The IITs are overcommitted, in crisis

Source: The information is derived from the article titled "The IITs are overcommitted, in crisis," published in The Hindu on November 4, 2023.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 - Social Justice, Issues related to the development and management of Social Sector/Services, particularly in the field of Education.

Q1.For the first practice question regarding challenges faced by the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and the need to tackle domestic challenges before focusing on overseas expansion:

Higher Education Institutes in India, such as IITs, need to prioritize addressing their domestic challenges before venturing into overseas expansion. There are several pressing issues faced by IITs that require immediate attention:

Quality Assurance: Newer IITs struggle to maintain the high academic standards and reputation of the original institutions. Empty seats in these institutions may be an indication of quality concerns. Ensuring that the educational quality at these newer IITs matches that of the original ones should be a top priority.

Faculty Shortages: The IITs face a significant shortage of qualified faculty members. It is crucial to fill these vacant positions with experienced and capable educators to provide students with quality education.

Attracting Talent: Offering competitive salaries that match international standards is vital to attract and retain top academic talent. This includes both Indian and foreign faculty members.

Location Considerations: The establishment of newer IITs in remote areas can be less appealing to both prospective faculty and students. Adequate infrastructure and resources should be provided to make these institutions more attractive.

Prestige Concerns: There is a growing concern about the perceived hierarchy within the IIT system, with some IITs considered more prestigious than others. Steps should be taken to ensure that all IITs are recognized for their quality education and research.

Before embarking on overseas expansion, it is essential for the Indian government and the IIT system to resolve these pressing domestic challenges. Strengthening the existing institutions and maintaining high educational standards should take precedence. Once these issues are adequately addressed, the IITs can consider international expansion.

On electoral bond

Q2.For the second practice question about the Electoral Bonds scheme:

The Electoral Bonds scheme in India has raised several concerns and challenges related to transparency and accountability in political funding. To critically examine this scheme and suggest measures for greater accountability and transparency, consider the following points:

Challenges with Electoral Bonds:

Anonymity of Donors: The scheme allows donors to remain anonymous, making it impossible for the public to know who is financing political parties. This lack of transparency raises concerns about potential influence over political decisions.

Lack of Disclosure: The scheme does not require political parties to disclose the identity of donors, leading to an opacity in political funding.

Potential for Black Money: Electoral Bonds can be purchased with cash, which raises concerns about the use of black money in political funding.

Measures for Greater Accountability and Transparency:

Disclosure of Donors: To enhance transparency, the government should mandate the disclosure of the identities of donors and recipients of electoral bonds. This will enable the public to know who is funding political parties.

Public Funding: Transition from private funding to public funding for political parties can significantly improve transparency. Introducing a system of public funding reduces the influence of wealthy donors and ensures a level playing field.

National Election Fund: Establishing a National Election Fund to which all donors can contribute would promote transparency. Funds can be allocated to political parties based on their electoral performance, reducing the dependency on private contributions

Eliminate Cash Transactions: Implementing measures to eliminate cash transactions in political funding can help combat the use of black money. Encouraging digital and traceable modes of contributions is essential.

Legal Framework: Develop a robust legal framework for political funding, including stringent penalties for non-compliance with transparency and accountability requirements.

Addressing these challenges and implementing these measures can lead to a more transparent and accountable political funding system, which is crucial for the integrity of democratic processes in India.