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A fair share: On the concerns of high performing States

(The Hindu, 19-09-24)

What are the key demands of the Opposition-ruled States regarding tax devolution?

- Raise the divisible pool of taxes from 41% to 50%
- Cap the amount the Centre can collect as cesses and surcharges
- Address growing infringement on States' autonomy to collect taxes since GST introduction
- Discuss penalising of States with better economic indices

What recent events have highlighted the need for this discussion?

- Paltry sums allocated in 2024-25 Union Budget for projects like:
 - Bengaluru's Suburban Rail Project
 - Non-allocation for Kerala's Vizhinjam Port
 - Second phase of Chennai Metro Rail project
- Recent natural disasters:
 - Flooding in Tamil Nadu's southern delta regions (December)
 - Heavy rains in western Gujarat
 - Devastating landslide at Wayanad, Kerala

How has the current tax devolution system affected high-performing States?

- Reduced devolutions to top tax revenue contributing States like Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu
- 45% weightage given to difference in State GDP by 15th Finance Commission
- Restrictions on tax collections due to GST framework
- Difficulty in addressing specific developmental, climate, and industrial needs
- Inability to cover contingency expenses for extreme weather events

What changes are suggested for the tax devolution framework?

- Amend tax devolution frameworks to give greater autonomy to States
- Address contingency expenses for mitigating extreme weather events
- Allow for tailor-made capital and social expenditures in high-performing States
- Implement a truly federal and participatory governance model

Can you answer the following question?

Critically examine the current tax devolution framework in India, highlighting its impact on high-performing States and their ability to address specific developmental needs.

Shed the myopia, refocus on the relevance of English

(The Hindu, 19-09-24)

What is the main issue regarding English language education in India?

- Many Indian parents aspire for their children to speak English for better socioeconomic opportunities

- National education policies have consistently neglected English language instruction for over 70 years
- This neglect has disproportionately affected marginalized children in government-run schools
- 90% of the population does not speak any English, according to the 2011 India Census

How does the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 approach English language education?

- It continues to devalue English, labelling it as foreign
- Ignores English's crucial role as a connector in the globalized economy
- Lacks a defined strategy to improve access to English for economically disadvantaged groups
- Promotes a three-language formula that ostensibly promotes linguistic diversity but may conceal an agenda to revive the concept of a Hindi-India

What is the constitutional stance on languages in India?

- The Constitution enshrines English and Hindi as official languages
- It refrains from appointing a national language
- Protects regional languages (Schedule VIII), preserving a critical balance
- Recognizes English as an instrumental language for education, health, law, trade, and global communication

What alternative approach does the article suggest for language policy in India?

- Proposes a pragmatic language policy respecting cultural diversity while addressing practical needs
- Suggests a two-language formula comprising a regional language and English
- Emphasizes the need to promote English as a vital tool for national and international communication
- Advocates for a balanced multilingual framework that supports the aspirations of all Indians

Can you answer the following question?

Examine the role of English language education in India's socioeconomic development and evaluate the current language policies in light of constitutional provisions and global economic realities.