Final Year Examinations - Risks Involved

Why in news?

On University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines, the Centre has insisted that final year examinations in all universities and institutions be held, in spite of the risks posed by COVID-19.

What are the concerns?

- The UGS has suggested the students to take a pen-and-paper test, or an online examination, or a combination of the two.
- But in any case, expecting large numbers of students to give exam at a pandemic time is counterproductive.
- There is growing concern worldwide that the coronavirus infection is not always mild among young people.
- More importantly, youth with mild symptoms might pass it on to older family members who could become seriously ill.
- The situation on COVID-19 in India is particularly worrying.
- India has the third highest number of cases in the world, with more than 1 million as of 16 July 2020.
- So, any move to force a final examination scheme could endanger lives.

What are the other options?

- In the unlock phase, States have been empowered to add restrictions to the Home Ministry's orders on public activity.
- This is being decided depending on the local situation.
- Given the incalculable risks involved, States such as Punjab, Maharashtra, Odisha, West Bengal and later Delhi decided against holding final year examinations.
- Many large universities have shown readiness in devising alternatives to evaluate students in the present circumstances.
- They have done away with a final examination and chosen a formula that uses best past performance of students.

What is the way forward?

- In its defence, the Department of Higher Education has gathered data to show that 454 out of 640 universities had either conducted examinations or

planned to do so.

- The rest should also now comply because of the legal position.
- But such a hardline approach does not cohere with the imperative of a consensus pandemic response.
- Notably, in the most affected nation, the U.S., major universities are placing health and safety first and academic enterprise next.
- Any decision to reopen institutions and conduct examinations requires careful assessment of local conditions.
- Given all these, it is better that the decision is left to the States.
- The Centre must take its own advice, of restricting public movement and gatherings during the pandemic, seriously.
- It should leave it to the States to determine the best course.

Source: The Hindu

