Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)

Why in news?

\n\n

Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry has decided to participate in Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) after a gap of 10 years.

\n\n

What is the origin and purpose of PISA?

\n\n

\n
- PISA was first administered in 2000.
\n
- It is an international Survey conducted every three years (triennial).
\n
- It is coordinated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
\n
- It assesses the quality of education systems across the world by evaluating students in **science, mathematics and reading.**
\n
- It is a 2-hour computer-based test that focuses on 15-year-old students.
\n
- This particular age group is selected as they have either completed or are near the end of their compulsory education in most countries.
\n
- PISA requires the examinees to have finished at least six years of formal schooling.
\n
- About 5.5 lakh students in 72 countries, which together make up nine-tenths of the world economy, took the test in 2015.
\n

\n\n

How does the program evaluate students?

\n\n

\n
- PISA is a competency-based test designed to assess the ability of the candidates to apply their knowledge to real-life situations.
\n
- It does not test a student's memory and curriculum-based knowledge.
\n
- PISA's science test, , measures three competencies —
\n

\n\n

\n
1. Ability to explain scientific phenomena
\n
2. Scientific interpretation of data and evidence
\n
3. Ability to design and evaluate scientific query.
\n

\n\n

\n
- Similarly, PISA defines reading as an individual's capacity to understand, use and reflect on written information in a range of situations.
\n

\n\n

What is the criticism about the test?

\n\n

\n
- Academicians have expressed concerns over the impact of PISA rankings.
\n
- Detractors feel PISA has contributed to an obsession with **standardized testing relying heavily on quantitative measures**.
\n
- America's 'Race to the Top' program is often cited as an example in this context as it uses standardized testing for evaluating students, teachers and administrators.
\n
- The triennial survey has also been criticized for shifting focus from **long-term and enduring solutions to temporary measures.**
\n
- Ad-hoc measures are being increasingly adopted by countries to improve their ranking.
\n
- OECD responded that there is no evidence to suggest PISA or any other

educational comparison has caused a shift to short-term fixes.
\n
- In fact, according to OECD, it has created opportunities for policy-makers and stakeholders to collaborate across borders.
\n

\n\n

Why was India out of it for 10 years?

\n\n

\n
- The country participated in 2009 test with 16,000 students from 400 schools in Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
\n
- India was placed 72nd among the 74 participating countries.
\n
- The then UPA government blamed “out of context” questions for the poor show.
\n
- Also it chose not to participate in the 2012 and 2015 cycles.
\n
- Till date, India has participated only once in PISA-2009.
\n

\n\n

What is the recent development?

\n\n

\n
- Under the NDA government, the HRD Ministry first revisited this decision in 2016.
\n
- The Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan set up a committee to review the matter and its report recommended that the country participate in the 2018 test cycle.
\n
- A similar recommendation was made in 2017 by the group of secretaries on education constituted by Prime Minister.
\n
- Recently, HRD Minister formally approved the decision to participate in the 2021 cycle of PISA.
\n
- The government will request OECD to administer the test across all schools in Chandigarh in 2021.

\n
- Chandigarh was selected for three reasons.
\n

\n\n

\n
1. Compact area.
\n
2. To keep number of languages in which the test has to be administered to a minimum and
\n
3. Chandigarh’s record of performing well in learning assessments.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Indian Express

\n