Geography · GS - I

What is regional disparity? How does it differ from diversity? How serious is the issue of regional disparity in India?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2024	GS - I	Geography

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

regional disparity, spatial inequality, regional diversity, inter-state disparity, intra-state disparity, per capita income, infrastructure, human development, urban-rural divide, balanced regional development

Model Answer

Introduction

Regional disparity refers to unequal levels of economic, social and infrastructural development among geographical regions. Diversity, in contrast, denotes differences in culture, language, ecology and social practices and does not inherently indicate inequality.

Regional Disparity and Diversity

Diversity represents India's plural character—for example, differences in language, food, customs, ecology and cultural traditions.

Regional disparity arises when geographical regions differ substantially in access to income, employment, infrastructure, education, healthcare and other development opportunities.

Thus, diversity can exist without inequality, whereas disparity specifically involves an **unequal distribution of development opportunities and outcomes**.

Extent of Regional Disparity in India

1. Income inequality: States and regions differ substantially in per capita income and productive capacity.

2. Industrial concentration: Manufacturing and modern services remain concentrated in regions with stronger infrastructure and investment ecosystems.

3. Human-development gaps: Education, health, nutrition and skill-development outcomes vary across states and districts.

4. Infrastructure differences: Roads, irrigation, electricity, digital connectivity and urban facilities remain uneven.

5. Rural-urban divide: Employment and higher-value economic opportunities are concentrated disproportionately in urban centres.

6. Geographical constraints: Himalayan, tribal, desert and remote regions often face higher connectivity and infrastructure costs.

Way Forward

Balanced regional development requires fiscal equalisation, targeted infrastructure investment, better public services, decentralised planning, human-capital development and region-specific industrial strategies.

Conclusion

Regional diversity is a strength of India's plural society, but persistent regional disparity can undermine **inclusive growth, social cohesion and balanced national development**. The objective should therefore be to preserve diversity while reducing inequalities in opportunities and basic services.

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