

Going off-course: On the rural jobs scheme and the Centre's bid to change its funding

The Centre's **suggestions** on changes in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme **seem misguided**

A **key** to the success of any welfare programme **is** the **conviction** in its implementation. In the 17 years since the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (**MGNREGS**) has been implemented, studies have **asserted** its net positive impact in the rural areas. From reducing **penury** through providing **off-season** employment, and **thereby** improving **household** consumption among the **invariably** poor citizens who **avail** the scheme, to acting as insurance during monsoon **deficient** seasons, besides allowing for greater food security through increased productivity helped by the works generated, the scheme continues to be a **robust** welfare tool. This was even clearer during the pandemic, when thousands of migrant workers who left urban areas **due to** the lockdowns took up work under the MGNREGS in rural areas where demand for the **menial** but **arduous** work **peaked**. There is **of course** the **case** that the scheme has still not **transcended** into creating more useful **assets** beyond roads and **irrigation** canals and requires **broadbasing** and better implementation. But it must be said that the Union government's **treatment** of the scheme **has graduated** from a case of **lukewarm** acceptance of its need because of its popular impact to treating it as a **fiscal burden**.

Such a **reading** can be **justifiably** made if the reduced **allocation** for the scheme in the Union Budget, from 2.14% of overall **outlay** in FY23 to 1.33% in FY24, is **considered**. This was despite implementation in recent years experiencing **wage** delays and **underfunding**. This has also **depressed** demand, with formal requests for work only being a portion of the actual demand. Also, there is much evidence that Aadhaar-based payments have neither reduced corruption nor reduced wage payment delays while creating **hurdles** for officials and workers during implementation. Union Rural Development Minister Giriraj Singh has now said that the Act should be **amended** to change the contribution of funds from 100% by the government to a 60-40 split between the Centre and the States **in order to** make States "more **vigilant** regarding corruption". But this will only **lead to** further **complications** in funding. There has been a **shrinking** in the States' share of taxes **following** GST and the **financial stresses** during the pandemic. **States** taking up 40% of the funding burden **would** affect the payment of wages even further. Besides, MGNREGS is a **demand-driven** programme and **salient** especially in poorer States and it is **incumbent upon** the Centre to ensure its robust funding instead of putting the **onus** on individual States to do so. The government must change its **approach** towards the MGNREGS by **recognising** its **potential** in **catering to** the poor's right to work. [Practice Exercise]

- Red/blue coloring of words in the sentence indicates subject verb relationship; where 'red' denotes 'subject' and 'blue' denotes 'verb'.

Vocabulary

1. **Off-course** (noun) – in the wrong direction or away from the intended course गलत दिशा में
2. **Bid** (noun) – attempt, effort, try, endeavor प्रयास
3. **Misguided** (adjective) – wrong because you have understood or judged a situation badly गुमराह, पथभ्रष्ट (वस्तुस्थिति को समझने या आँकने में भूल के कारण)
4. **Key** (noun) – the best or only way to achieve something: (सफलता की) कुंजी
5. **Conviction** (noun) – a very strong opinion or belief प्रबल मत या आस्था
6. **MGNREGS** (noun) –The MGNREGA was initiated with the objective of “enhancing livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year, to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work”.
7. **Assert** (verb) – declare, affirm, state, claim, aver दृढ़ता से कहना
8. **Penury** (noun) – the state of being very poor; extreme poverty. गरीबी
9. **Off-season** (noun) – a period of time in the year when business, travel, etc. is a lot less than in the rest of the year वर्ष का
10. **Thereby** (adverb) – thus, therefore, in this way, consequently, hence जिसके चलते
11. **Household** (noun) – all the people who live in one house and the work, money, organization, etc. that is needed to look after them परिवार
12. **Invariably** (adverb) – almost always लगभग हमेशा
13. **Avail** (verb) – Use to one's advantage लाभ उठाना
14. **Deficient** (adjective) – Inadequate in amount or degree अपूर्ण, अपर्याप्त
15. **Robust** (adjective) – strong, vigorous, sturdy, मजबूत
16. **Due to** (phrase) – because of के कारण, की वजह
17. **Menial** (adjective) – Unskilled, tedious, basic, lowly अकुशल
18. **Arduous** (adjective) – Difficult, hard, laborious, demanding, strenuous, onerous कठिन
19. **Peak** (verb) – reach its highest point, reach the high point चरम पर होना

20. **Of course** (phrase) – naturally; certainly
निश्चित रूप से
21. **Case** (noun) – Circumstance, situation, event, instance, occasion स्थिति
22. **Transcend** (verb) – surpass, exceed, go beyond; be or go beyond the range or limits of पार करना
23. **Asset** (noun) – Something of value that a person, company, etc. owns परिसंपत्ति, पूंजी
24. **Irrigation** (noun) – the practice of supplying land with water so that crops and plants will grow सिंचाई
25. **Base** (noun) – an idea, fact, etc. from which something develops or is made मूल विचार, पदार्थ, तथ्य आदि
26. **Graduate** (verb) – to move forward or improve उन्नति करना
27. **Lukewarm** (adjective) – not showing much interest; not keen उदासीन
28. **Fiscal burden** (noun) – Contribution made by the government to fund government-sponsored schemes such as MGNREGs
29. **Reading** (noun) – Interpretation, understanding, evaluation, impression, sense, विचार, व्याख्या
30. **Justifiably** (adverb) – justly, rightly, rightfully, properly, legitimately उचित रूप से
31. **Allocation** (noun) – Distribution, provision, apportionment, sharing, division आवंटन
32. **Outlay** (noun) – expenditure, spending, expense, cost, disbursement व्यय / खर्च
33. **Consider** (verb) – to think about something carefully, often before making a decision (निर्णय लेने से पहले) किसी बात पर सावधानी से विचार करना; सोचना
34. **Wage** (noun) – Salary, pay, income, remuneration, वेतन, मज़दूरी
35. **Underfunding** (noun) – a situation in which something is given less money than it needs
36. **Depressed** (adjective) – lowered, decreased, slow down, dampened मंद
37. **Hurdle** (noun) – obstacle, hindrance, barrier, obstruction, impediment बाधा
38. **Amend** (verb) – revise, alter, change, modify, qualify संशोधन करना
39. **In order to** (phrase) – With the purpose /intention of doing something. ताकि
40. **Vigilant** (adjective) – Watchful, Attentive, Alert, Wary, Cautious, Observant, Heedful, Aware सतर्क

41. **Lead** (to) (verb) – cause, give rise to, result in, bring about वजह बनना
42. **Complication** (noun) – Difficulty, snag, problem, impediment, obstacle, hurdle, barrier जटिलता
43. **Shrinking** (noun) – Decrease, lessening, Contracting घटाव
44. **Following** (preposition) – After के बाद
45. **Financial stress** (noun) – a situation of worry, anxiety, or emotional tension related to money, debt, and upcoming or current expenses वित्तीय तनाव
46. **Demand-driven** (adjective) – caused or influenced by Demand मांग से प्रेरित
47. **Salient** (adjective) – important, main, principal, major, chief, primary प्रमुख
48. **Incumbent** (on) (adjective) – necessary for (someone) as a duty or responsibility; Binding, obligatory, mandatory, necessary, compulsory अवश्यकरणीय
49. **Onus** (noun) – responsibility, liability, obligation, duty, charge कर्तव्य/ जिम्मेदारी
50. **Approach** (noun) – a way of considering or doing something दृष्टिकोण
51. **Recognise** (verb) – Acknowledge, accept, concede मानना
52. **Potential** (noun) – capability, capacity, ability, power क्षमता
53. **Cater** (to) (verb) – to provide what somebody/something needs or wants आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति करना

Practice Exercise

Direction: In the following passage some words have been deleted. Fill in the blanks with the help of the alternatives given. Select the most appropriate option for each number.

NEW rules are set in 2022 for an entirely new dynamics of education in India. Implementation process of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 _____1_____ reviewed in a meeting in May 2022 chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi which _____2_____ detailed plans from education leaders for achieving the goals. Thereafter, education sector of the country has been changing fast with the rolling _____3_____ of new rules across the country and education institutions. The country is all set to see and feel the impact of the new dynamics in operation in 2023.

The fundamental changes would include a changed pattern of education system which would include non-traditional educational _____4_____ at almost all levels of education, saffronisation, technological inclusion in and out of classrooms, and greater push for privatisation of education that would make education costlier than ever before, making quality education, especially higher education _____5_____ for majority of the people of the country.

1. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank number 1.**
 - A. Were
 - B. Have
 - C. Has
 - D. Was
2. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank number 2.**
 - A. Assimilated
 - B. Proscribed
 - C. Elicited
 - D. Belabored
3. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank number 3**
 - A. Over
 - B. Out
 - C. In
 - D. To
4. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank number 5**
 - A. Agnostics
 - B. Coup
 - C. Anomalies
 - D. Disciplines
5. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank number 6**
 - A. Grandiloquent
 - B. Unaffordable
 - C. Superfluous
 - D. Imperial

Directions: In this section each item consists of six sentences of a passage. The first and sixth sentences are given as S1 and S6. The middle four sentences in each have been jumbled up and labelled as P, Q, R and S. You are required to find the proper sequence of the four sentences and mark your response accordingly on the Answer Sheet.

6. **S1.** The country has experienced unprecedented economic development since the adoption of the New Economic Policy in the year 1999.
P. The middle classes have been the greatest beneficiary of the policy, who today enjoy far greater levels of income than their previous generations.
Q. In the immediate aftermath of the newly announced policy, there was apprehension in the minds of the people.
R. Within a few years, however, the beneficial impact of the newly announced policy became manifest through higher GDP and a thriving economy.
S. Faced with a critical foreign exchange crisis, the country adopted the policy in the Union Budget presented in the year 1999.
S6. If the country dreams of a much larger economy today, much of the optimism is due to the policy changes that took place in the year 1999.
- A. SQRP B. RQSP C. SPRQ D. QSPR
7. **S1.** The Indian co-operative movement is probably one of the largest, strongest and the oldest in the world with widespread spatial coverage, diversified business activities and ample success stories.
P. It has celebrated its Centenary very recently.
Q. It is structured around the Rochdale Principles and Raiffeisen Model in wake of miseries of peasantry.
R. It is termed as the "economic miracle" of the last century.
S. Ever since the officially sponsored Act of 1904, the Movement has passed through a number of phases.
S6. Co-operatives have been organized in areas like credit, marketing, distribution, dairy development, industry, sugar and so on.
- A. QRPS B. RPQS C. PQRS D. SQRP

Directions: In the following questions, a sentence has been given in Active/Passive Voice. Out of the four alternatives suggested, select the one which best expresses the same sentence in Passive/Active Voice.

8. We must endure what we cannot cure.
 A. What cannot cured must endured.
 B. What could be cure must be endured.
 C. What we cure must be endured.
 D. What cannot be cured must be endured.
9. Did everybody miss the first bus?
 A. The first bus was missed by everybody?
 B. Was the first bus missed by everybody?

- C. Everybody missed the first bus?
- D. Had the first bus been missed by everybody?

Directions: In the following questions, a sentence has been given in Direct/Indirect Speech. Out of the four alternatives suggested, select the one which best expresses the same sentence in Indirect/Direct Speech.

10. She asked, "Is the secretary coming to the meeting?"
- A. She asked that the secretary was coming to the meeting.
 - B. She asked that if the secretary was coming to the meeting.
 - C. She asked if the secretary is coming to the meeting.
 - D. She asked if the secretary was coming to the meeting.
11. The convict said, "Let me speak freely please".
- A. The convict suggested that he must be allowed to speak freely.
 - B. The convict requested that he must be allowed to speak freely.
 - C. The convict requested that he be allowed to speak freely.
 - D. The convict proposed that he might be allowed to speak freely.
12. Nisha told Monica, "What a beautiful dress you are wearing!"
- A. Nisha exclaimed that Monica was wearing a very beautiful dress.
 - B. Nisha exclaimed that it is a very beautiful dress.
 - C. Nisha exclaimed that Monica is wearing a very beautiful dress.
 - D. Nisha told Monica that was a beautiful dress.

Directions: In the following questions, out of the four alternatives, choose the one which can be substituted for the given words/sentence.

13. Doubtful about the existence of God

- A. Missionary
- B. Agnosticism
- C. Geek
- D. Recluse

14. Quick to judge and understand

- A. Perspicacious
- B. Epitome
- C. Inaugural speech
- D. Reveille

15. To spread troops for battle

- A. Deprecate
- B. Deploy
- C. Illegible
- D. Impressionist

Directions: Choose the alternative which best expresses the meaning of the Idiom/Phrase.

16. Crack down on

- A. to experience a lot of problems in a period of your life
- B. To place or rest something above or on top of something else
- C. take severe measures against someone

D. to continue making progress according to the intended or ideal plan.

17. **Set a precedent of**

- A. to put all your energy or enthusiasm into what you are doing
- B. To provide something that is needed
- C. to make considerable progress
- D. to set an example or rule to be followed

18. **Turn over new leaf**

- A. start to act or behave in a better or more responsible way
- B. To solidify or confirm that a particular, usually unpleasant, thing will happen
- C. To change the balance of a situation, such that one side or element is favored or gains advantage
- D. To immediately accept an offer

Directions : choose the word opposite in meaning to the given word.

19. **INDIGENOUS**

- A. Foreign
- B. Hackneyed
- C. Indigent
- D. Catholic

20. **FRENETIC**

- A. Covert
- B. Calm
- C. Manifesto
- D. Futile

Direction: In the following question, out of the four alternatives, choose the word which best expresses the meaning of the given word.

21. **DISDAIN**

- A. Scorn
- B. Grandiloquent
- C. Scrutinize
- D. Exemplify

22. **ADHERENT**

- A. Artifice
- B. Diffident
- C. Supporter
- D. Epigram

Directions: Find out the error, if any –

- 23. Mangal Pandey was well known (A)/ because he was involved (B)/ in the initial stage of the Indian rebellion. (C)/ No Error (D)
- 24. Most of the Indian populations still lives (A)/ in its villages and thus the contribution (B)/ of agriculture to Indian economy (C)/ becomes very important. (D)
- 25. Catherine's grandfather always (A)/ lost his balance while walking (B)/ and would be found fallen (C)/ on the road (D)

Answers

1. D 2. C 3. B 4. D 5. B 6. A 7. C 8. D 9. B 10. D 11. C 12. A 13. B
14. A 15. B 16. C 17. D 18. A 19. A 20. B 21. A 22. C 23. D 24. A 25. C

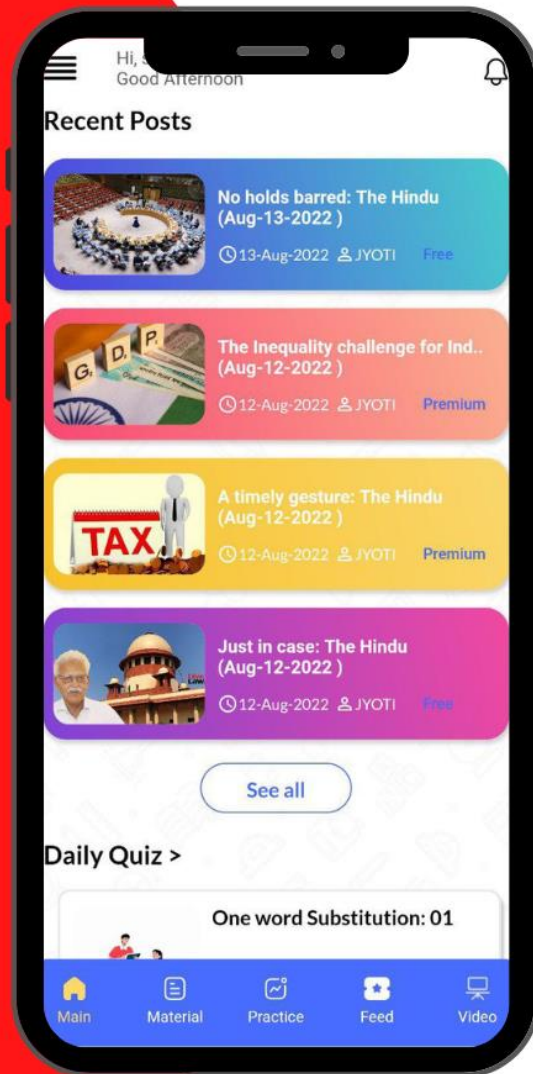
Explanation

1. The most appropriate word for the given blank is 'was' as the sentence past and passive voice.
2. **Elicit** (verb) – obtain, extract, draw, educe प्राप्त करना
 - **Assimilate** (verb) – To take in; to absorb to learn thoroughly अपनाना
 - **Proscribe** (verb) – To outlaw; to prohibit देश से निकालना
 - **Belabor** (verb) – To go over repeatedly or to an absurd extent बुरी तरह पीटना, घोर निन्दा करना
3. **Roll out** (phrasal verb) – start, begin, launch, introduce, begin शुरू करना
4. **Discipline** (noun) – a subject of study अध्ययन का विषय
 - **Agnostic** (noun) – One who believes that the existence of a god can be neither proven or disproven अनीश्वरवादी, संशयवादी
 - **Coup** (noun) – A brilliant victory or accomplishment; the violent overthrow of a government by a small internal group तख्तापलट
 - **Anomaly** (noun) – An aberration; an irregularity; a deviation असंगति, नियमहीनता
5. **Unaffordable** (adjective) – high-priced, excessive, exorbitant, too expensive महंगा
 - **Grandiloquent** (adjective) – Pompous; using a lot of big, fancy words in an attempt to sound impressive. आडंबरपूर्ण, शब्दाडंबरपूर्ण
 - **Superfluous** (adjective) – Extra; unnecessary; redundant ज़रूरत से ज्यादा
 - **Imperial** (adjective) – Like an emperor or an empire शाही, राज्य-संबंधी
6. **SQRP**
The country has experienced unprecedented economic development since the adoption of the New Economic Policy in the year 1999. Faced with a critical foreign exchange crisis, the country adopted the policy in the Union Budget presented in the year 1999. In the immediate aftermath of the newly announced policy, there was apprehension in the minds of the people. Within a few years, however, the beneficial impact of the newly announced policy became manifest through higher GDP and a thriving economy. The middle classes have been the greatest beneficiary of the policy, who today enjoy far greater levels of income than their previous generations. If the country dreams of a much larger economy today, much of the optimism is due to the policy changes that took place in the year 1999.
7. **PQRS**
The Indian co-operative movement is probably one of the largest, strongest and the oldest in the world with widespread spatial coverage, diversified business activities and ample success

stories. It has celebrated its Centenary very recently. It is structured around the Rochdale Principles and Raiffeisen Model in wake of miseries of peasantry. It is termed as the "economic miracle" of the last century. Ever since the officially sponsored Act of 1904, the Movement has passed through a number of phases. Co-operatives have been organized in areas like credit, marketing, distribution, dairy development, industry, sugar and so on.

8. What cannot be cured must be endured.
9. Was the first bus missed by everybody?
10. She asked if the secretary was coming to the meeting.
11. The convict requested that he be allowed to speak freely.
12. Nisha exclaimed that Monica was wearing a very beautiful dress
13. **Agnosticism** – Doubtful about the existence of God अज्ञेयवाद
 - **Missionary** – A person sent to teach Christian religion पादरी
 - **Recluse** – One who lives alone and avoids company एकांतवासी
 - **Geek** – An unfashionable or socially inept person
14. **Perspicacious** – Quick to judge and understand सूक्ष्मदर्शी
 - **Epitome** – A perfect example प्रतिमान
 - **Inaugural speech** – The lecture of a function for introduction उद्घाटन भाषण
 - **Reveille** – A sound intended to wake up soldiers
15. **Deploy** – To spread troops for battle तैनात करना
 - **Deprecate** – Express earnest disapproval of निरुत्साहित करना, विरोध करना
 - **Illegible** – A writing that cannot be read अपठनीय
 - **Impressionist** – One who amuses by copying activities of another person प्रभाववादी
16. **Crack down on** (Phrase) – take severe measures against someone सख्त कार्रवाई करना
17. **Set a precedent of** (Phrase) – to set an example or rule to be followed एक मिसाल कायम करना
18. **Turn over new leaf** (Phrase) – start to act or behave in a better or more responsible way एक नए रूप में शुरू करना
19. **Indigenous** (adjective) – Originating or occurring naturally in a particular place; native. स्वदेशी
 - **Hackneyed** (adjective) – Overused; trite; stale मामूली, साधारण, घिसा-पिटा
 - **Indigent** (adjective) – Poor दरिद्र
 - **Incipient** (adjective) – Beginning; emerging उत्पन्न होनेवाला, प्रारंभिक
20. **Frenetic** (adjective) – filled with excitement, activity, or confusion wild or frantic उन्मत्त
 - **Catholic** (adjective) – Universal; embracing everything उदार, दुनिया भर का
 - **Covert** (adjective) – Secret; hidden गुप्त, गोपनीय

- **Manifesto** (noun) – A public declaration of beliefs or principles, usually political ones
घोषणापत्र
21. **Disdain** (noun) – the feeling that somebody/something is not good enough to be respected यह भावना कि कोई सम्मानीय नहीं है, तिरस्कार, अवज्ञा
- **Futile** (adjective) – Useless; hopeless व्यर्थ, निष्फल
 - **Grandiloquent** (adjective) – Pompous; using a lot of big, fancy words in an attempt to sound impressive. आडंबरपूर्ण, शब्दाडंबरपूर्ण
 - **Scrutinize** (verb) – To examine very carefully जाँचना
22. **Adherent** (noun) – Supporter, believer, devotee, follower अनुयायी/ समर्थक
- **Exemplify** (verb) – To illustrate by example; to serve as a good example उदाहरण देना
 - **Artifice** (noun) – A clever trick; cunning चालाकी, युक्ति
 - **Diffident** (adjective) – Timid; lacking in self-confidence संकोची, शंकायुक्त, शर्मीला
23. No Error
24. (A) 'populations' के बदले 'population' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि 'population' जिसका अर्थ है 'आबादी' का Plural नहीं बनाया जाता है।
- 'population' will be used instead of 'populations' because 'population' which means 'all the inhabitants of a particular place.' is not made plural.
25. (C) 'would be found' के बदले 'was found' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि जब past की दो ऐसी घटनाओं का जिक्र हो जिनमें 'कारण' और 'परिणाम' का सम्बन्ध हो तो दोनों घटनाओं के लिए Simple Past का प्रयोग होता है; जैसे-
- i. He lost his balance and fell down.
 - ii. He was guilty, so he was punished.
- 'was found' will be used instead of 'would be found' because when two such events of past are mentioned in which 'cause' and 'result' are related then Simple Past is used for both the events; As-
 - He lost his balance and fell down.
 - He was guilty, so he was punished.



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