

Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)

Why in news?

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

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What is the origin and purpose of PISA?

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

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How does the program evaluate students?

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

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

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

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What is the criticism about the test?

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- Academicians have expressed concerns over the impact of PISA rankings.
- Detractors feel PISA has contributed to an obsession with **standardized testing relying heavily on quantitative measures**.
- 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.
- The triennial survey has also been criticized for shifting focus from **long-term and enduring solutions to temporary measures**.
- Ad-hoc measures are being increasingly adopted by countries to improve their ranking.
- OECD responded that there is no evidence to suggest PISA or any other

educational comparison has caused a shift to short-term fixes.

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- In fact, according to OECD, it has created opportunities for policy-makers and stakeholders to collaborate across borders.

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Why was India out of it for 10 years?

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- The country participated in 2009 test with 16,000 students from 400 schools in Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

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- India was placed 72nd among the 74 participating countries.

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- The then UPA government blamed “out of context” questions for the poor show.

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- Also it chose not to participate in the 2012 and 2015 cycles.

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- Till date, India has participated only once in PISA-2009.

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What is the recent development?

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- Under the NDA government, the HRD Ministry first revisited this decision in 2016.

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- 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.

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- A similar recommendation was made in 2017 by the group of secretaries on education constituted by Prime Minister.

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- Recently, HRD Minister formally approved the decision to participate in the 2021 cycle of PISA.

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- The government will request OECD to administer the test across all schools in Chandigarh in 2021.

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- Chandigarh was selected for three reasons.

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1. Compact area.

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2. To keep number of languages in which the test has to be administered to a minimum and

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3. Chandigarh's record of performing well in learning assessments.

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Source: The Indian Express

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