



1. Finance Commission

Topic: Polity And Governance



सत्यमेव जयते

Finance Commission Of India

In News: The government will appoint 16th Finance Commission to determine how much of the Centre's tax revenue should be given away to States (the vertical share) and how to distribute that among States (the horizontal sharing formula).

More on the Topic

About Finance Commission:

- Article 280 of the Indian Constitution laid down the provisions related to the constitution of the Finance Commission and the Finance Commission Act of 1951 supplemented the provision of the constitution.
- Finance Commission, a **quasi-judicial body**, recommends President certain measures related to the distribution of financial resources between the union and the states.
- Individual commissions operate under the **terms of reference (ToR) which are different for every commission**, and they define the terms of qualification, appointment and disqualification, the term, eligibility and powers of the Finance Commission.
- As per the constitution, **the Commission consists of a chairman and four other members.**

Areas of Focus In front of 16th Finance Commission:

- **Horizontal distribution:**
- Currently, the Centre gives away **41% of its tax pool to the States**. States will demand that this proportion be raised.
- But there is not much room for stretching this further due to Centre's expenditure needs and the constraints on its borrowing limit.



- **The very nature of horizontal distribution that richer States compensate poorer States.** How to ensure that this happens without deepening the divide will challenge the government in defining the terms of reference of the Finance Commission, and of the Finance Commission itself in delivering on those terms of reference.
- **Cesses and surcharges:** there is an increasing trend of Centre increasingly resorting to a levy of cesses and surcharges rather than raising taxes. The proportion of cesses and surcharges in the Centre's total tax revenue had nearly doubled from 10.4% in 2011-12 to 20.2% in 2019-20.
- **The cess and surcharges are not a part of devisable pool of taxes and the increase in those has been protested by states.**
- The next Finance Commission should lay down guidelines for when cesses and surcharges might be levied, and also suggest a formula to cap the amount that can be raised.
- **Restraint on freebies:** The trend of provision of freebies to lure the vote is practiced very much by almost all the political parties. This trend would have been checked by the restraints imposed by the **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act.**
- But Governments have, however, devised innovative methods to increase debt without it showing up in the budget books.
- The FC, in the interest of long-term fiscal sustainability, **should lay down guidelines on the spending on freebies.**

Challenges in front of the New Finance Commission:

- **Population Basis:** The Terms of Reference of the 15th FC became quite contentious because it referred to the 2011 population figures in determining the expenditure needs of a State.
- This was a departure from the standard practice to use the 1971 population numbers.
- States (particularly the southern States) which had done well in stabilising population growth rates, protested against this change calling it a 'penalty for good performance'.
- **Revenue Deficit Grants:** Historically, FCs have struggled to determine how much a State's deficit is due to its fiscal incapacity and how much is due to fiscal irresponsibility.
- Finance Commission has to tweak the distribution formula to support deficit States without penalising responsible States.
- The rationale of revenue deficit grants is that every State should be able to provide a minimum level of service to its residents.

Source: Indian Express

1. Good Governance

Topic: Environment and Ecology



In News: The National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG) completed its flagship capacity building programme (CBP) for civil servants of Bangladesh.

More on the Topic:

- The National Centre for Good Governance was set up in 2014 by the Government of India as an apex-level institution under **the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions**.
- NCGG is mandated to work in the areas of **public policy, governance, reforms, training and capacity building of civil servants** of the country as well as of other developing countries. It is to also work as a think tank of the government.
- It provides a platform for sharing existing knowledge and proactively seeking out and developing ideas for their implementation in the government, both at the National & International levels.
- It is governed by a Governing Body, under the Chairmanship of **the Cabinet Secretary**.

About Good Governance:

- According to UNESCAP, good governance means ‘the processes and institutions which produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal’. In simple words, good governance is the management of public affairs in just, fair and reasonable manner.

8 Principles of Good Governance By United Nations:

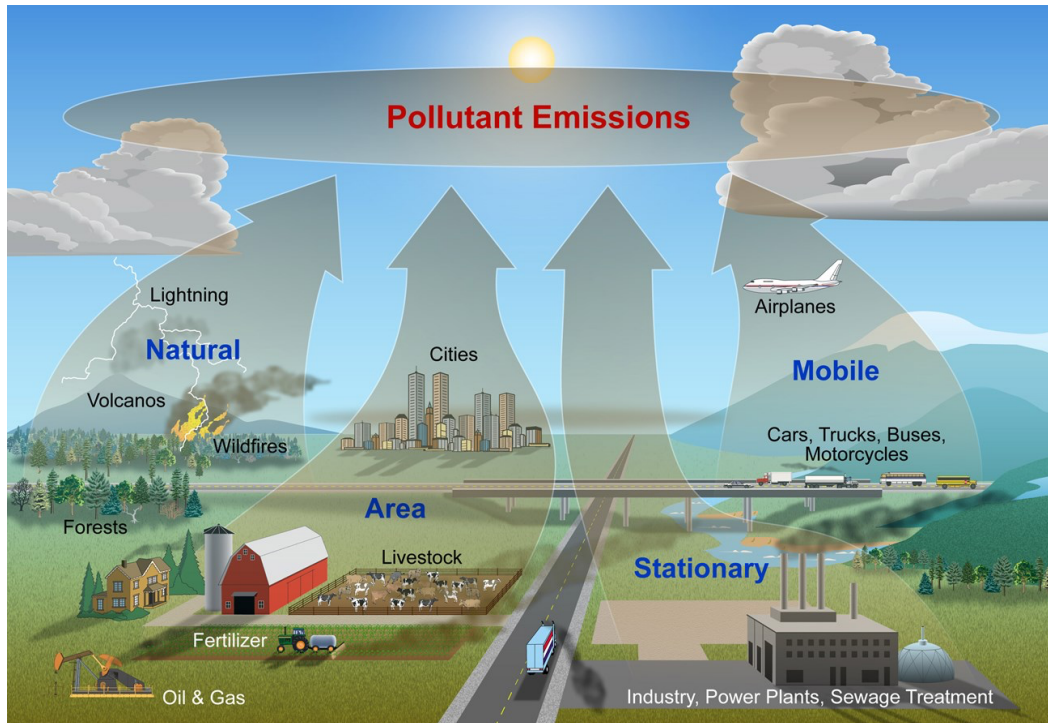
- **Participation:**



- People should be able to voice their own opinions through legitimate immediate organizations or representatives.
- Participation also implies freedom of association and expression.
- **Rule of Law:** Legal framework should be enforced impartially, especially on human rights laws.
- **Consensus Oriented:** Consensus oriented decision-making ensures that even if everyone does not achieve what they want to the fullest, a common minimum can be achieved by everyone which will not be detrimental to anyone.
- **Equity and Inclusiveness:** Good governance assures an equitable society. People should have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.
- **Effectiveness and Efficiency:** Processes and institutions should be able to produce results that meet the needs of their community. Resources of the community should be used effectively for the maximum output.
- **Accountability:** Governmental institutions, private sectors, and civil society organizations should be held accountable to the public and institutional stakeholders.
- **Transparency:** Information should be accessible to the public and should be understandable and monitored. It also means free media and access of information to them.
- **Responsiveness:** Institutions and processes should serve all stakeholders in a reasonable period of time.

Source: Hindu

3. Particulate Matter pollution



Topic: Environment and Ecology

In News: According to the report of the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) Particulate pollution has been increasing in the cities of Rajasthan.

More on the Topic:

- PM stands for particulate matter (also called particle pollution): the term for a mixture of solid particles and liquid droplets found in the air. Some particles, such as dust, dirt, soot, or smoke, are large or dark enough to be seen with the naked eye.
- Others are so small they can only be detected using an electron microscope.

Particle pollution includes:

- **PM10** : inhalable particles, with diameters that are generally 10 micrometers and smaller; and
- **PM2.5** : fine inhalable particles, with diameters that are generally 2.5 micrometers and smaller.

Harmful Effects of PM?

- Particulate matter contains microscopic solids or liquid droplets that are so small that they can be inhaled and cause serious health problems.
- Some particles less than 10 micrometers in diameter can get deep into your lungs and some may even get into your bloodstream. Of these, particles less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter, also known as fine particles or PM2.5, pose the greatest risk to health.



- They lead to **chronic bronchitis, reduced lung function and increased mortality from lung cancer and heart disease.**
- NASA satellite data pertaining to PM 2.5 and found that “more than 4 in 10 Indians are exposed to 5 times the safe limit of particulate matter in the air they breathe”.
- Fine particles are also the main cause of reduced visibility (haze).

Government Initiatives to Mitigate Particulate Matter Issue:

- **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP):** a long-term, time-bound, national level strategy to tackle the air pollution problem across the country in a comprehensive manner with targets to achieve 20 % to 30 % reduction in PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} concentrations by 2024 keeping 2017 as the base year for the comparison of concentration.
- **Comprehensive Action Plan (CAP):** The Central Government has notified a Comprehensive Action Plan (CAP) in 2018 identifying timelines and implementing agencies for actions identified for prevention, control and mitigation of air pollution including PM pollution in Delhi and NCR.
- **The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB):** It is a **statutory organisation** under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (Mo.E.F.C).
- It was established in 1974 under the Water (Prevention and Control of pollution) Act, 1974.
- It is also **entrusted** with the powers and functions under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.
- **National Air Quality Index (AQI):** The AQI is an index for **reporting daily air quality**. It tells how clean or polluted the air is.
- The higher the AQI value, the greater the level of air pollution and the greater the health Concern.
- It Would measure Particulate Matter 2.5, Ozone, Carbon monoxide, Ammonia, Lead, Nitrogen oxide, Sulphur dioxide, PM 10.

Source: Hindu

4. ICC World Test Championship (WTC)



Topic: Sports

In News: Australia beats India to win the WTC title.

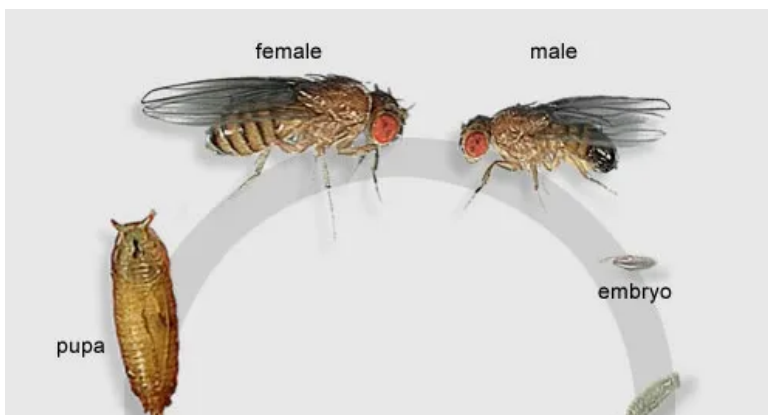
More on the Topic:

- The ICC World Test Championship, also referred to as the Test World Cup, is a league competition for Test cricket run by the International Cricket Council, which started on 1 August 2019. It is the premier championship for Test cricket.
- New Zealand beat India in the inaugural ICC World Test Championship (WTC) Final to become the first World Test Champion.
- WTC comprises the top nine Test teams, all of whom played six series each – three at home and three away.

Source: HT

5. Fruit Flies

Topic: Science and Technology



Go, change the world



In News: Researchers using a concept called “gene drive,” manipulated the fruit flies’ DNA so that the female offspring would be sterile and saving fruit farmers.

More on the Topic:

- The researchers found if they bred one of their modified flies with a non-modified fly, up to 99 per cent of the offspring would inherit the sterility trait.
- Genetically modifying insects as a form of pest control isn’t a new idea. Scientists have already released genetically modified mosquitoes.
- These mate with the native population to produce offspring that die before adulthood. This keeps numbers low and helps to combat the spread of insect-borne diseases like yellow fever, dengue and Zika viruses.

Gene Drive:

- Engineered gene drives are genetic systems that circumvent traditional rules of sexual reproduction and **greatly increase the odds that the drive will be passed on to offspring.**
- This enables **the spread of specified genetic alterations through targeted wild populations over many generations.**
- They represent a potentially powerful tool to confront regional or global challenges, including control of invasive species and eradication of insect-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue.

Source: Hindu



6. Columbia

Topic: Places in News



In News: Lost for 40 days in the Colombian Amazon, four Indigenous children survived eating seeds, roots and plants.

More on the Topic:

- Columbia is a north-western South American country with a coastline on Atlantic Ocean as well as the Pacific Ocean.
- Bordered by Panama, Venezuela, Brazil, Peru and Ecuador.

Source: Hindu

7. Gilgit manuscripts



Topic: Art and Culture

In News: The birch bark and clay coated Gilgit manuscripts are the oldest surviving manuscripts in India.

More on the Topic:

- These manuscripts include both canonical and non-canonical Buddhist works that throw light on the evolution of Sanskrit, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Mongolian, Manchu and Tibetan religion-philosophical literature.
- They are used for the study of the history and development of Buddhist thought and writing is invaluable.
- The Gilgit manuscript contain inter alia **Sutras (aphorism) from the Buddhist canon, Samadhirajasutra and the Saddharmapundarikasutra (the Lotus Sutra)** form part of the corpus that covers a wide range of subjects including religion, ritual, philosophy, iconometry, folk tales, medicine and many other areas of human life and knowledge.
- Paleographically these manuscripts can be dated back to the **5th to 6th Century A.D.** and are written in Buddhist hybrid Sanskrit language of the Gupta Brahmi and Post Gupta Brahmi script of that period.
- The manuscripts were discovered in three instalments in the Gilgit region of Kashmir.

Source: Hindu