

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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The Madras High Court dismissed a petition seeking to declare Vaikasi Anusham as the official birthday of Tamil poet Tiruvalluvar, instead of the current celebration on the second day of Thai.

- ▶ The court upheld the Tamil Nadu government's decision, stating that 'Tiruvalluvar day' is meant to honour his literary works, not a specific birth date.

Madras High Court junks plea to declare Tamil saint-poet's birthday on *Vaikasi Anusham*

Mohamed Imranullah S.
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court has refused to declare the day of *Anusham* star in the Tamil month of *Vaikasi* as the birthday of Tiruvalluvar, who is believed to have penned *Tirukkural*, a highly celebrated compendium of 1,330 couplets containing life lessons.

Justice M. Dhandapani also refused to issue a direction to the Tamil Nadu government to shift the annual celebration of 'Tiruvalluvar day' from the second day of Tamil month *Thai*, as it is being followed now, to the *Vaikasi Anusha Natchathiram* day.

The judge dismissed a writ petition filed in 2021 by Samy Thiagarajan, the president of Tiruvalluvar Tirunatkazhagam.

The petitioner had claimed to be a Tamil pro-



Statue of saint-poet Tiruvalluvar.

fessor with 36 years of teaching experience and a doctorate for his research on *Tirukkural*.

He stated that a temple for Tiruvalluvar was in existence at Mylapore in Chennai and that it was around 600 years old. It was under the control of Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments department and it celebrates the birth anniversary of

the saint-poet on *Vaikasi Anusham* day, he said.

The petitioner said that even Colombo-based Tamil scholar K.P. Ratnam, who founded Tamil Marai Kazhagam, had spread the message worldwide that the birth anniversary of Tiruvalluvar must be celebrated only on *Vaikasi Anusham*.

A Government Order issued on March 18, 1966, after the conclusion of the first Tiruvalluvar conference, had ordered that 'Tiruvalluvar day' would be celebrated on June 2, 1966, which was a *Vaikasi Anusham* day. Subsequently, it was shifted to the second day of *Thai*, the litigant said.

Advocate General P.S. Raman told the court that the government celebrated 'Tiruvalluvar day' only to celebrate the literary works of the saint-poet.

More About Tiruvalluvar:

- ▶ Tiruvalluvar is a renowned Tamil poet and philosopher, best known for his work, the *Tirukkural*, a classic collection of 1,330 couplets.
- ▶ The *Tirukkural* addresses universal themes such as ethics, politics, economics, and love, and is considered one of the greatest works of Tamil literature.

Daily News Analysis

- ▶ Though his exact birth date and place are uncertain, he is believed to have lived between the 4th and 5th century CE.
- ▶ Tiruvalluvar is revered as a moral guide and social reformer in Tamil Nadu, with his work promoting non-violence, justice, and the welfare of all.
- ▶ His teachings transcend religious boundaries, appealing to people from all walks of life and faiths.
- ▶ The Tirukkural has been translated into numerous languages, symbolising its global appeal.
- ▶ A 133-foot statue of Tiruvalluvar stands in Kanyakumari, symbolising the significance of his work.



The news highlights India's space collaboration with France, focusing on the Gaganyaan mission.

- France is assisting with astronaut training, space medicine, and knowledge exchange, while both nations plan future cooperation in space exploration and satellite launches, including the TRISHNA mission.

'We are sharing state-of-the-art expertise with ISRO for Gaganyaan'

Philippe Baptiste, chief of Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales, the French space agency, says India-France collaboration is not only a great success of the past but an ongoing one, and that France is impressed by what India is doing, especially in lunar exploration; on Gaganyaan mission, he says France is sharing knowledge, especially on space medicine

INTERVIEW

Philippe Baptiste

Hemanth C.S.

Philippe Baptiste, President of the French Space Agency, Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales (CNES), who is in India to participate in the Bengaluru Space Expo 2024, spoke to *The Hindu* on the sidelines of the event on a wide range of topics from celebrating 60 years of French-India space cooperation to the Gaganyaan and the



K. MURALI KUMAR

TRISHNA missions.

India and France have had a partnership of over six decades in

space. How do you see this collaboration evolving?

It (India-France collabora-

tion) is not only a great success of the past but an ongoing one. It started off with our launchers where we had a strong cooperation many decades ago. Then we also had a partnership in engines and Earth Observation and so on. It is an ongoing cooperation. We have many projects coming very soon for launching satellites, in the domain of space exploration and there is a lot of discussion in the areas of defence and security, especially in Space Situational Awareness.

Any update on the Indo-French Thermal Infra-Red Imaging

Satellite for High-resolution Natural Resource Assessment (TRISHNA) mission? When will it be launched?

TRISHNA which is our next project together is a very highly visible project. It is an infrared satellite project. It will greatly help to get information on climate, agriculture, drought forecasting and urban heat island monitoring. The project is going very well. We expect to launch the satellite in 2026.

India and France in 2021 had signed an agreement for

cooperation for the Gaganyaan mission. Could you please elaborate on the areas in which CNES is helping ISRO and how is it progressing?

We do have a bit of expertise in this area (human spaceflight) as we have been sending astronauts to space for several decades. With regard to the Gaganyaan programme, we are sharing knowledge, especially on space medicine, to understand the physiology of astronauts, to train them and so on. People from both India and France are going back and forth from Bengaluru and

Toulouse sharing knowledge and expertise. We are sharing latest state-of-the-art expertise with ISRO.

India has lined up ambitious missions like the Chandrayaan-4 and Chandrayaan-5 which aim at bringing back samples from the moon. Is France keen to be part of this?

We are looking forward to these missions. We are very impressed by what you are doing in India, especially in lunar exploration. We are looking forward to seeing close cooperation in these areas.

Analysis of the news:

- France is actively supporting India's Gaganyaan mission, leveraging its extensive experience in human spaceflight.
 - **Focus on space medicine:** French space experts are sharing knowledge on space physiology and medicine, helping India understand the physical effects of space travel on astronauts.
 - **Astronaut training:** French expertise is aiding in training Indian astronauts, ensuring they are prepared for the physical and psychological challenges of space missions.
 - **State-of-the-art technologies:** France is providing access to cutting-edge technologies and latest advancements in human spaceflight.
 - **Knowledge exchange programs:** Both countries are engaged in continuous collaboration, focusing on key areas like space exploration and human space physiology, thus enhancing India's capabilities in manned space missions.

TRISHNA Mission

- TRISHNA (Thermal Infra-Red Imaging Satellite for High-resolution Natural Resource Assessment) is a joint mission between India and France.
- The satellite will be launched in 2026.
- It uses thermal infrared imaging to provide high-resolution data for monitoring natural resources.
- Applications include climate change assessment, agricultural management, drought forecasting, and urban heat island monitoring.

Daily News Analysis

- ▶ The mission will enhance Earth observation capabilities by analysing temperature variations on land and water.
- ▶ The data collected will support sustainable resource management and help address global environmental challenges, including climate change.



The Union Cabinet approved the continuation of PM-AASHA schemes to ensure fair prices for farmers and control essential commodity price volatility.

- Additionally, the Cabinet set Nutrient Based Subsidy rates for fertilisers, ensuring affordability for farmers during the upcoming rabi season.

Potential Benefits for Farmers under PM-AASHA

- **Ensures MSP:** Prevents distress sales by guaranteeing minimum support prices for pulses, oilseeds, and copra.
- **Expanded Procurement:** Increased coverage for procurement from 25% to 40% of state production for oilseeds under the Price Deficit Payment Scheme (PDPS).
- **More Direct Payments:** Farmers receive differential payments directly into their accounts under the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS).
- **Motivation for Cultivation:** Promotes the cultivation of pulses and oilseeds, contributing to self-sufficiency and reducing import dependency.
- **Buffer Stock Benefits:** Stabilises prices, especially for perishable commodities like onion and tomatoes, ensuring fair prices.
- **E-platform Integration:** Farmers registered on the eSamridhi and eSamyukti portals benefit from MSP even if market prices drop.
- **Support for Perishables:** Transportation and storage costs for Tomato, Onion, Potato (TOP) crops covered, ensuring better returns.

Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA):

- **Objective:** PM-AASHA aims to ensure remunerative prices for farmers and mitigate price volatility of essential commodities.
- **Components:**
 - **Price Support Scheme (PSS):** Provides MSP for certain crops.
 - **Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS):** Compensates farmers when market prices fall below MSP.
 - **Market Intervention Scheme (MIS):** Addresses short-term price issues due to surplus production
 - **Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF):** Maintains strategic buffer stocks of pulses and onions to stabilise prices and control hoarding.
- **Financial Allocation:** ₹35,000 crore allocated during the 15th Finance Commission cycle (up to 2025-26).
- **Farmer Protection:** Ensures MSP for produce, protecting farmers from fluctuating market prices.
- **Consumer Protection:** Helps maintain stable supply and affordable prices for agricultural commodities.
- **Overall Impact:** Supports both producers and consumers by managing price volatility and ensuring price stability.

PM-AASHA schemes to continue with additions: Centre

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the continuation of schemes of the Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA).

The Centre said the schemes under PM-AASHA will ensure remunerative prices to farmers and control price volatility of essential commodities to benefit consumers.

The Cabinet also fixed the Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) rates for the upcoming rabi season on phosphatic and potassic (P and K) fertilisers. The tentative budgetary requirement for this will be ₹24,475.53 crore.

The total financial outgo for PM-AASHA will be ₹35,000 crore during the 15th Finance Commission cycle up to 2025-26. The Centre has converged the Price Support Scheme (PSS) and Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) schemes in PM-AASHA.

"PM-AASHA will now have the components of PSS, PSF and the Price Deficit Payment Scheme (PDPS) and Market Intervention Scheme (MIS)," the Centre said.

It said the extension of the PSF scheme will help in



The schemes under PM-AASHA will ensure remunerative prices to farmers, the Centre said.

protecting consumers from extreme volatility in prices of agri-horticultural commodities by maintaining strategic buffer stock of pulses and onion for calibrated release. It will also discourage hoarding and unscrupulous speculation, and ensure supplies to consumers at affordable prices.

Subsidy for fertilizers

On the fertilizer subsidy, the Centre said it will ensure availability of fertilizers to farmers at subsidised, affordable and reasonable prices. It added that the rationalisation of subsidy on P and K fertilisers is taken in view of the recent trends in the international prices of fertilizers and inputs.

Ultrafast lasers have achieved spin currents in just 2 femtoseconds, advancing spintronics technology.

- This breakthrough promises faster, more efficient hard drives by enabling quicker data storage and retrieval, potentially revolutionising future data storage technologies.

Superfast lasers open shortcut to hard drives of the future

Scientists are interested in spin currents because the electrons' up and down spin states can represent 0s and 1s, to store and retrieve data in a computer's hard drive. Spintronic drives of the future are expected to be able to store more data than existing drives, and consume less energy

How Ultrafast Lasers Could Revolutionise Future Hard Drives

- **Spintronics Basics:** Hard drives use electrons' spin states (up or down) to store data. Faster data storage and retrieval depend on manipulating these spin states quickly.
- **Need for Speed:** Current technology is limited by how fast we can change these spin states. Faster spin currents can lead to quicker data processing.
- **Role of Ultrafast Lasers:** Scientists use ultrafast lasers to create spin currents—rapidly changing the spin states of electrons.
- **New Achievement:** Researchers recently achieved spin currents in just 2 femtoseconds (fs), far faster than previous methods.
- **Implications for Hard Drives:** This speed allows for more efficient and faster data storage and retrieval. Future hard drives could operate at petahertz rates, vastly improving performance.
- **Future Testing:** Next steps include testing these methods in real hard drives and pushing for even faster spin currents.

Vasudevan Mukunth

You're watching Chennai Super Kings play Mumbai Indians at the Wankhede. The stands are packed, and the atmosphere is electric. In the excitement, a bunch of people in one of the stands starts a Mexican wave. Everyone is eager to participate. At just the right moment, hundreds of people stand up and sit down in unison, giving the wave a full and fervent expression.

The Mexican wave is a type of wave that appears to propagate through a medium when the medium's constituents are sequentially displaced from and restored to their original positions.

In the same way, let's imagine a spin current.

A flow of spin (every electron particle has an intrinsic property called quantum spin, or just spin for short). It represents some angular momentum carried by the particle. At any given moment, it can be measured to have one of two values, colloquially called up and down. A spin current flows through a medium whose constituents transmit a spin state—say, up—in quick succession before reverting to their original state (in this case, down).

That is, when a spin current moves through a material, it implies a Mexican wave of a particular spin state moving through the material. The electrons themselves aren't displaced, however.

Scientists are interested in spin currents because the electrons' up and down spin states can represent 0s and 1s, to store and retrieve data in a computer's hard drive. Spintronic drives of the future are expected to be able to store more data than existing drives, and consume less energy.

In a study published in the journal *Physical Review Letters* on September 6, an international team of researchers reported an important advance on this front.

'Crucial figure of merit' Spintronics is a branch of physics dealing with the study and manipulation of electrons' magnetic properties. Magnetic hard drives computers already take advantage of spintronics. Each drive consists of a very thin magnetic disk that uses an effect called giant magnetoresistance to quickly store and read data encoded in the ups and downs of its electrons.

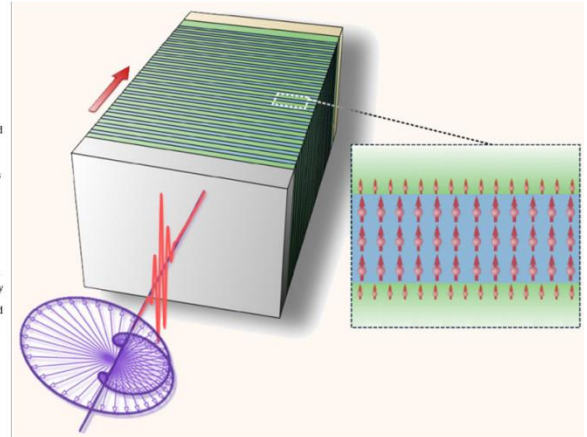
These spin states are modified by applying a magnetic field over small parts of the disc. The stronger the field, the faster the states change, and the faster the drive's read/write speed. The field strength increased through the 1990s and 2000s as computers became a common sight in daily life. Today, drive speeds have been maxed out; new products improve the read/write speed only marginally.

Spin currents are expected to provide the next quantum leap on this frontier. If scientists can find a way to create spin currents rapidly, the currents can quickly reorganise electrons' spin states and form the basis of next-generation drives. The catch is we need to produce spin currents that start-stop on an extremely short timescale. As a review article published in 2020 in the *Journal of Magnetism and Magnetic Materials* put it, "In spintronics, the spin-current generation efficiency is the most critical figure of merit for device applications."

Beyond 1,000x better Researchers are currently exploring ways to produce spin currents directly. In one existing scheme, they fire lasers at a material, delivering energy to its electrons and getting them to move around. Then they apply a magnetic field across the material so that some electrons' spins are parallel to the field and some other electrons' spins are anti-parallel. Finally, they have the electrons interact with impurities in the material that scatter electrons with up and down spins at different rates, eventually leaving only electrons of one spin state behind.

A 2014 study by researchers at Eindhoven University of Technology in the Netherlands introduced another scheme. They sandwiched three layers of carefully chosen materials together. When they magnetised the uppermost layer and shot an ultrafast laser at the bottommost layer, the magnetisation of the middle layer changed in a way that induced spin currents in the uppermost layer.

These and other schemes have produced spin currents in the order of a few hundred femtoseconds (1 fs = 10⁻¹⁵ s). The lead author of the 2014 study, Sjors



An illustration of the experimental setup in the new study. The red line shows the linearly polarised light, followed by the circularly polarised light in purple. The red arrow shows the direction of the applied magnetic field. Cobalt and platinum layers are shown in green and blue, respectively. PNAS, REV. LETT. 113, 10002

Scholkens, said in a press release that this timescale was "a factor 1,000" improvement on other technologies of the day. Scholkens also said the team was able to explain how the spin currents arose in the material, which is important to ensure the technique is reliable and there's nothing in the data that simply resembles a spin current.

Soon, scientists began to anticipate even faster technologies. For example, in January 2020, *Science Advances* published a paper by researchers from Germany, Sweden, and the U.S. They reported using a Heusler alloy to demonstrate the transfer of spin from one atom to another. Heusler alloys are compounds of some elements that exhibit many properties of interest in spintronics. They anticipated their findings paved the way "towards spintronic devices that can operate on few-femtosecond or faster time scales."

'Petahertz clock rates' In the September 6 study, researchers were able to use a new concept to produce spin currents in 2 fs.

Physicists with the Max Planck Institute for Microstructure Physics, Germany, had described this concept in a 2018 paper in *Nano Letters* and further fleshed it out in subsequent work. It was based on a mechanism called optical intersite spin transfer (OISTR). Here, light of specific frequencies could rapidly manipulate electrons' angular momentum in a material without relying on indirect effects.

If it seems straightforward, deducing this mechanism wasn't simple. The reason is light itself. In its wave form, it

consists of an electric field and a magnetic field oscillating perpendicular to each other. When an electromagnetic wave interacts with matter, the material's electronic properties respond almost immediately to the oscillating electric field. Translating the energy in the wave to the electrons' spin is more long-winded, however, because it is mediated by intervening processes.

For some time, scientists were looking for evidence of a link between changes in the electrons' spin with an incident light wave. In a 2019 study in *Nature*, researchers—including many involved in the 2018 study—found one. They proposed using a layered stack of ferromagnetic materials like cobalt and nickel. Here, they wrote, "optical excitations result in the local displacement of charge carriers between different atomic species or across layer interfaces". The result is OISTR, as a "spatially dislodged electron wave carries its spin away" from its "resident" atom to another atom nearby.

Importantly, they were able to track subatomic changes in the stack using a bespoke "detection scheme" at the level of thousands of femtoseconds. Their findings, they wrote, "paves the way towards coherent spintronic applications with petahertz clock rates."

One-two punch The researchers in the September 6 study engineered a material consisting of 20 alternating layers of cobalt and platinum. Each layer was less than 1 nm thick. They wrote, "This type of structure is ubiquitous in spintronic research, in particular to obtain giant magnetoresistance effects." For their study, they added, the layered stack offered two advantages: it maximises "magneto-optical effects with normally incident light" and "multiplies the number of Co/Pt interfaces, so that potential injection taking place there becomes more measurable."

They applied a magnetic field perpendicular to the stack to force the electrons to settle into an ordered arrangement of spins.

First, the researchers fired a pulse of linearly polarised light only 4 fs long into the material. (When the oscillation of the electric field in the light wave is confined to a fixed plane, the light is linearly polarised.) This shot riled up the electrons and sent their spin states into a tizzy.

Right after, they shot another pulse of circularly polarised light (when the electromagnetic field is rotating around the light's direction of motion). The way this light was absorbed as it passed through the material told the researchers how "well" the electrons' spins were ordered following the first laser shot.

Proof of concept The absorption of the circularly polarised light indicated to the researchers that in the cobalt layers, the electrons' spins had become around 10% less ordered, whereas they'd become slightly more ordered in the platinum layers—both within just 2 fs after the linearly polarised light had passed through.

The team developed a mathematical model to explain these findings using density-functional theory, which allows physicists to predict a material's properties based on some fundamental quantum properties. These calculations are computationally intensive. The researchers made some assumptions to simplify their model, and this version showed that their findings could be explained if a small spin current had passed from the cobalt layers to the platinum layers in that 2-fs interval. Thus, the team reported a new record for the timescale at which a system could produce spin currents.

This is a proof of concept—a feat that says it's possible for ultrafast lasers to directly induce spin currents within a few femtoseconds in a specific material. The researchers have said that next they plan to test whether femtosecond-laser pulses can produce useful spin currents in a functional spintronic device and whether they can produce spin currents in a few attoseconds, i.e., a thousand-times faster.



Drive speeds have been maxed out and the new products of today are able to improve it only marginally. Spin currents are expected to provide the next quantum leap on this frontier. WUJIAN WANG/SCIENCEPULSE

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Festival In News : Karam Festival

Recently, tribal populations in many states of India celebrated the harvest festival of Karma or Karam Parv.

About Karam Festival:

- Karma Puja, one of the most popular festivals, is related to the harvest and a tribute to the Karam tree. This tree symbolises fertility, prosperity and everything that is auspicious.
- **Origin:** The origin of the festival can be traced to the beginning of agriculture by tribal communities.

How is it celebrated?

- About a week before the festival commences, young women bring clear sand from the river, in which they sow seven types of grains.
- On the day of the festival, a branch of the Karam tree is planted in the courtyard or 'akhra'.
- Devotees come with jawa (hibiscus) flowers, and the pahan (priest) worships the Karam Raja. Dancing and singing of traditional Karam songs follow.
- The festival concludes with the immersion of the Karam branch in a river or pond, and the jawa is distributed among the devotees.
- Towards the end of the Karam festival, branches from sal or bhelua trees are often planted in the fields with the hope that the Karam Raja/ Devta will protect their crops.
- It is traditionally celebrated on the Ekadashi tithi (eleventh day) of the lunar fortnight in the month of Bhado/ Bhadra, which corresponds to August-September in the Gregorian calendar.
- The festival is popular especially among the Munda, Ho, Oraon, Baiga, Kharia, and Santhal peoples.
- It is mainly celebrated in Jharkhand, West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Assam, and Odisha.

Shed the myopia, refocus on the relevance of English

The aspiration to have their child/children speak in English is a dream that many Indian parents have, recognising its critical role in ensuring better socioeconomic opportunities. Despite this widespread desire, national education policies have consistently neglected English language instruction for over seven decades.

Since India's independence, educational policies such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, influenced by political ideologies, have aimed to restrict the spread of the English language and diminish its significance across various sectors. Yet, the neutral nature of English, recognised by the Constitution of India as a tool of equality, safeguards its position, allowing it to maintain a vital role in the nation. This ongoing conflict between restrictive policies and constitutional safeguards has significantly hindered the ability of the economically deprived masses to achieve proficiency in English, perpetuating a cycle of educational and socio-economic disadvantage. This neglect has disproportionately affected marginalised children in government-run schools, deepening educational inequalities. In contrast, children from affluent families have had the resources to achieve proficiency in English, thus widening the chasm between those who can and cannot speak the language. Alarming, the 2011 India Census reveals that 90% of the population does not speak any English, highlighting a stark linguistic divide that underscores the failure of education policies to bridge this gap. Surprisingly, the policy does not mention this issue. Nor does it provide any measures to address it.

The NEP 2020 continues to devalue English, labelling it as foreign and ignoring its crucial role as a connector in the globalised economy. It also lacks a defined strategy to improve access to English for economically disadvantaged groups, thereby worsening the challenge of closing this critical educational gap.

The 'agenda' behind the cover of 'diversity'

The NEP 2020's three-language formula ostensibly promotes linguistic diversity but conceals a deeper agenda aimed at reviving the concept of a Hindi-India, particularly by diminishing the role of English in India. This approach not only is in conflict with the aspirations of millions who view English as a ladder to socio-economic mobility but also stands at odds with the Constitution, which safeguards against the imposition of any single language on the nation.

The Constitution enshrines English and Hindi as official languages, deliberately refraining from appointing a national language, while it also



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Sabur Ali M.

the co-founder of CLAD

The government must prioritise the promotion of English not as a competitor to Indian languages but as a vital tool for national and international communication

protects regional languages, thereby preserving a critical balance. This framework recognises English as an instrumental language, pivotal to education, health, law, trade, and global communication, ensuring neutrality among diverse ethnic groups, while it positions regional languages as carriers of India's rich cultural heritage. However, the NEP 2020 risks unsettling this balance by potentially overlooking these constitutional safeguards.

This move is misguided and will ultimately fail, squandering valuable time and resources. This will force the nation to revisit the contentious linguistic debates of its past instead of promoting English to a stature that complements the cultural significance of regional languages. Recognising this constitutional discord can guide India away from historical pitfalls toward a more inclusive and pragmatic language policy.

Since the economic liberalisation of 1991, the demand for English has surged, aligning with the global narrative that "the world is flat". This means that proficiency in English is not just desirable but also essential for participating in India's economic growth and seizing international opportunities. Ironically, successive governments have ignored this shift, choosing instead to cling to regional and nationalistic language policies.

The NEP 2020 not only continues to marginalise English but also gives a disproportionate thrust to regional languages, inadvertently fuelling regional identity politics. This approach fails to recognise that there is no inherent conflict between nurturing regional languages and promoting English. The real issue arises from the attempts to position Hindi as the national language, which stymies the spread of English among the masses.

The anti-English stance is not new. Post-independence, there was a significant push to establish Hindi as the lingua franca of India, which led to systematic efforts to diminish the role of English, despite its status as a co-official language. This was underpinned by the belief that Hindi, unlike English, could not be a neutral bridge across India's diverse cultural landscape.

The thread from the past

This bias can be traced back to the freedom struggle, led predominantly by Hindi-speaking leaders who envisioned a monolingual Hindi-speaking India, post-independence. The partition with Pakistan, which removed Urdu from the equation, only intensified the focus on Hindi. Despite this, the multilingual reality of India and the constitutional provisions for equality and linguistic diversity necessitated the retention of English as an official language alongside Hindi.

The National Policy on Education 1968 introduced a three-language formula supposedly to spread Hindi across non-Hindi-speaking regions, thereby integrating the nation linguistically.

However, this formula faced opposition, particularly from Tamil Nadu, which saw it as an imposition of Hindi while diminishing the role of English. The NEP 2020, despite claiming flexibility in language choice, subtly continues this agenda under the guise of offering choice, thus not addressing the core issue of language imposition.

The practical implementation of this policy shows its flaws. While it allows for the selection of languages, the infrastructure and resources are heavily biased towards Hindi. This not only limits real choice but also undermines the policy's goal of fostering multilingualism. The emphasis on Hindi and Sanskrit, due to cultural and political motivations, neglects English, which remains crucial in the professional, educational, and legal contexts in India.

Be pragmatic

In comparison, countries such as China have recognised the importance of English, mandating its study to align with global economic shifts and the aspirations of its middle class. This is in stark contrast with India's approach, where the lack of a focused English language policy may hinder our global economic engagement and social mobility.

To rectify this, India needs a pragmatic language policy that respects its cultural diversity while addressing the practical needs of its citizens. A two-language formula, comprising a regional language and English, would better serve the aspirations of Indians to be global citizens while preserving their unique cultural identities. Such a policy would enable broader participation in global economic opportunities and ensure that all Indians can engage effectively in the professional, educational, and legal spheres of life.

The government must prioritise the promotion and the development of English not as a competitor to Indian languages but as a vital tool for national and international communication. This approach aligns with the democratic principles of equality and individual rights, ensuring that every citizen can participate fully in the nation's socioeconomic activities without linguistic barriers.

India, as a liberal democracy, must be responsive to the needs and wants of its citizens. It is high time its language policy reflects this, promoting a balanced multilingual framework that genuinely supports the aspirations of all Indians. English is India's solution.

GS Paper 02 : Social Justice – Education

UPSC Mains Practice Question Discuss how the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 affects the spread of English education in India. Analyse its implications on educational inequality and suggest ways to ensure equal access to English for all socio-economic groups. (250 w /15 m)

Context :

- India's education policies, like NEP 2020, have downplayed the importance of English, despite its role in helping people access better jobs and opportunities.
- This neglect has increased educational inequalities, especially for poor children, while wealthier families continue to benefit from better access to English education.

English as a Socioeconomic Ladder

- Indian parents aspire for their children to speak English, recognizing its role in securing better socioeconomic opportunities.
- National education policies, such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, have neglected English instruction for decades, influenced by political ideologies.
- This neglect has led to educational inequalities, disproportionately affecting marginalised children in government schools, while children from affluent families have easier access to English education.
- According to the 2011 Census, 90% of India's population does not speak English, showcasing the stark linguistic divide.

NEP 2020 and the Role of English

- The NEP 2020 continues to devalue English, labelling it as foreign and ignoring its crucial role in the global economy.
- The policy fails to address the lack of access to English for economically disadvantaged groups, exacerbating the educational gap.
- The three-language formula in NEP 2020 promotes linguistic diversity on the surface but hides an agenda to reduce English's significance, aiming to boost Hindi as a national language.

Constitutional Safeguards and Language Policy

- The Constitution enshrines both English and Hindi as official languages while protecting regional languages, ensuring balance and neutrality.

- English serves as a tool for education, trade, law, and communication, while regional languages preserve India's cultural heritage.
- The NEP 2020 risks unsettling this balance by downplaying English, potentially clashing with constitutional safeguards that prevent language imposition.

The Demand for English Post-Liberalization

- Since economic liberalisation in 1991, the demand for English has surged as it has become essential for economic growth and global participation.
- Successive governments have ignored this shift, sticking to regional and nationalistic language policies that fail to align with global economic trends.
- The NEP 2020 further marginalises English, increasing the emphasis on regional languages, which could fuel regional identity politics.

Historical Bias Against English

- The anti-English stance is rooted in India's post-independence period when there was a push to establish Hindi as the national language.
- This bias can be traced back to the freedom struggle, where Hindi-speaking leaders envisioned a monolingual India.
- Despite efforts, the multilingual reality of India and constitutional provisions led to the retention of English as an official language.

The Flaws of the Three-Language Formula

- The National Policy on Education 1968 introduced a three-language formula to spread Hindi in non-Hindi-speaking regions, but it faced strong opposition from states like Tamil Nadu.
- The NEP 2020 continues this agenda, limiting real linguistic choice by emphasising Hindi and undermining multilingualism.
- The policy's focus on Hindi and Sanskrit, driven by cultural and political motives, sidelines English, which remains critical in the professional and legal spheres.

A Pragmatic Approach to Language Policy

- Countries like China have embraced English education to align with global economic needs, contrasting India's approach.
- India needs a pragmatic language policy that balances cultural diversity with the practical needs of its citizens.
- A two-language formula – combining a regional language and English – would better serve India's needs, allowing citizens to be both global and culturally rooted.

Conclusion

- The government must promote English as a vital tool for national and international communication, not as a competitor to Indian languages.

- This approach would ensure greater participation in socioeconomic activities and align with democratic principles of equality and individual rights.

