DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 30-01-2025

GS-2

1. **Should Governors head State Universities**
2. **PM-KISAN**
3. **NITI fiscal health index**

GS-3

4. **Thyroid Disorder**
5. **Blue Carbon Ecosystems**

Should Governors head State Universities

Syllabus: GS-2: Indian Polity –Role of Governor

Context:

- The Governor's role as Chancellor of State universities has become politicised, undermining university autonomy and causing governance issues.

Historical Background

- The role of the Governor as Chancellor is not a post-Independence safeguard against political interference but a colonial-era mechanism.
- Introduced in 1857, the Governors of presidencies (Calcutta, Bombay, Madras) were made ex-officio Chancellors to maintain British control over universities.
- Powers granted to the Governor as Chancellor included:
    - Appointment of Vice-Chancellors.
    - Nominating members to university bodies.
    - Approving delegated legislation under university laws.
    - Presiding over convocations.
- This colonial model continued post-Independence without assessing its relevance in a democratic, federal structure.

Politicisation of the Governor's Office

- **Pre-1967 (Congress dominance):** Governors remained ceremonial, and the colonial model was unchanged.
- **Post-1967 (Political changes):**
    - Governors became political instruments of the Central government, leading to clashes with State governments.
    - Efforts to amend university laws faced delays as Governors referred such amendments to the President.
    - Criticisms by commissions:
        - First Administrative Reforms Commission (1966–77): Highlighted erosion of dignity due to the politicisation of the office.
        - Sarkaria Commission (1983-88): Revealed over 60% of Governors were active politicians before appointment.

Governor's Dual Role

- **Constitutional Powers (Article 163(1)):**

- Bound by the advice of the Council of Ministers in most functions.

- **Statutory Powers (As Chancellor):**
  - Acts at discretion in university matters unless laws mandate otherwise.
  - Functions include:
    - Appointing Vice-Chancellors.
    - Approving subordinate legislation.
    - Nominating members to university bodies.
  - Supreme Court upheld this dual role distinction.

Challenges in Current System

- **Dual Authority:**
  - Universities are accountable to both the Governor and State government, leading to administrative inefficiencies.
- **Delays in Governance:**
  - Clashes between Governors and State governments result in delayed appointments of Vice-Chancellors and staff, affecting academic and administrative operations.
- **Lack of Qualifications:**
  - Many Governors lack the academic expertise necessary for effective oversight of universities.
- **Political Interference:**
  - Instead of reducing interference, Governors often prioritize the Centre's political agenda, undermining university autonomy.
- **Erosion of Federalism:**
  - Allowing Governors (appointed by the Centre) to control State institutions compromises State autonomy.

Insights from Commissions

- **Rajamannar Committee (1969-71):**
  - Recommended Governors act as Chancellor only on the advice of the State government.
- **Sarkaria Commission (1983-88):**
  - Advocated consultation with Chief Ministers while retaining independent judgment.

- **National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2000-02):**
  - Called for political neutrality, clear role definition, and greater university autonomy.
- **M.M. Punchhi Commission (2007-10):**
  - Suggested States appoint eminent academics as Chancellors to avoid conflicts and preserve the dignity of the Governor's office.

Alternative Models for the Chancellor's Role

- **Governor as Ceremonial Chancellor:**
  - Mandates the Governor act on the advice of the State Council of Ministers.
  - Adopted by Gujarat (1978), Karnataka (2000), Maharashtra (2021).
- **Chief Minister as Chancellor:**
  - Adopted by West Bengal and Punjab in 2023 (awaiting Presidential assent).
  - Tamil Nadu passed a Bill in 2022 substituting 'Government' for 'Chancellor' (awaiting assent).
- **State-Appointed Chancellor:**
  - Implemented in Telangana (2015).
  - Kerala passed a similar Bill in 2022 (awaiting assent).
- **Chancellor Elected by University Bodies:**
  - Followed in Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh universities.
- **Chancellor Appointed by University's Executive Council:**
  - Examples include Birmingham (U.K.), McGill (Canada), Melbourne (Australia).

Recommendations for Reform

- States should transition to the **State-appointed Chancellor model**, ensuring the appointee is a distinguished academician or public figure, excluding politicians.
- Align university governance models with global best practices.
- The Centre should facilitate reform by:
  - Granting timely Presidential assent to State Bills.
  - Avoiding political biases in decision-making.

Conclusion

Reforming the "Governor as Chancellor" system requires:

- Accountability to State governments.
- Minimising political interference.
- Promoting institutional autonomy and academic excellence.
- Removing the colonial legacy is essential for strengthening the governance of State universities in India.

PM-KISAN

Syllabus: GS-2: Welfare Schemes and Policies.

Context:

The scheme, which started off strong, has been providing assistance to fluctuating numbers of farmers over the past six years

Introduction

- **PM-KISAN**: Provides annual income support of ₹6,000 to eligible farmer families in three installments.
- **Launch**: Became operational in December 2018; officially launched in February 2019.
- Initially targeted small and marginal farmers; expanded in May 2019 to include all land-owning farmers.
- Tenant farmers are excluded from the scheme.

Scheme Coverage and Financial Outlay

- **Initial Estimates (2019-20)**:
  - Total expected cost: ₹87,217.5 crore.
  - Target beneficiaries: ~14.5 crore.
- **Actual Performance**:
  - Annual disbursal never exceeded ₹70,000 crore.
  - Beneficiary count has not reached 14.5 crore.

Allocation vs. Expenditure

- **2019-20 and 2020-21**:
  - Allocation: ₹75,000 crore each year.
  - Expenditure ranged between ₹49,000 crore and ₹61,000 crore.

- **2021-22**:
  - Highest disbursal: ₹67,150 crore.
  - Year-on-year growth moderated to ~10%.
- **2022-23**:
  - 13% dip in disbursal to ₹62,000 crore.

Beneficiaries Over Time

- **Trends**:
  - Rise in beneficiaries from the second to fourth year of implementation.
  - Post-2021: Governments began weeding out ineligible individuals.
- **Saturation Drive**:
  - November 2023: Included 1 crore additional farmers.
  - June 2024: Added 25 lakh more beneficiaries.
- **18th Payout (October 2024)**:
  - Total beneficiaries: ~9.59 crore.
  - Beneficiary composition:
    - Scheduled Castes (SCs): 12%.
    - Scheduled Tribes (STs): 9%.
    - Women: ~20% among SCs and others; 29% among STs.

Regional Variations in Beneficiary Count

- **Tamil Nadu**:
  - Beneficiaries reduced from 44.6 lakh (2020-21) to 21.9 lakh (2023-24).
  - Disbursed amount dropped from ₹2,594 crore (2020-21) to ₹1,439 crore (2023-24).
- **Manipur**:
  - Beneficiaries decreased by ~70% between 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Challenges and Farmers' Demands

- **Challenges**:
  - Decline in the number of beneficiaries due to stricter eligibility verification.
  - Demand for better record-keeping (e.g., no separate data for Other Backward Classes).

- **Farmers' Demands**:
  - Increase annual payout from ₹6,000 to ₹12,000.
  - Incentives for efficient resource use (water, electricity, and inputs).

Key Takeaways for Policy Recommendations

- Address fluctuations in coverage and disbursal across states.
- Ensure inclusivity by expanding the scheme to tenant farmers.
- Incentivize sustainable farming practices.

NITI fiscal health index

Syllabus: GS-2: Governance & GS-3: Indian Economy – Fiscal policy.

Context:

Recently, released report by NITI Aayog released Fiscal Health Index 2025.

Fiscal Health Index (FHI) 2025: Key Highlights

Introduction

- **Released by:** NITI Aayog on January 24, 2025.
- **Purpose:** Evaluates fiscal health across 18 Indian states contributing significantly to India's GDP, demographics, public expenditure, revenues, and fiscal stability.
- **Launch:** Inaugural issue presented by **Arvind Panagariya**, Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission.

Importance of Fiscal Health

- Plays a pivotal role in **resource allocation** for agriculture, poverty alleviation, human development, urbanization, and infrastructure.
- Enhances **social welfare**, promotes **regional economic convergence**, and stimulates **growth**.

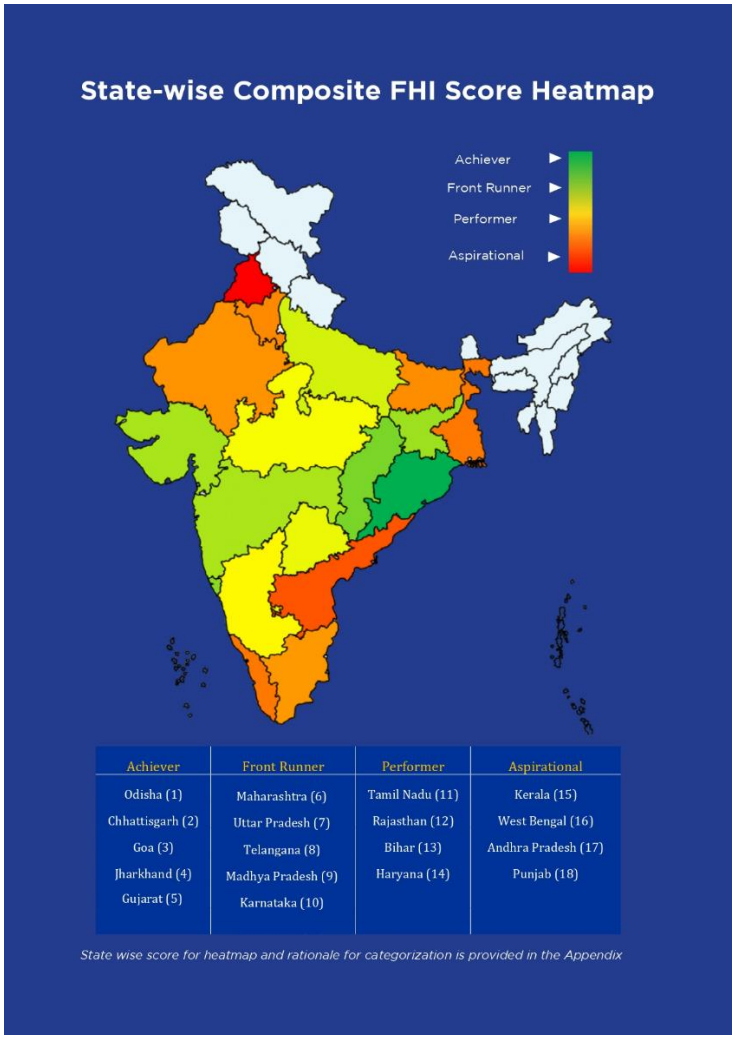
Top-Performing States (FY 2022-23)

Rank	State	FHI Score	Quality of Expenditure	Revenue Mobilization	Fiscal Prudence	Debt Index	Debt Sustainability
1	Odisha	67.8	52	69.9	54	99	64
2	Chhattisgar	55.2	55.1	56.5	56	79.6	29

Rank	State	FHI Score	Quality of Expenditure	Revenue Mobilization	Fiscal Prudence	Debt Index	Debt Sustainability
	h						
3	Goa	53.6	45.5	87.1	59.4	51	25.2
4	Jharkhand	51.6	47.3	45.7	62.4	66.9	35.7
5	Gujarat	50.5	40	48.7	52.7	69	42

Key Observations

- **Odisha**:
  - Ranked 1st with a score of 67.8.
  - Strengths:
    - **Debt Index:** 99.0 (highest among all states).
    - **Debt Sustainability:** 64.0.
  - Notable for low fiscal deficits, robust capital outlay, and a healthy debt profile relative to GSDP.
- **Chhattisgarh**:
  - Ranked 2nd, scoring high in **Debt Index** (79.6).
  - Strong fiscal balance between expenditure and revenue.
- **Goa**:
  - Ranked 3rd, excelling in **Revenue Mobilisation** (87.1).
- **Jharkhand**:
  - Improved rank significantly (from 10th in earlier periods to 4th in FY 2022-23).
  - Progress driven by better revenue mobilisation, fiscal prudence, and debt sustainability.



Front-Runners

- States: **Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka.**
- Strengths: Moderate fiscal performance and sound expenditure management.

Aspirational States (Worst-Performing)

- **Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Kerala:**
  - **Punjab & Kerala:** Weak **expenditure quality** and **debt sustainability.**
  - **West Bengal:** Challenges in **Revenue Mobilisation** and **Debt Index.**
  - **Andhra Pradesh:** Struggles with significant **fiscal deficit.**
  - **Haryana:** Weak debt profile exacerbates fiscal challenges.

Conclusion

- **Significance:** Effective fiscal health management is critical for equitable growth, financial sustainability, and regional development.

- **Focus Areas:** Improving debt profiles, enhancing revenue mobilisation, and promoting fiscal prudence across states.

This structured data is crucial for GS-3 (Indian Economy) and GS-2 (Governance).

Thyroid Disorder

Syllabus: GS-3: General Science – Diseases.

Context:

- Webinar by The Hindu in collaboration with Naruvi Hospitals, Vellore, under the *Healthy India Happy India* initiative (January 26, 2025).

Introduction to Thyroid Disorders

- **Thyroid Gland Function:** Produces thyroxine, critical for normal body functioning.
  - **Hypothyroidism:** Low thyroxine levels.
  - **Hyperthyroidism:** High thyroxine levels.
- **Prevalence:**
  - 40–50% of the population may have undiagnosed thyroid problems.
  - Only a small percentage is detected.
- **Thyroid Swellings:** Common but not always malignant.

Key Insights on Thyroid Disorders

Types and Diagnosis:

- **Hypothyroidism and Hyperthyroidism Symptoms:**
  - Gradual weight gain or loss.
  - Fatigue, lethargy, sleepiness.
  - Constipation or diarrhoea.
  - Menstrual irregularities.
  - Palpitations, sweating.
  - Chronic cough, difficulty swallowing or breathing.
  - Delayed growth in children.
- **Thyroiditis:**
  - Inflammation of the thyroid gland.

- **Tests for Diagnosis:**
  - Thyroid function tests (part of health packages).
  - Specific tests for symptomatic individuals.
- **Thyroid Cancers:**
  - 90% cases are curable with treatment.
  - Requires early detection via imaging and clinical examination.

Thyroid Disorders in Pregnancy

- **Second most common disorder in pregnancy (after diabetes).**
- **Challenges:**
  - Physiological changes during and after pregnancy mimic thyroid disorders.
  - Symptoms can persist up to a year post-delivery.
- **Recommendations:**
  - Early detection through endocrine evaluation by gynaecologists.

Preventive Measures

- **Dietary Recommendations:**
  - Avoid cruciferous vegetables like cauliflower.
  - Limit processed foods that can cause goitre.
  - Use iodised salt and consume minerals like selenium and zinc.
- **Lifestyle Recommendations:**
  - Maintain healthy body weight.
  - Practice stress reduction techniques.
  - Regular exercise and mental health care.

High-Risk Groups

- Adolescents.
- Pregnant women.
- Men above 40 years.
- Women above 50 years.

Management of Thyroid Tumours

- **Benign Tumours:** Require evaluation and, if necessary, surgical intervention.

- **Asymptomatic Swellings:** Should be monitored for growth in size or number.

Role of Mental Health

- **Endocrine Disruptors:** Stress, anxiety, and depression contribute to thyroid disorders.

Conclusion

- Early detection and timely management are crucial for minimizing morbidity and ensuring effective treatment.
- Awareness among high-risk groups and adoption of preventive measures can significantly reduce the burden of thyroid disorders.

Blue Carbon Ecosystems

Syllabus: GS-3: Environment and Ecology.

Context:

- Blue carbon ecosystems are highly effective carbon sinks, surpassing the carbon sequestration rates of traditional forests.
- They play a critical role in reducing atmospheric carbon, aiding climate resilience.

What Are Blue Carbon Ecosystems?

- Coastal and marine habitats that capture and store carbon.
- Include **mangroves**, **salt marshes**, and **seagrasses**.
- Vital for:
    - Maintaining biodiversity.
    - Providing habitat for marine life.
    - Protecting coastlines from erosion and flooding.

Carbon Sequestration Potential

- Mangroves can sequester carbon at rates **10 times higher** than mature tropical forests.
- Capable of storing over **1,000 tons of carbon per hectare**.
- Restoring **10% of degraded mangroves globally** could sequester an additional **1.6 billion tons of carbon**.

Economic and Environmental Benefits

- **Local economies** benefit through sustainable fisheries and eco-tourism.
    - Example: Restored mangroves in India increased coastal GDPs and attracted government funding.
- **High economic returns**: Every $1 invested in blue carbon restoration yields **$6 in benefits**.

Challenges in Blue Carbon Conservation

- Threats include:
    - Agricultural expansion.
    - Coastal development.
    - Illegal logging.
- **Systemic hurdles**: Delay in project development due to governance issues.
- **Carbon credit market challenges**: Lack of transparency undermines investor confidence.

Innovations in Blue Carbon Projects

- **Australia's Blue Carbon Method**: Streamlines project implementation and encourages investments.
- Technological advancements:
    - **AI mapping** for better monitoring.
    - **Blockchain** for transparency in carbon credit markets.
- **Community-driven efforts** in Indonesia:
    - Successful mangrove restoration.
    - Enhanced local economies.

Future of Blue Carbon Ecosystems

- **Global market for blue carbon credits** projected to reach **$50 billion by 2030**.
- Key initiatives:
    - India's **Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes (MISHTI)**:
        - Focus on mangrove restoration.
        - Aims to enhance sustainability and climate resilience.

Conclusion

- Blue carbon ecosystems represent a vital tool in combating climate change while offering economic and environmental co-benefits.
- Investment, innovation, and community involvement are key to unlocking their full potential.