration.

News Summary

- The Supreme Court has dismissed a writ petition challenging the Constitutional validity of certain provisions of the SMA.
- The petition was dismissed on the grounds that the petitioner was no longer an aggrieved party.
- Also, another writ petition in Nandini Praveen vs Union of India & Others filed on similar grounds was admitted by the Supreme Court in 2020.
- In this case, court is waiting for the reply of Government.

What does the petition seek?

- The writ petition has called certain provisions of SMA, 1954 violative of the right to privacy guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- This is because these provisions require couples to give a notice of 30 days before the date of marriage inviting objections from the public.

- As per the petition, these provisions contravene Article 14 as well as Article 15 on right to equality as these requirements are absent in personal laws.

Provisions that have been challenged

- The writ seeks striking down of provisions that follow in Section 6 to Section 10.
 - Section 6 requires such a notice to be then entered into the Marriage Notice Book maintained by the Marriage Officer, which can be inspected by “any person desirous of inspecting the same.
 - Section 7 provides the process for making an objection.
 - Section 8 specifies the inquiry procedure to be followed after an objection has been submitted.
- The petition contends that these provisions make the personal information of the individuals open to public scrutiny.
- Hence, these provisions seriously damage one’s right to have control over her/his personal information and its accessibility.
- Also, these public notices have been used by anti-social elements to harass couples getting married.

THE ONGOING POLITICAL CRISIS IN IRAQ

In News:

- Iraq’s political crisis took a violent turn recently when at least 24 people were killed and about 200 injured in clashes between the supporters of influential Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and the country’s security personnel.
- After Mr. Sadr announced that he was quitting politics amid a political deadlock, his supporters stormed the Republican Palace of the government and fought the security personnel.

Political crisis in Iraq

Background:

- The October 2021 elections to the Council of Representatives were considered to be a new beginning and opportunity for Iraq.
- The Sadrist Movement won 73 out of the 329 seats available, but failed to secure absolute majority.

- Iraq's post-war tradition was to form national consensus governments. But Mr. Sadr wanted to form a majority government led by his bloc.
- He entered into a tripartite coalition, called "Save the Homeland", with Sunni and Kurdish parties. Together, they had absolute majority in the House.
- However, the Shia Coordination Framework, the coalition of **Iran-backed** Shia parties, opposed Mr. Sadr resulting into a bitter power struggle.

Constitutional provision on election of President & PM of Iraq

- The Constitution of Iraq requires a new Parliament to pick a President first, who then should ask the largest parliamentary bloc to nominate someone for the post of Prime Minister.
- The PM nominee should then form a government and get parliamentary approval.
- For the Presidential election to take place, two-thirds of the representatives should be present in the House.

Triggering of crisis

- The subsequent Presidential votes in Iraq failed to go through as the quorum was not met as different blocs boycotted parliament sessions.
 - Therefore, without a new President, a new government could not be formed.
- In protest against the rival parties' continued boycott of Parliament, Mr. Sadr, in June 2022, asked all the 73 legislators of the Sadrist Movement to resign.
- According to Iraq's electoral laws, if a parliamentary seat becomes vacant, it will be filled by the candidate who receives the second-highest number of votes in their electoral district.
- The Coordination Framework took advantage of this resignation and became the largest bloc. They went ahead with plans to form their government.
- Sadr, now out of Parliament, called for protests in the streets.

What do Sadrists want?

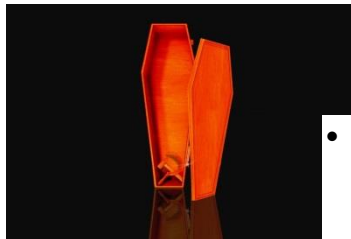
- They demand the dissolution of Parliament, early elections and Constitutional amendments to clear blockades that stand in the way of Mr. Sadr forming a majority government.
- Sadr asked his supporters to continue the sit-in protests until new elections are held. The Shia Coordination Framework opponents have staged counter-protests.

What lies ahead?

- The political paralysis in Iraq could have two possible outcomes.
 - Firstly, as per the wishes of Mr. Sadr and his loyal followers, Parliament could be dissolved, and early elections could be called.
 - The second possibility is the Shia Coordination Framework electing a new President and getting their choice, Mohammed al-Sudani, elected as the next PM of Iraq.
 - This possibility, however, runs the risk of violence. Sadrists might have resigned from Parliament, but they remain a formidable street force.
 - The current crisis also marks a break from Iraq's post-war Shia consensus.
 - The dominant political contradiction in the elections held immediately after the U.S. invasion was between Shia and Sunni parties.
 - Now the power struggle is between two Shia factions, one backed by Iran and the other relatively autonomous led by Mr. Sadr.
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MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

Mikhail Gorbachev, the former Soviet leader who brought the Cold War to a peaceful end, has died aged 91.



About:

- Mikhail Gorbachev (1931 – 2022) was a Russian and Soviet politician who served as the last leader of the Soviet Union.
- As the country's head of state from 1988 to 1991, he served as Chairman of the Supreme Soviet from 1989 to 1990 and President of the Soviet Union from 1990 until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.
- Ideologically, Gorbachev initially adhered to Marxism–Leninism, but he moved towards social democracy by the early 1990s.
- Gorbachev believed significant reform was necessary, particularly after the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

- He withdrew from the Soviet–Afghan War and embarked on summits with United States president Ronald Reagan to limit nuclear weapons and end the Cold War.
- Domestically, his policy of glasnost ("openness") allowed for enhanced freedom of speech and press, while his perestroika ("restructuring") sought to decentralize economic decision-making to improve efficiency.
- The recipient of a wide range of awards, including the Nobel Peace Prize, he was widely praised for his pivotal role in ending the Cold War.

FAKE CURRENCY

Nearly 60% of all fake notes seized in 2021 were of ₹2,000 denomination, the Crime in India 2021 report compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) shows.

Invalid notes | Post-2016, there has been a rise in seizure of counterfeit currency. In 2016, fake notes with a face value of ₹15.93 crore were seized. The seizures crossed the ₹17 crore mark in the following years



About:

- Of the fake Indian currency notes with a face value of ₹20.39 crore seized in 2021, ₹12.18 crore was in the denomination of ₹2,000.
- The new ₹2,000 and ₹500 currency notes were introduced in 2016 after the old ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes were scrapped by the Union government. The government had said that curbing of fake notes was one of the primary objectives of the 2016 demonetisation exercise.
- Post-2016, there has been an increase in seizure of fake money, the NCRB data reveal.
- The highest recovery of fake ₹2,000 notes was made in Tamil Nadu (₹5 crore), followed by Kerala (₹1.8 crore) and Andhra Pradesh (₹1 crore).

FORENSIC EVIDENCE



Delhi Police has become the first police force in the country to make collection of forensic evidence mandatory in crimes punishable by more than six years.



CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK



About:

- The order was issued hours after Union Home Minister Amit Shah visited the Police Headquarters here. Since Delhi is a Union Territory, its police force is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs.
 - The order comes following a push by Mr. Shah who had said the government was going to overhaul the British-era Indian Penal Code and one of the changes being considered was making collection of forensic evidence compulsory in criminal cases punishable by more than six years.
 - “The era of third degree torture is over. Custodial torture has roots in colonial India. Conviction of criminals can be achieved based on forensic evidence that is irrefutable,” Mr. Shah had said.
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