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**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
INDRAPRASTHA ESTATE, RING ROAD,
NEW DELHI.**

ANNUAL ESSAY PRIZE COMPETITION-2016

Entries are invited for the Annual Essay Prize Competition-2016. The value of the prize for the competition will be as under:

First Prize	Rs.10,000/-
Second Prize	Rs.7,000/-
Third Prize	Rs.5,000/-

Any competitor who has got a prize on one occasion will not, on any subsequent occasion, be eligible for an equivalent or lower prize. The joint authorship of essays shall not be allowed and any essay under joint authorship shall not be considered for competition.

The topics for the competition are

- (i) Decentralization and Public Service Delivery
- (ii) The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by UN General Assembly in September 2015
- (iii) The Agrarian Crises

The essay writers are expected to cover the following aspects in their respective entries:

Topic : Decentralization and Public Service Delivery

Properly designed and implemented decentralization may effectively address the service delivery needs of local communities by more accurately reflecting local priorities for services and preferences for delivery systems and content. The design of administrative decentralization in India hinges on the "three Fs": funds, functions, and functionaries. India's experience with decentralization can be characterized as unbalanced, with political decentralization (Panchayat elections) running ahead of administrative decentralization. Functions have been devolved but PRIs have little control over funds (which come to PRIs tied to specific items) or functionaries (who remain appendages of the state government). This limited and unbalanced decentralization is unlikely to improve services, significantly because it does not improve the delegation, financing, information, and enforcing elements of system accountability— and in some ways could make them weaker.

The 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian Constitution, provide the legal framework for decentralization. The amendments mandated state governments to transfer some powers and responsibilities to Panchayats at the rural level and to urban local bodies (ULBs) so they could function as autonomous institutions of self-government. The amendments also provided for regular elections to these local bodies and reserved one-third of the seats for women and a proportional number for Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) populations. Elections have been held in most states, resulting in the inclusion of more than three million people in the formal political system. However, few states have moved much beyond political decentralization to devolve funds, functions, and functionaries to local governments.

A well-designed decentralized system of governance requires that functions are clearly delegated to individual activities consistent with a budgeting system; finances follow functions; performance is judged through well-designed monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and information flows down to citizens; and citizens can enforce accountability both with policymakers and between policymakers and providers .

The strength of decentralization through PRIs lies in the fact that they are the legally grounded representative institution at the grassroots. However, in the absence of effective checks and balances, these institutions are susceptible to elite capture, political exclusion, and corruption. The user group approach is advantageous because it encourages an inclusive decision-making process at the local level by directly targeting the poor.

Topic: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by UN General Assembly in September 2015

The concept of the SDGs was born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, in 2012. The objective was to produce a set of universally applicable goals that balances the three dimensions of sustainable development: environmental, social, and economic. The SDGs replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which in September 2000 rallied the world around a common 15-year agenda to tackle the indignity of poverty.¹⁷ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at a historic UN Summit — officially came into force on 1st January 2016. Over the next fifteen years, with these new goals that universally apply to all, countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, ensuring that no one is left behind.

The SDGs build on the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and aim to go further to end all forms of poverty. The new goals are unique in that they call for action by all countries, poor, rich and middle-income to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. While the SDGs are not legally binding, governments are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for the achievement of the seventeen goals. Countries have the primary responsibility

for follow-up and review of the progress made in implementing the goals, which will require quality, accessible and timely data collection. Regional follow-up and review will be based on national-level analyses and contribute to follow-up and review at the global level.

In this context, the proposed theme of the essay may emphasise upon the niche area and may facilitate the solutions to specific issues such as; India's framework of action plan with respect to the SDGs, What would be India's strategy to achieve the global goals of action on climate change and the environment, improved access to health and education? What support should be extended to government to reflect the new global agenda in national development plans and policies? How would the challenges of financial resources meet the global development challenges? What would be the national indicators for the framed SDGs? How adequate and reliable is the existing data to frame a policy on the related issues. What are the challenges as a nation to meet the SDGs in the present context?

Essay should be original and creative in content selection and presentation. The effectiveness and clarity in communicating ideas should be an integral part of the essay.

Topic: The Agrarian Crises

Agrarian crisis presently raging in India is a cumulation of a series of a series of crises: agrarian, economic, technological, environmental, and ecological. As an agrarian crisis, it reflects the nonviability of increasingly fragmented small landholdings that are unable to sustain even subsistent farming. As an economic crisis, it draws attention to macro and micro factors adversely affecting agriculture from the neoliberal economic reforms accelerated since 1991. As a technological crisis, it indicates the endless and still unsettled debate and policy ambivalence around the issue of the use of genetically modified seeds among the Union and State governments. As an environmental crisis it refers to the fact that heavy uses of chemical fertilizers and multi-cropping have made the land overtly saline, hard, deficient in soil organic carbon (SOC), fatigued, weedy, and resistant to pest-control. As an ecological crisis, it is marked by symptoms of loss of biodiversity, percolation of chemicals used in farming to ground waters and their contamination, the going down and drying up of underground water tables due to lack of water-harvesting systems and pulling up of water for our use from 300 to 400ft. depth which was 40 to 50ft earlier. It ultimately merges with global warming and climate change threatening the very survival of species on the planet earth, much like the spectre, of nuclear holocaust. For example, many thriving ancient agrarian and urban civilizations in the world were destroyed by gradual loss of forest cover and creeping desertification or by decimation of ice caps and glaciers and all-enveloping inundation.

The colonial era in India was afflicted by frequent famines and appointment of Royal Famine Commissions to remedially deal with them. The colonial state was primarily an extractive instrument and only incidentally developmental to subserve

its own imperial interests. The growth rate in food production between 1900-1947 was barely 0.1 per cent. The notable achievements of post-Independence India were the Green Revolution and the White Revolution. The annual food grains production growth rate in 1950-2012 was 3.2 per cent. Not a big deal, but India grew from 'ship-to-mouth' imports to being not only self-sufficient but also an exporter.

The turn of the century witnessed a slow-down in agricultural growth and in fact decline. It did not happen overnight. A sharp fall in agricultural growth rate is evident in the figure of 3.3 per cent during 1950-51/1964-65 and a mere 0.6 per cent during 1994-95/2004-05. The result is that 40 per cent of those who live in and on the farm sector want to quit farming, given the availability of option. Even more grim is the tragic high incidence of suicides of farmers in sizeable parts of the country. It is supposed to be caused by 'unbearable burden of debt and increased competition from the 'imports' following economic liberalisation. This policy shift from Indian socialism to business liberalism is also accompanied by growing economic disparities between agricultural and urban sectors of the economy and class and regional disparities in general.

The phenomenon of agrarian crisis must, however, be closely examined in a nuanced way. As A. Vaidyanathan aptly remarks, the farm suicides are not occurring everywhere nor is its cause equally intense in the totality of the economic indicators. 'In 2002, less than 30 per cent of rural households in the country had outstanding debt and this constituted barely 2-3 per cent of the total value of assets held by them. The incidence of indebtedness in the states where suicides are high (Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh) or have been affected by import liberalisation (Kerala) though higher than average is still no more than a fifth' (The Hindu, November 8, 2006). The human dimension of the tragedy is still quite poignant and the crisis of the Indian agriculture and the related multiple crises sketched above appear to be too sticky to be amenable to an easy and speedy solution. Even the agricultural crisis alone needs to be dissected into *agrarian crisis* and *agricultural development crisis* for addressing in terms of short-term and long-term measures (D. Narasimha Reddy and Srijit Mishra, *Agrarian Crisis in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010).

A competitor may attempt a comprehensive survey of all these factors or may opt for focusing only on problems of a specific sector.

These are flexible guidelines, illustrative rather than comprehensive. The competitors may not feel in any way rigidly bound by these guidelines.

Essay should be based on personal research or experience of the competitors and show evidence of original thinking and scholarship as well as a critical analysis of the subject. Broad generalizations should be avoided.

The essay should be in English or Hindi. The length of an essay should approximately be 5000 words. Essay exceeding 5500 words shall not be accepted. The contestants must indicate the total number of words of the essay, failing which it will not be accepted. All essays must be typed in double space on one side of the paper only and those entries which do not adhere to the stipulation may be rejected. It should be submitted in triplicate under a “nom-de-plume” or “alias.” The full name and address of the competitor should be given on a separate sheet and enclosed in a sealed envelope bearing the nom-de-plume on the outer cover with the following inscription.

Annual Essay Prize Competition-2016, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi.

All essays should be sent to the Director, Indian Institute of Public Administration, Indraprastha Estate, Ring Road, New Delhi-110002, by Registered Post, so as to reach him not later than **August 31, 2016**. The envelope should be marked “Annual Essay Prize Competition 2016”. The entries received after the due date may not be entertained.

The essays will be adjudged by a body of judges and the award of the judges shall be final. The institute reserves the right not to make any award if none of the essays submitted meets the necessary standard. Any essay which receives an award shall become the joint intellectual property of the author and IIPA.

N.B.: Intending competitors who wish to seek any further clarification may write to The Director, Indian Institute of Public Administration, Indraprastha Estate, Ring Road, New Delhi-110002.