



## NEET and States

Governor should not delay assent to TN's Bill for exemption from mandatory admission test.

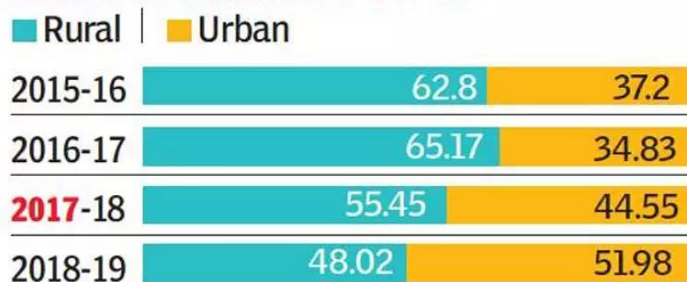
### Highlights:

1. With the Tamil Nadu Assembly passing once again its earlier Bill seeking to exempt government seats in undergraduate medical and dental courses from the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET), the ball is once again in the court of Governor R.N. Ravi.
2. The Governor had chosen to return to the House for reconsideration of the Bill that was passed in September 2021, questioning the tenability of the Justice A.K. Rajan Committee Report that had given its findings in favour of the passage of such a law.
3. If the Bill is presented to him again, Mr Ravi is constitutionally bound to grant assent. It is a matter of speculation whether the Bill will obtain a presidential nod.
4. After all, this is clearly a Bill that requires the President's acceptance — the exemption from NEET is in conflict with the central law that makes it mandatory and, therefore, can only be saved by the President's assent.
5. Regardless of Bill's merits, the Governor should delay the matter no further. The original intent of the Constitution makers was that the Governor, under Article 200, ought to have no discretion, save in the case of a law that undermines the position of the High Court, which he is bound to reserve for the President's consideration.

## FIGURES HIT THE NAIL ON THE HEAD

NEET was made mandatory for medical intake from 2017-18. Share of rural students securing a seat has gone down since

### Urban-rural divide in %





6. However, the Governor's rare use of discretion to question the desirability or validity of a Bill, and ask for reconsideration is now a matter of constitutional practice.

### **The power to legislate**

A five-judge Supreme Court Bench heard the matter of Modern Dental College vs Madhya Pradesh government. The Supreme Court verdict was clear: The State government has the power to legislate on student admissions to higher education institutions.

### **Separation of Power:**

1. Some parts of the Governor's communication to the Legislative Assembly Speaker seem to suggest that Mr Ravi disagrees with the basis for the Bill, even though he is not wrong in highlighting a Supreme Court decision in favour of NEET.
2. It is not generally desirable for the Governor to seek to match wits with the legislature's wisdom on social inputs that inform policy.
3. It will be useful to recall that the Sarkaria Commission on Centre-State relations observed that the Governor should not act contrary to the advice of the Council of Ministers merely because he did not like the policy embodied in the Bill.

### **NEET as a barrier to access quality medical education:**

1. The attention will now be on whether the NEET Exemption Bill will pass muster. For one thing, the exemption may not be a solution to the problem of government school students not making it to MBBS courses in sufficient numbers. The situation prior to the introduction of NEET was no better.
2. However, the issue of NEET being a barrier to access is genuine. There is no doubt that the mandatory nature of NEET on a pan-India basis undermines the role of State governments in medical education.
3. As the main deliverers of public health, the States cannot be denied a say in who joins medical courses in government colleges.

### **The Justice AK Rajan committee report**

1. Data from the Justice AK Rajan committee report shows that NEET (National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test) hinders rural, poor, and government school students from securing admissions in medical colleges.

09.02.2022

Wednesday



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2. Particularly Tamil medium educated, state board students, and first-generation graduates, have a tough time clearing NEET, the report shows.
3. In 2010, 80.2% of English medium-educated students and 19.79% of Tamil medium students were admitted to various medical colleges in Tamil Nadu. But in 2017 after NEET was introduced, 98.41% of students who got admissions were English-medium educated. Only 1.6% of students who secured seats were Tamil-medium educated.
4. Not much has changed this year too. In 2020-2021, 98.01% of students who secured medical admission were English-medium educated, the rest 1.99% studied in Tamil medium schools.

## Step up agri-spending, boost farm incomes

India's poor AOI is a stark reminder of the need to attain a key sustainable development goal of higher agri-growth.

### India is ranked low

1. The picture changes and rather looks disappointing when we look at the Agriculture Orientation Index (AOI) — an index that was developed as part of Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015.
2. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 emphasises an increase in investment in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, development of technology to enhance agricultural productivity and eradication of poverty in middle- and lower-income countries.
3. The AOI is calculated by dividing the agriculture share of government expenditure by the agriculture value-added share of GDP. In other words, it measures the ratio between government spending towards the agricultural sector and the sector's contribution to GDP.
4. India's index is one of the lowest, reflecting that the spending towards the agricultural sector is not commensurate with the sector's contribution towards GDP.

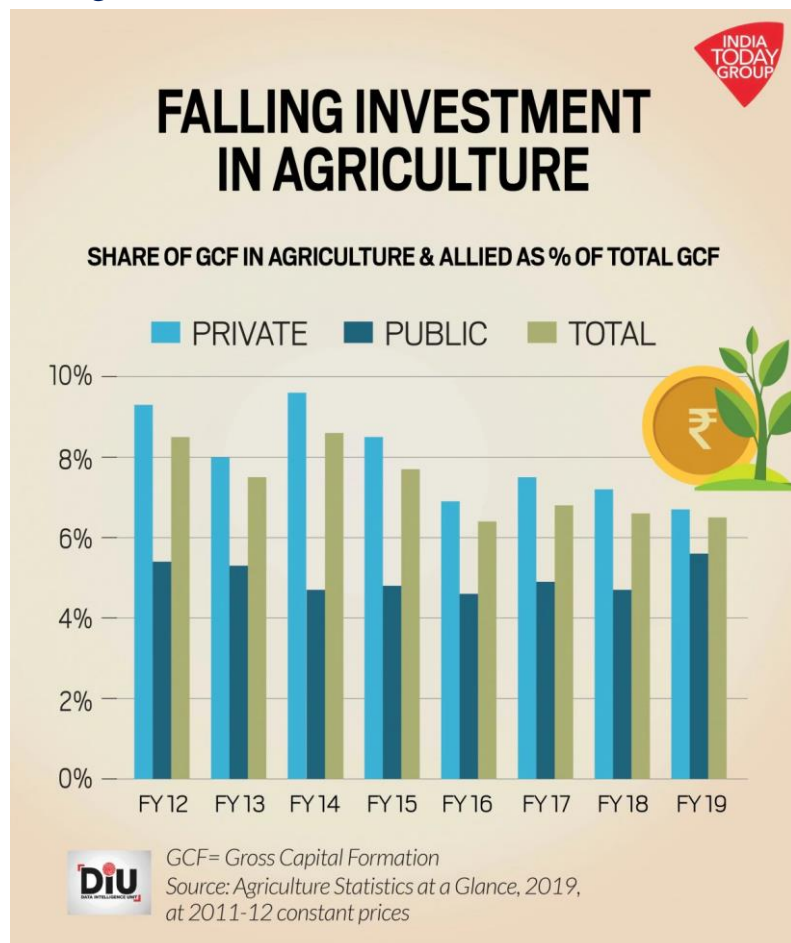


## A comparison with Asia

1. The enormous spending on the agricultural sector by East Asian countries is also reflected in their higher crop yield. For example, the total cereal yield in India is only around 3,282 kilograms per hectare compared to 4,225 kg per hectare in Asia.
2. Within the Asian region, Eastern Asia has the highest cereal yield of 6,237 kg per hectare.
3. In China, even with an average landholding size of 0.6 hectares, which is much lower than India's average landholding size, the performance of the sector in terms of crop yield is much higher than in India.

4. For example, the cereal yield is 6,296 kg per hectare, pulses yield is 1,815 kg per hectare and vegetable crops yield is 25,546 kg per hectare in China; the corresponding figures for India are 3,282 kg, 704 kg, and 15,451 kg, respectively. Both India and China are among the world's largest producers of wheat, rice, cotton and maize.

5. A closer look at the budgetary allocation towards the agricultural sector shows that there has been a drastic slashing of funds toward important schemes such as crop insurance and minimum support price (MSP).



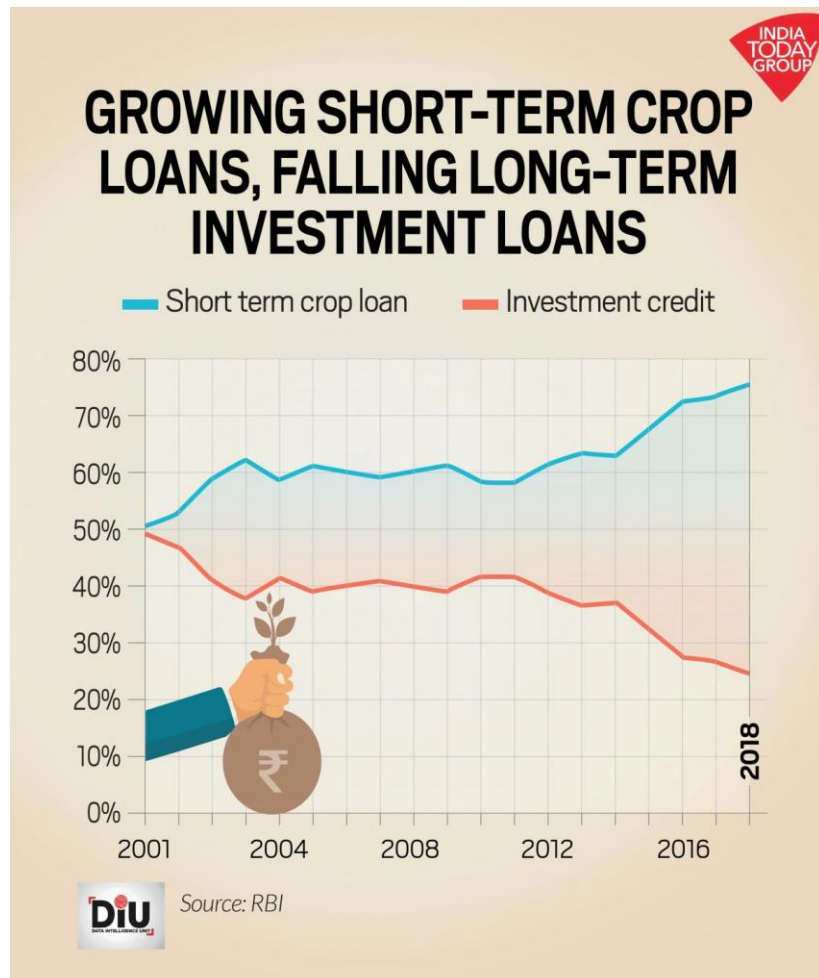




6. Market Intervention Scheme and Price Support Scheme (MIS-PSS) was only ₹1,500 crore. This is 62% less than the previous allocation of ₹3,959.61 crores in revised estimates (RE) of FY 2021-22.
7. Similarly, the Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) experienced a significant reduction to only one crore as against the allocation of ₹400 crores in 2021-22. It was allocated just ₹1 crore for the year as against an expenditure of ₹400 crores in 2021-22.

### Capital investment in agriculture:

1. While one can still argue that the capital investment in the agricultural sector is more crucial than price support programmes, there has not been any considerable and commensurate increase in the allocation towards capital investment, especially for the promotion of rural infrastructure and marketing facilities.
2. Allocation for rural development was 5.59% in the previous Budget and it has been reduced to 5.23%.



3. The allocation of funds towards schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM KISAN), Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana, though desirable, will not result in long-run asset generation.



## Measures to implement

1. The intensification in government spending towards the agricultural sector is the key to attaining the sustainable development goals of higher agricultural growth and farm income.
2. The focus on the development of irrigation facilities, urban infrastructure and development of national highways must be complemented with an emphasis on the development of rural infrastructure and rural transportation facilities, along with an increase in the number of markets, as suggested by the National Commission on Farmers.
3. These measures will play a crucial role in enhancing farmers' access to markets and integrating small and marginal farmers into the agricultural supply chain to a greater extent.