

Panchayat autonomy

- More than three decades after the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts, which gave constitutional status to local governments, State governments, through the local bureaucracy, continue to exercise considerable discretionary authority and influence over panchayats.
- Gram panchayats remain fiscally dependent on grants (both discretionary and non-discretionary grants) from the State and the Centre for everyday activities.
- Broadly, panchayats have three main sources of funds their own sources of revenue (local taxes, revenue from common property resources, etc.), grants in aid from the Centre and State governments, and discretionary or scheme -based funds.
- Their own sources of revenue (both tax and non-tax) constitute a tiny proportion of overall panchayat funds
- There are also severe constraints on how panchayats can use the funds allocated to them. State governments often impose spending limits on various expenditures through panchayat funds.
- State governments also bind local governments' through the local bureaucracy.
- Approval for public works projects often requires technical approval (from the engineering department) and administrative approval from local officials of the rural development department, such as the block development officer.
- Gram Panchayat Acts in many States have empowered district -level bureaucrats, mostly district Collectors, to act against sarpanches for official misconduct.

THE HINDU

South Asia and India as G20 PRESIDENT

- The global food, energy, and financial crises have been exacerbated by the climatic crisis and India has a unique opportunity to lead from the front of one of the most influential global platforms.
- India has identified several priorities, i.e. green development, climate finance, and LiFE (lifestyle for the environment); accelerated, inclusive and resilient growth; accelerating progress on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); technological transformation and digital public infrastructure;

multilateral reforms; and women-led development.

- The majority of problems that South Asian countries face are global in nature, transcend national borders, and necessitate group effort.
- In August 2022, inflation in Sri Lanka reached an all-time high of 64.3% as food prices rose by 84.6% compared to a year ago. Damage caused by floods and economic losses in Pakistan amount to more than \$30 billion with an estimated restoration cost of more than \$16 billion.
- As global fossil fuel prices have increased, the Government of Bangladesh hiked fuel prices by more than 50% that triggered inflation of 7.5% in September 2022.
- India needs to promote collective action at the G20 that results in economic stability and peace in the region.
- India has an opportunity to effectively voice the socio-economic aspirations of South Asia's 1.8 billion people, representing one-third of the global poor, and is also one of the world's fastest-growing markets.
- Three G20 emerging economies India, Indonesia, and Brazil collectively make up the G20 troika to be followed by another important G20 developing member, i.e. South Africa, the G20 President for 2025.
- Hence, India can draw attention to issues that are significant for South Asia and the entire developing world, ensuring greater momentum for those nations not represented in the G20.
- The majority of South Asian nations produce their energy from fossil fuels; 63% of the region's emissions of greenhouse gases come from energy generation.
- Since dollars are short in supply, it has become challenging for countries to keep up with energy production
- The green energy transition is one of the top priorities for this region. Improving health infrastructure is quite important for South Asia and the G20 agenda.
- Being the only G20 member from South Asia, India has added responsibilities since many non-G20 nations.

THE HINDU

Shifting bank of Ganga

- The rivers of the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) delta have a tendency to oscillate and erode in an area which is called the meander belt.

- “Normal oscillation of the river was interrupted after the construction of the Farakka Barrage. It reduced the cross-sectional area of the river, it reduced the water holding capacity, and compelled the river to change its course,”
- The primary objective of the Farakka Barrage Project was to divert an adequate quantity of Ganga waters to the Bhagirathi- Hooghly river system through a 38.38-km -long feeder canal for preservation and maintenance of Kolkata Port by improving navigability.
- the barrage has converted the river into a stagnant pool holding 87,000 million cubic meters of water and the river has deposited sediment upstream in Malda,
- This sediment deposition is leading to the emergence of chars (river islands) in Malda.
- The river is eroding on the left bank, and the relatively sediment- free water downstream Farakka is eroding the right bank in Murshidabad; in both these cases, c.
- The barrage was constructed by Hindustan Construction Company.
- The Barrage serves water to the Farakka Super Thermal Power Station. There are also sixty small canals which can divert some water to other destinations for drinking purposes etc.
- The purpose of the barrage is to divert 1,800 cubic meters per second (64,000 cu ft/s) of water from the Ganges to the Hooghly River for flushing out sediment deposition from Kolkata harbor without the need for regular mechanical dredging.

THE HINDU

New guidelines to regulate promotion on social media

About Farakka Barrage

- Farakka Barrage is a barrage across the Ganga river located in Murshidabad district in the Indian state of West Bengal,
- The Centre released the endorsement guidelines for celebrities and social media influencers, mandating compulsory disclosure of monetary or material benefits of a product or a brand they are promoting through social media platforms.
- Failing to do so will attract a penalty of up to ₹50 lakh.
- The disclosures must be prominently and clearly displayed in the endorsement and terms such as ‘advertisement’, ‘sponsored’ or ‘paid

promotion' should be used for all sorts of endorsements.

- The step is after considering the increased use of social media for promotional activities that go beyond advertisements or advertorials in print or electronic media.
- With the increasing reach of digital platforms and social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, there has been a rise in the influence of virtual influencers, in addition to celebrities and social media influencers.
- This has led to an increased risk of consumers being misled by advertisements and unfair trade practices by these individuals on social media platforms,
- The guidelines specify that disclosures must be prominently and clearly displayed in the endorsement, making them "extremely hard to miss".
- Benefits and incentives, monetary or other compensation, trips or hotel stay, media barter, coverage and awards, free products with or without conditions, discounts, gifts, and any family or personal or employment relationship come under material benefits according to the guidelines.
- If there are violations, the penalty prescribed for misleading advertisements under the Consumer Protection Act 2019 will be applicable.
- In that case, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) can impose a penalty of up to ₹ 10 lakhs on manufacturers, advertisers, and endorsers and for repeated offenses, a penalty of up to ₹ 50 lakhs can be imposed.
- The CCPA can also prohibit the endorser of a misleading advertisement from making any endorsement for up to one year and for subsequent contravention, prohibition can extend up to three years.

THE HINDU

Biodegradable plastic

- Biodegradable plastics are plastics that can be decomposed by the action of living organisms, usually microbes, into the water, carbon dioxide, and biomass
- Biodegradable plastics are commonly produced with renewable raw materials, micro-organisms, petrochemicals, or combinations of all three.
- Not all bioplastics (plastics derived partly or entirely from biomass) are

biodegradable, and some biodegradable plastics are fully petroleum-based.

TYPES OF BIOPLASTIC

- Biologically synthesized plastics (also called bioplastics or bio-based plastics) are plastics produced from natural origins, such as plants, animals, or micro-organisms
- Polyhydroxyalkanoates are a class of biodegradable plastic naturally produced by various micro-organisms
- Polylactic acid is thermoplastic aliphatic polyester synthesized from renewable biomass, typically from fermented plant starch such as from corn, cassava, sugarcane, or sugar beet pulp.
- Petroleum-based plastics are derived from petrochemicals, which are obtained from fossil crude oil, coal, or natural gas.

THE HINDU
