

**10. Discuss why land pooling is being seen as an effective and dependable tool that can replace the traditional land acquisition mechanism. (150 words) 10**

**Approach:**

- Briefly introduce the traditional land acquisition mechanism and issues associated with it.
- Write about land pooling and how it can prove a good alternative to traditional land acquisition.
- Conclude by discussing some challenges to be addressed in land pooling.

**Answer:**

Given the pressing need for development in India, land acquisition by States has persistently been a key issue. A number of flagship urban development projects have been delayed owing to issues with land acquisition, which often stem from problems with compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement for persons affected. For example, the Ahmedabad-Mumbai Bullet Train project in Gujarat faced farmers resistance and protest.

The mechanism under Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (RFCTLARR) Act, 2013 adds complications such as, Social Impact Survey; higher rates of compensation; caps on acquisition of multi-crop and agricultural land; mandatory consent of landowners; consent of the Gram Sabhas in Scheduled Areas.

In this context, land pooling can emerge as a viable and popular alternative to direct land acquisition in India. **Land pooling** involves amassing small land parcels into a large parcel, providing it with infrastructure and returning a sizable portion of redeveloped land to the original owners after the development is complete. The part of land that remains with the government/developer is reserved for setting up infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, schools, water etc.

**Benefits of Land Pooling**

- **For Landowner:**
  - Gets benefited by increased land value as the value of the land retained increases substantially compared to his original holding.
  - Gets access to substantially better infrastructure.
  - Leads to conversion of irregular parcels into plots of regular sizes and shapes appropriate for its development further.
  - The non displacing strategy retains the traditional sense of belonging for the landowners.
- **Government:**
  - The government does not have to pay any initial outlay to purchase the land.
  - It leads relatively less resistance by landowners as it in a way treats them as investors in development projects.
  - It also fast-tracks the traditional land acquisition process while still addressing social concerns.
  - Increased property prices lead to higher tax base for the government.
- **Increase of public-private cooperation and trust:** Land pooling strategy ensures a three-way win; for the private players to put their skills to use; the government to facilitate the development and ultimately the land owners who benefit from the development.
  - Since it involves participation of the landowners, the diversion of land for another use is prevented.

Land pooling is not new to India. It has been utilised in Gujarat under the mechanism of Town Planning Schemes (TPS). In Andhra Pradesh too, land pooling has been done on an exceptionally large scale for the development of its new capital city of Amaravati. Nonetheless, despite the benefits, the success of land pooling as a policy for land acquisition depends on the government's ability to address challenges associated with it. For example, issue of proper consent by landowners despite the speed needed for development, insufficient compensation and resettlement for tenant farmers and agricultural labourers.