Date –15-May 2025

FLASH FLOODS DEVASTATE SOMALIA: 17 LIVES LOST

WHY IN THE NEWS?

In Somalia, at least 17 people have been killed and more than 84,000 others displaced due to flash floods following torrential rains across the country since mid-April. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said an assessment conducted by disaster management officials has revealed extensive damage to infrastructure and an urgent need for assistance to affected people. The UN agency said the Somali government has formed a committee that includes federal ministers and regional officials to respond to the flooding crisis. Somalia, a country with nearly two-thirds of the population that depends on agriculture for their livelihoods, has experienced extreme climate shocks in the past, including prolonged dry seasons causing drought and heavy rains leading to flooding.

WHAT IS A FLASH FLOOD?

A flash flood is a sudden and intense flood that occurs within a short period, typically within six hours of heavy rainfall or the sudden release of water, such as from a dam break or glacier melt. It is characterized by a rapid rise in water levels, which can quickly overwhelm rivers, streams, and dry areas. Flash floods are especially dangerous because they occur with little warning and can sweep away people, vehicles, and structures. They are more common in arid or hilly regions where the ground cannot absorb water quickly. Poor drainage systems and deforestation can also worsen their impact. Due to their speed and unpredictability, flash floods pose serious risks to life and property.

NDMA GUIDELINE

1. Early Warning Systems: Implementing robust forecasting and real-time monitoring systems to provide timely alerts to communities at risk.

2. Community Awareness and Preparedness: Educating the public about flood risks and promoting community-based disaster preparedness plans.

3. Infrastructure Resilience: Ensuring that critical infrastructure, such as dams and levees, are designed and maintained to withstand extreme flood events.

4. Land Use Planning: Regulating development in flood-prone areas to minimize exposure and vulnerability.

5. Emergency Response Planning: Developing and regularly updating emergency response plans, including evacuation routes and shelters.

REASON FOR FLASH FLOOD

1. Intense or Prolonged Rainfall: Sudden, heavy downpours in a short period can overwhelm soil absorption and drainage capacity, triggering flash floods.

2. Cloudbursts: A cloudburst is a sudden, very heavy rainfall event over a localised area, which can dump large volumes of rain in a matter of minutes.

3. Topography and Terrain: Steep, hilly, or mountainous regions accelerate water runoff, making these areas more prone to flash floods.

4. Poor Drainage Systems: Urban areas with inadequate or clogged drainage are highly vulnerable, as water cannot flow away quickly.

5. Dam or Glacier Lake Outbursts: Sudden releases of water from breached dams or melting glacial lakes (GLOFs) can cause catastrophic flash floods downstream.

6. Deforestation and Land Use Changes: Reduced vegetation cover leads to decreased soil absorption, increasing surface runoff and flood risk.

7. Climate Change: Changing weather patterns have led to an increase in extreme rainfall events, contributing to the frequency and severity of flash floods.

CONSEQUENCES OF INDIA'S VULNERABILITY TO FLASH FLOODS

1. Loss of Life and Livelihoods: Flash floods often strike with little warning, leading to significant casualties and displacement, especially in vulnerable rural and urban communities.

2. Damage to Infrastructure: Roads, bridges, railways, power lines, and water supply systems are frequently damaged or destroyed, disrupting connectivity and essential services.

3. Agricultural Losses: Farmlands are inundated, destroying standing crops, livestock, and stored grains, leading to food insecurity and financial distress for farmers.

4. Urban Flooding and Health Hazards: In cities, clogged drains and poor urban planning worsen flash flood impacts, increasing the spread of waterborne diseases and contamination of drinking water.

5. Environmental Degradation: Floodwaters erode soil, degrade riverbanks, and disturb ecosystems. Siltation and debris also damage aquatic habitats and wetlands.

6. Economic Burden: The cumulative damage leads to high economic costs due to loss of productivity, reconstruction, relief measures, and insurance claims.

7. Displacement and Migration: Frequent flooding events force temporary or permanent displacement, straining urban resources and increasing vulnerability in relief camps or resettlement areas.

IMPACT OF FLASH FLOODS IN INDIA

1. Human Casualties and Displacement: Flash floods often occur without warning, leading to loss of lives and large-scale displacement. Vulnerable groups, such as those living in low-lying or poorly constructed housing, are at the greatest risk.

2. Damage to Infrastructure: Critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, railways, power lines, and dams is frequently damaged or destroyed. This not only incurs huge repair costs but also disrupts transportation, communication, and electricity supply.

3. Agricultural Loss: Flash floods wash away standing crops, erode fertile topsoil, and damage irrigation infrastructure. This leads to food shortages, rural distress, and long-term income loss for farmers.

4. Urban Flooding: In cities, poor drainage systems and unplanned construction exacerbate the effects of flash floods. Waterlogging, property damage, and traffic disruptions become common, especially in metros like Mumbai, Chennai, and Delhi.

5. Public Health Risks: Stagnant water from floods creates breeding grounds for mosquitoes and spreads waterborne diseases like cholera, dengue, and leptospirosis. Contaminated water sources pose severe health risks.

6. Environmental Damage: Floods cause soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and degradation of riverbanks and wetlands. They also carry industrial and domestic waste into water bodies, polluting ecosystems.

7. Economic Loss: The combined effect of infrastructure damage, agricultural losses, and relief operations puts a strain on public finances and slows down regional economic growth.

CONCLUSION

Flash floods are among the most dangerous and rapidly occurring natural disasters, posing a significant threat to both life and property. The recent devastation in Somalia highlights the urgent need for global attention to climate-induced disasters. In India, frequent flash floods caused by erratic rainfall, unplanned urbanisation, deforestation, and climate change have had profound human, economic, and environmental impacts. While the NDMA guidelines offer a strong framework for disaster preparedness and response, their effective implementation at local levels remains crucial. Strengthening early warning systems, community awareness, sustainable development, and climate resilience strategies will be key to reducing the vulnerability and enhancing the adaptive capacity of flood-prone regions.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q. With reference to flash floods, consider the following statements:

1. Flash floods usually occur within six hours of intense rainfall.
2. Deforestation has no direct impact on the frequency of flash floods.
3. Poor urban drainage systems can worsen the effects of flash floods.
4. Flash floods are more common in flat plains than hilly areas.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 3 only
(b) 2 and 4 only
(c) 1, 3, and 4
(d) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

Q.Flash floods are becoming increasingly frequent and destructive in India due to climatic and anthropogenic factors. Discuss the causes and consequences of flash floods in India.

(250 words, 15 marks)

THE LANGUAGE DILEMMA: BRIDGING COMMUNICATION

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Supreme Court recently dismissed a plea seeking directions to the governments of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and West Bengal to implement the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, including its three-language formula. The Court clarified that while it can issue directives under Article 32 of the Constitution to protect citizens' fundamental rights, it cannot compel states to adopt a particular policy like the NEP, 2020. This ruling underscores the federal structure of India and the autonomy of states in matters related to education, which is a subject in the Concurrent List.
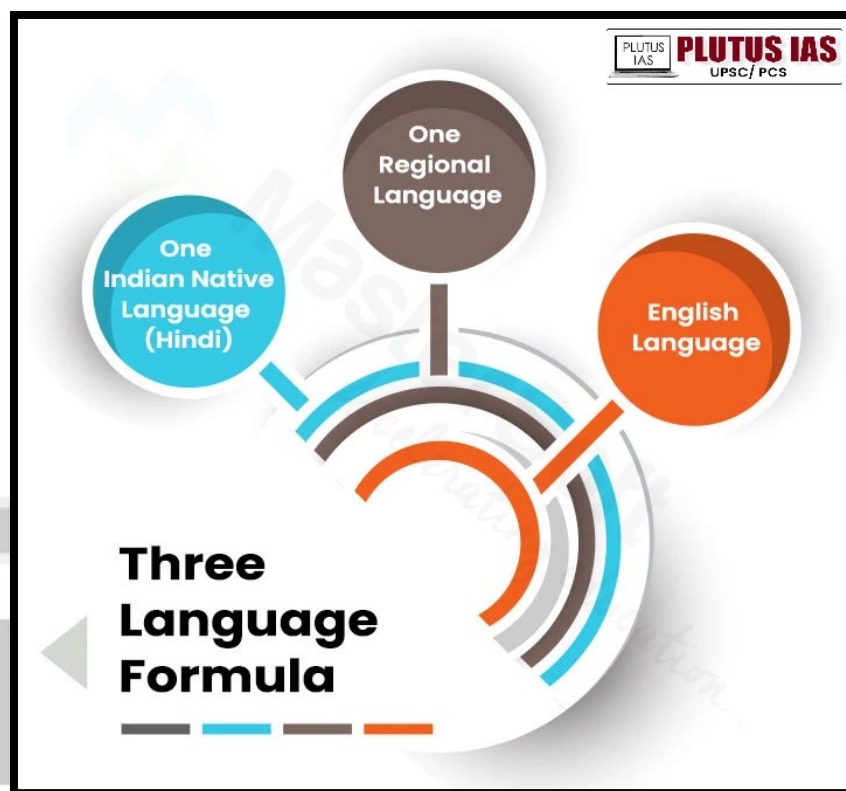
NEW EDUCATION POLICY 2020
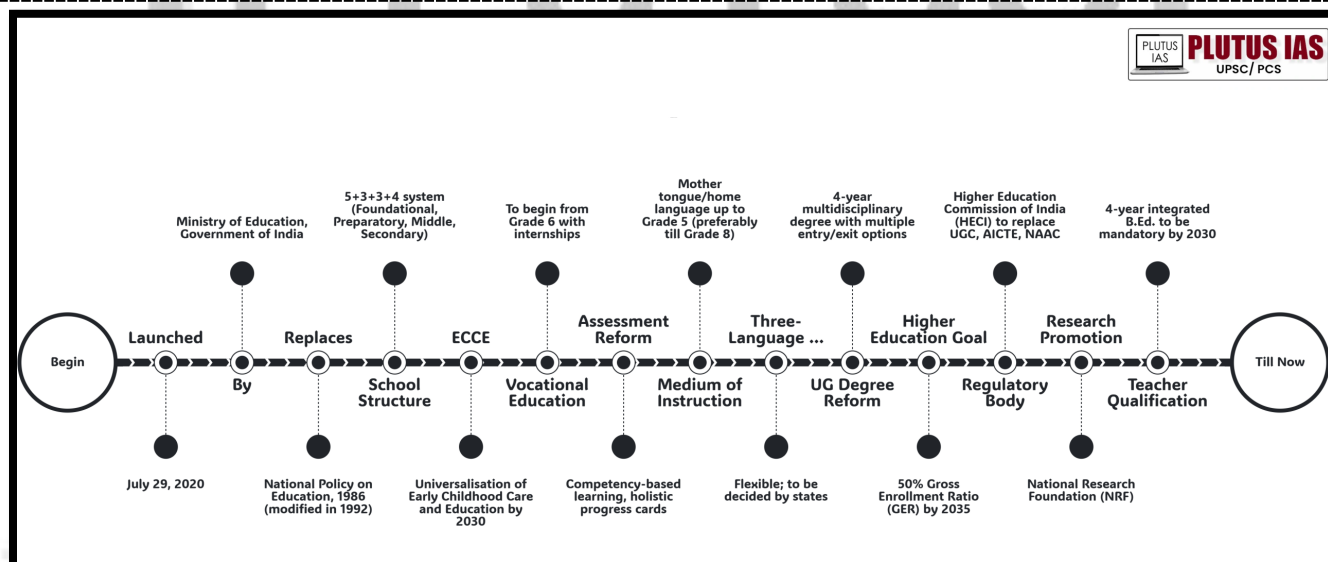
CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS ON LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Article	Provision	Description
Art. 343	Official Language of the Union	Hindi in Devanagari script to be the official language of the Union. English to continue for 15 years.
Art. 344	Commission and Committee of Parliament on Official Language	Provides for the constitution of a Commission (after 5 years) and a Committee to examine language issues.
Art. 345	Official language of a State	The state legislature may adopt any one or

Article	Provision	Description
		more languages used in the state or Hindi as its official language.
Art. 346	Official language for communication between one State and another, and with the Union	English is the default, unless states agree to use Hindi or any other language.
Art. 347	Special provision relating to the language spoken by a section of a state's population	President may direct recognition of a language spoken by a substantial population in a state.
Art. 348	Language to be used in the Supreme Court and High Courts	English is to be used in all proceedings, unless Parliament provides otherwise.
Art. 349	Special procedure for the enactment of laws relating to language	Restrictions on making laws under Articles 348(2) and 345 during the initial 15 years.
Art. 350	Right to submit representation for redress of grievances in any language used in the Union or a State	Any person can submit a representation in any language used in the Union or the State.
Art. 350A	Facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage	Every State must provide facilities for primary education in the mother tongue for linguistic minority children.
Art. 350B	Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities	Appointed by the President to investigate matters related to linguistic minorities and report to the President.
Art. 351	Directive for the development of Hindi	Union Government to promote the spread and development of Hindi for use as a medium of expression.
Eighth Schedule	Languages recognised by the Constitution	Contains 22 scheduled languages (originally 14); inclusion helps in promotion and preservation.

WHAT IS THE THREE-LANGUAGE FORMULA(TLF)

The Three-Language Formula is an educational policy introduced in the 1968 National Policy on Education (NEP) to promote multilingualism and national integration. It mandates that students in India learn three languages: their regional language (mother tongue), Hindi, and English. NEP 2020 retains this framework but allows states and students flexibility in choosing languages, ensuring at least two are Indian languages.

EVOLUTION OF THE THREE-LANGUAGE FORMULA

Commission / Policy	Year	Key Recommendations Related to Language in Education	Other Language-Related Recommendations
Kothari Commission	1964–66	– Proposed the Three-Language Formula: 1. Regional language/mother tongue 2. Hindi (for non-Hindi states) or a modern Indian language (for Hindi-speaking states) 3. English	– Emphasised language's role in national integration – Recommended better language teaching methods
National Policy on Education (NPE)	1968	– Officially introduced the Three-Language Formula – Highlighted the importance of Hindi and English in communication	– Development of regional languages – Preservation of linguistic diversity
National Policy on Education (NPE)	1986	– Retained the Three-Language Formula – Acknowledged challenges in implementation – Promoted mother-tongue-based primary education	– Promoted the use of modern Indian languages – Recognised English as a link language
Ramamurti	1990	– Emphasised improving the quality of	– Supported linguistic

Commission / Policy	Year	Key Recommendations Related to Language in Education	Other Language-Related Recommendations
Committee		language education – Advocated mother tongue as a medium of instruction at all levels	inclusivity in educational institutions
Acharya Ramamurti Review Committee	1991	– Called for strengthening the Three-Language Formula – Stressed on better training for language teachers	– Proposed measures to safeguard linguistic minorities
National Curriculum Framework (NCF)	2005	– Reaffirmed multilingualism in education – Promoted bilingual teaching methods	– Emphasised context-based language learning
National Education Policy (NEP)	2020	– Retained Three-Language Formula with flexibility for states – At least two languages to be Indian – Emphasis on mother-tongue-based education	– Promoted Sanskrit as optional – No imposition of any language on states

THREE-LANGUAGE FORMULA IN THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020
----

1. Retained with Flexibility: NEP 2020 retains the existing Three-Language Formula but allows greater flexibility for states to implement it as per their regional and cultural needs.

2. No Language Imposition: The policy does not impose any particular language on any state. Language choices will be left to the students, parents, and local authorities.

3. Two Indian Languages Mandatory: Among the three languages taught, at least two must be Indian languages. This aims to promote indigenous linguistic diversity.

4. Mother Tongue as Medium of Instruction: Emphasis on teaching in the mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction up to at least Grade 5, preferably till Grade 8.

5. Promotion of Classical and Regional Languages: Classical languages like Sanskrit will be available as an optional subject at all school levels. The policy also promotes teaching and preservation of tribal and endangered languages.

6. Introduction of Foreign Languages: Foreign languages such as Korean, Japanese, French, Spanish, German, etc., may be introduced at the secondary level to increase global exposure.

7. Focus on Multilingualism: NEP 2020 strongly supports multilingualism to improve cognitive abilities, creativity, and cultural understanding among students.

8. Digital and Technological Support: Content will be made available in regional languages through digital platforms like DIKSHA, and AI-based translation tools will be developed to support learning.

ADVANTAGES OF THE THREE-LANGUAGE FORMULA
----

1. Promotes National Integration: Learning multiple Indian languages fosters a sense of unity in diversity and encourages cross-cultural understanding among regions.

2. Preserves Linguistic Heritage: It helps in protecting and promoting regional, tribal, and classical languages, many of which are at risk of extinction.

3. Enhances Cognitive Abilities: Multilingualism in early education has been shown to improve memory, problem-solving, and multitasking skills in children.

4. Improves Communication Skills: Knowing more than one Indian language along with English expands a student's communicative reach within and outside the country.

5. Supports Mother-Tongue Education: Emphasising the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in early years leads to better comprehension and learning outcomes.

6. Wider Career Opportunities: Multilingual proficiency increases employability in government services, translation, diplomacy, media, and education sectors.

7. Boosts Social Inclusion: Promoting minority and regional languages ensures inclusiveness and respect for all linguistic communities, especially marginalised groups.

8. Facilitates Migration and Mobility: Knowing multiple regional languages makes it easier for individuals to adapt and work across different states in India.

9. Reduces Language Dominance: Encourages linguistic equity by balancing the dominance of English and Hindi with the promotion of other Indian languages.

ISSUES WITH THE THREE-LANGUAGE FORMULA

1. Lack of Uniform Implementation: Different states follow different language policies—for example, Tamil Nadu has historically resisted the three-language formula and follows a two-language system (Tamil and English).

2. Political and Regional Resistance: There is perceived imposition of Hindi in non-Hindi speaking states, especially in the South and Northeast, which often view the policy as a threat to their linguistic identity.

3. Shortage of Language Teachers: Many schools, particularly in rural or tribal areas, face an acute shortage of qualified teachers for the third language, limiting effective implementation.

4. Burden on Students: Learning three languages simultaneously may put academic pressure on students, especially when the third language has little relevance to their immediate environment or goals.

5. Resource and Infrastructure Gaps: Lack of adequate teaching materials, textbooks, and technology-based resources in regional and tribal languages hampers quality education.

6. Urban-Rural Divide: Urban schools may offer a wider selection of languages and better teaching resources, while rural schools often struggle to even provide basic bilingual education.

7. Implementation Ambiguity: NEP 2020 allows flexibility to states, but there is no clear mechanism or accountability to ensure that the core objectives of the three-language formula are achieved.

8. Neglect of Tribal and Endangered Languages: Despite policy emphasis, in practice, tribal and minority languages remain underrepresented in curricula and formal instruction.

9. Limited Functional Use: Students may not find practical use for the third language, especially if it's not widely spoken in their region or required for employment.

WAY FORWARD FOR BALANCING UNITY AND DIVERSITY

1. Promote Linguistic Federalism: Encourage a decentralised approach where states have the autonomy to choose their language policies within a broad national framework, ensuring both unity and regional identity.

2. Encourage Voluntary Multilingualism: Instead of imposing languages, create an incentive-based model where students are motivated to learn additional Indian languages through scholarships, cultural exchanges, and career benefits.

3. Invest in Language Infrastructure: Improve the availability of qualified teachers, textbooks, digital content, and AI-based translation tools for all Indian languages, including tribal and endangered ones.

4. Strengthen Mother-Tongue Education: Focus on early education in the mother tongue to enhance learning outcomes while gradually integrating other Indian and global languages for broader exposure.

5. Revive and Digitise Endangered Languages: Use technology to document, digitise, and teach endangered languages, preserving linguistic heritage and empowering tribal and minority communities.

6. National Language Policy Consensus: Initiate an inclusive dialogue among the centre and states, language experts, and civil society to develop a consensus-based language policy that respects both unity and diversity.

7. Cultural Integration Through Education: Integrate folklore, regional literature, music, and local history into curricula to promote mutual cultural respect and emotional integration across linguistic groups.

8. Media and Technology in Local Languages: Expand public broadcasting, e-learning platforms, and e-governance services in multiple Indian languages to increase access and participation.

9. Awareness and Sensitisation Campaigns: Promote public awareness about the value of linguistic diversity and the need for national unity, especially among youth through school programs and mass media.

CONCLUSION

India's linguistic diversity is both a strength and a challenge. The Three-Language Formula, as envisioned in NEP 2020, is a well-intentioned attempt to foster national integration, promote multilingualism, and preserve the country's rich linguistic heritage. However, its success hinges on sensitive implementation, respect for federal principles, and investment in educational infrastructure. While the recent Supreme Court ruling reaffirms the autonomy of states in educational matters, it also highlights the importance of cooperative federalism in addressing language-related concerns. A balanced, inclusive, and flexible approach, which respects regional aspirations while promoting unity, is essential for a harmonious linguistic future. Through dialogue, decentralised policymaking, and digital innovation, India can achieve a fine equilibrium between national cohesion and cultural diversity.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q. With reference to the Three-Language Formula in India, consider the following statements:
1. The Three-Language Formula was first officially introduced in the National Policy on Education, 1986.
2. As per the NEP 2020, at least two of the three languages taught must be Indian languages.
3. The Constitution of India mandates the use of three languages in school education through Article 350B.
Which of the above statements is/are correct?
A. 1 and 2 only
B. 2 only
C. 1 and 3 only
D. 1, 2 and 3
Answer: B

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q. The Three-Language Formula seeks to balance the goal of national integration with the preservation of linguistic diversity." Critically evaluate the constitutional, educational, and federal dimensions of this policy in light of NEP 2020.

(250 words, 15 marks)