

2020



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CURRENT AFFAIRS

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1. ASER Report 2019

Why in News?

The Non-governmental organization (NGO) **Pratham's** Annual Status of Education Report 2019 has flagged poor learning outcomes in schools.

- ASER 2019 reported on the pre-schooling or schooling status of children in the age group 4 to 8 years in 26 rural districts (districts with rural populations >70%) across 24 States.
- The report focuses on the “early years” and lays emphasis on “developing problem-solving faculties and building memory of children, and not content knowledge”.

Early years : *It is defined globally as age 0-8, and is known to be the most important stage of cognitive, motor, social and emotional development in the human life cycle.*

- It explores children's performance on 4 competencies that are identified as important predictors of future success, viz.
 - Cognitive Development,
 - Early Language,
 - Early Numeracy, and
 - Social and Emotional Development

Key Findings

- ASER Report 2019 argues that a focus on cognitive skills rather than subject learning in the early years can make a big difference to basic literacy and numeracy abilities.
- It tested the cognitive skills of children.
 - It included
 1. Sorting images by colour and size,
 2. Recognising patterns,
 3. Fitting together a four-piece animal puzzle
 - Of those children who could correctly do all three cognitive tasks, 52% could read words, and 63% could solve the additional problem.
- Reading and early childhood education
 - Only 16% of children in Class 1 can read the text at the prescribed level, while almost 40% cannot even recognise letters.
 - Early childhood education has the potential to be the “greatest and most powerful equaliser.”
- **Private schools ahead**
 - Of 6 year olds in Class 1, nearly 42% of those in private schools could read words in comparison to only 19% from government schools.
- 36% in Class 1 are older than the Right To Education (RTE) Act (2009) - mandated age of 6.

- It can be noted that the draft New Education Policy (NEP), 2019 also links the “severe learning crisis” to what goes on with young children in India.

Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)

- It is **released by** NGO Pratham.
- ASER surveys use Census 2011 as the sampling frame.
- ASER continues to be an important national source of information about children’s foundational skills across the country.
- In 2016, ASER switched to an alternate-year cycle where this ‘basic’ ASER is conducted every other year (2016, 2018, and next in 2020); and in alternate years ASER focuses on a different aspect of children’s schooling and learning.
- In 2017, ASER 'Beyond Basics' focused on the abilities, experiences, and aspirations of youth in the 14-18 age group.
- In 2018, ASER had data on enrollment patterns in age group 4 to 8.

2. Bru Refugee Crisis

Why in News?

Recently, a **four party agreement** among the Centre, Mizoram Government, Tripura Government and Mizoram Bru Displaced People’s Forum (MBDPF) has been signed.

- This agreement seeks to **end the 22-year-old Bru refugee crisis.**

New Agreement:

- According to this new agreement, they can now settle in Tripura also.
 - Earlier, an agreement was signed in 2018 to send them back to Mizoram but it could not be implemented due to their protest on the grounds of safety in Mizoram.
- The stakeholders in the issue expect a package of Rs 600 crore from the Centre which includes:
 - Plots of 2,500 sq ft for each Bru family in addition to agricultural land.
 - A stipend of Rs 5,000 per month and free ration for each family for the next two years.
 - Bru tribals would be included in Tripura’s voter list.

About Bru Refugee Crisis:

- Bru or Reang is a community indigenous to Northeast India, living mostly in Tripura, Mizoram and Assam.
- While many Brus of Assam and Tripura are Hindu, the Brus of Mizoram converted to Christianity over the years.
- In Tripura, they are recognised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group.
- In Mizoram, they have been targeted by groups that do not consider them indigenous to the state.

- In 1997, following ethnic clashes, nearly 37,000 Brus fled Mamit, Kolasib and Lunglei districts of Mizoram and were accommodated in relief camps in Tripura.

3. Commissionerate System

Why in News?

Recently, the Uttar Pradesh government has approved the implementation of the police commissionerate system in Lucknow and Noida.

- Under the 7th Schedule of the Constitution, Police is under the State list.
- The current system would be monitored for six-months on a review basis to know its effectiveness in handling law and order better and the earlier system of District Magistrates (DMs) would be done away on an experimental basis.

Key Points

- Apart from these, the new team would also have a special Superintendent of Police (SP) appointed for women security to ensure control of crime related to women and timely investigation of the registered cases.
- Also, there would be another SP rank officer who would be in charge of Traffic management.

Police Commissionerate System

- In the commissionerate system, the Commissioner of Police (CP) is the head of a unified police command structure.
- The commissioner is responsible for the force in the city and is accountable to the state government.
- The office also has magisterial powers, including those related to regulation, control, and licensing.
- Under this system, the commissioner does not report to the DM.
- The CP is drawn from the Deputy Inspector General rank or above and is assisted by Special/Joint/Additional/Deputy Commissioners.

Dual System

- Under the colonial system, the overall in-charge of a district or region was the district collector and the SP reported to him.
- The powers of the executive magistrate, such as issuing orders for preventive arrests or imposition of Section 144 CrPC, were vested in the district collector.
- This was called the dual system of police administration.
- At the district level, a 'dual system' of control exists, in which the SP has to work with the DM for supervising police administration.
- At the metropolitan level, many states have replaced the dual system with the commissionerate system, to allow for faster decision-making to solve complex urban-centric issues.
- Almost all states barring Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, UT of J&K, and some Northeastern states have a commissionerate system.

- The British brought the system first in Kolkata and followed it in Mumbai and Chennai presidencies. Delhi turned into a commissionerate during 1977-1979.

4. Private property is a human right: Supreme Court

Why in News?

- The Supreme Court has recently held in a welfare state, right to property is a human right.
- The case was of an 80-year-old woman whose 3.34 hectare land was forcibly taken by the Himachal Pradesh Government in 1967, for constructing a road.
- The Court used its extraordinary jurisdiction under Article 136 and Article 142 of the Constitution to direct the government to pay the woman compensation of 1 crore rupees.

Key Points

- The state cannot take possession of it without following due procedure and authority of law.
- The Bench referred to an earlier verdict in *State of Haryana v. Mukesh Kumar case (2011)* wherein it was held that the right to property **is not only a constitutional or statutory right, but also a human right**.
- The state cannot claim ownership of private property of a citizen in the name of 'adverse possession'.
- Grabbing private land and then claiming it as its own makes the state an encroacher.

Doctrine of Adverse Possession

- It is a legal doctrine that allows a person who possesses or resides on someone else's land for an extended period of time to claim legal title to that land.
- In India, a person who is not the original owner of a property becomes the owner because of the fact that he has been in possession of the property for a minimum of 12-years, within which the real owner did not seek legal recourse to oust him.

Article 142

- Article 142 provides discretionary power to the Supreme Court as it states that the supreme court in the exercise of its jurisdiction may pass such a decree or make such an order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it.

Article 136 (Special Leave Petition)

- It allows the Supreme Court to hear, at its discretion, an appeal against any order from any court or tribunal in the territory of India. However, this does not apply to any judgment, determination, sentence or order passed or made by any court or tribunal constituted by or under any law relating to the Armed Forces.

Right to Property

- Originally, the right to property was one of the seven fundamental rights under Part III of the Constitution under article 31.
- Later the 44th Amendment Act of 1978 abolished the right to property as a Fundamental Right and inserted a new Article 300A in Part XII which makes it a legal right or a constitutional right.
- It provides that no person shall be deprived of his property except by authority of law.
- It is not a part of the basic structure of the Constitution.

5. Kerala files suit against CAA

Why In News?

- Kerala has become the first State to challenge the constitutionality of the **Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA)** in the Supreme Court.

Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA)

- The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 seeks to provide citizenship to illegal migrants from Buddhist, Hindu, Sikhs, Jain, Parsi and Christian faiths, who have come to India from the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, on or before 31st December, 2014.

Key Points:

- The suit has been filed under **Article 131 of the Constitution**.
 - Under Article 131, the **Supreme Court has “original” jurisdiction** in disputes between States or the Centre and State(s).
 - The Article allows the court to directly take cognisance of such a dispute.
- Kerala has said in its suit that it would be compelled under **Article 256** to comply with the CAA, which it considers manifestly arbitrary, unreasonable, irrational and violative of fundamental rights.
 - Article 256 of the Constitution states that the executive power of every State shall be so exercised as **to ensure compliance with the laws made by Parliament**.
- **Existence of a dispute between the centre and state on the questions of law and fact:**
 - Regarding the enforcement of legal rights as a State, and
 - Regarding enforcement of the fundamental, constitutional and other legal rights of the inhabitants of the State.
- The Kerala Government has asked for the law to be declared unconstitutional and in violation of:
 - **Article 14** (equality before law),
 - **Article 21** (protection of life and personal liberty) and

- **Article 25** (freedom of conscience and free profession, practice, and propagation of religion).
- It has also sought directions to declare the **Passport (Entry into India) Amendment Rules, 2015, and Foreigners (Amendment) Order, 2015**, to be “**ultra vires the Constitution of India and to be void**”.

Different from Article 32

- Unlike the original jurisdiction under Article 32 (which gives the Supreme Court the power to issue writs, etc.), the jurisdiction in Article 131 is exclusive, meaning it is only the Supreme Court which has this authority.
- Under Article 226, the High Courts too have the power to issue writs, directions etc.

6. ‘Levels and Trends in Child Mortality’ Report

Why in News?

- Recently, a United Nations inter-agency group for child mortality released the ‘Levels and Trends in Child Mortality’ report.
- India is among the few countries in the world where, in 2018, the mortality under-5 years of girls, exceeded that of boys.

Key Findings

- On average, boys are expected to have a higher probability of dying before reaching age-5 than girls. But this trend was not reflected in India.
- The risk of dying before age 5 for girls is significantly higher than global patterns in South Asia and Western Asian countries.
- Jharkhand, Bihar and Uttarakhand showed the largest gender gaps in under-5 mortality.
- Half of all under-5 deaths in 2018 occurred in five countries: India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia.
 - India and Nigeria alone account for about a third.
- The majority of child mortality cases in India are attributable to deaths during the neonatal period.
 - The major causes of neonatal mortality are preterm birth, intrapartum related events, and neonatal infection.
 - In the post-neonatal period, the major direct causes of death are diarrhoea and pneumonia.
- One child or young adolescent died every five seconds in 2018.

7. Integrated Road Accident Database (IRAD)

Why in News?

The government has launched a central accident database management system- **Integrated Road Accident Database (IRAD)**.

- The system will be first piloted in the six States with highest fatalities

from road crashes — Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.

- It will help in analysing causes of road crashes and in devising safety interventions to reduce such accidents in the country.

Integrated Road Accident Database (IRAD)

- It is a comprehensive web-based Information Technology (IT) solution. The IRAD mobile application will enable various agencies such as the police, Public Works Department (PWDs), etc. to enter details on a road accident from different perspectives such as investigation, road engineering, vehicle condition etc.
- It has been developed by the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras.
- It will be implemented by the National Informatics Centre.
- The project costs ₹258 crore and is being supported by the World Bank.

Road Accidents in India

- According to the World Road Statistics, India recorded the highest number of road accident deaths across 199 countries in 2018 followed by China and the US.
- According to government data, more than 1.5 lakh people lost their lives in road crashes in the country in 2018.
- Of the total people killed in road crashes in 2018, 48% were between 18 years and 35 years old, and more than 60% of such fatalities were due to over speeding.

Government Initiatives:

- India has signed the Brasilia declaration and committed to reduce the number of deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents.
- Motor Vehicles Amendment Act, 2019 hikes the penalties for traffic violations, defective vehicles, juvenile driving, etc..

National Informatics Centre

- It is under the aegis of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- It provides network backbone and e-Governance support to the Central Government, State Governments and Union Territory Administrations.
- It was established in 1976 and is located in New Delhi.

8. National Investigation Agency

Why in News?

Chhattisgarh government moved the Supreme Court against the National Investigation Act, 2008 stating it is violative of the Constitution.

- In its civil suit, the government told the apex court the NIA should have no power over state policing matters.
- State challenged a central legislation under Article 131 of the constitution.

National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act

- The law governs the functioning of India's premier counter-terror agency.
- It was passed in 2008 in the wake of the 26/11 Mumbai terrorist attacks and was amended in 2019.
- The Act makes the National Investigation Agency the only truly federal agency in the country.
- It gives the NIA powers
 - To take suo motu cognisance of terror activities in any part of India register a case
- To enter any state without permission from the state government to investigate and arrest people.

NIA Amendment Act, 2019

- It expanded the type of offences that the investigative body could investigate and prosecute.
 - The agency can now investigate offences related to:
 1. Human trafficking
 2. Counterfeit currency
 3. manufacture or sale of prohibited arms
 4. Cyber-terrorism
 5. Offences under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908
- The amendment also enables the central government to designate sessions courts as special courts for NIA trials.
- The **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment (UAPA)**, also passed in 2019.
 - Allows an NIA officer to conduct raids, and seize properties that are suspected to be linked to terrorist activities without taking prior permission of the Director General of Police of a state
 - The investigating officer only requires sanction from the Director General of NIA

State's Concerns:

- 'Police' is an entry in the State List of the Constitution's 7th Schedule.
- Petition contends that the 2008 Act takes away states power of conducting an investigation through the police while conferring unfettered, discretionary and arbitrary power on the centre.

9. Henley Passport Index 2020

Why in News?

Henley & Partners, the residence and citizenship planning firm, has released Henley Passport Index.

Key Points

- It is a global ranking of countries according to travel freedom for their citizens.

- The ranking is based on data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA).
- The index includes 199 different passports and 227 different travel destinations.
- Data is updated in real time when visa policy changes come into effect.
- The Index lists the world's passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa.
- **Top Rankers:**
 1. Japan (*Citizens of Japan can travel 191 destinations without visa*)
 2. Singapore
 3. Germany & South Korea
- **India's Rank**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Rank</u>
2020	84
2019	82
2018	81

Implications

- It translates into visa-free access to 58 destinations, including 33 which give Indians visas on arrival.
- Twenty of the 58 visa-free access destinations in the 2020 list are in Africa, and 11 each in Asia and the Caribbean.
- Serbia is the only European country to which Indian passport holders can travel visa-free.
- There is no major or developed country to which Indian passport holders have visa-free access.

10. TrueNat

Why in News?

Recently, the World Health Organisation has endorsed TrueNat, an indigenous molecular diagnostic tool for tuberculosis (TB) diagnosis.

- Truenat is developed by the Goa-based MolBio Diagnostics.

Key Points

- WHO's approval is important for India because it has the most number of TB patients in the world.
- According to the Global Tuberculosis Report 2019, India had 26.9 lakh TB patients in 2018.
- According to the National Strategic Plan for TB Elimination 2017-2025, TB kills an estimated 4,80,000 Indians every year and over 1,400 every day.

- India also has over a million ‘missing’ cases every year that are not notified. Most of the cases remain either undiagnosed or inadequately diagnosed and treated in the private sector.

Truenat MTB

- TrueNat is a polymerase chain reaction (PCR)-based test that assays the genes present in the TB bacteria.
 - It can not only detect the presence of the bacteria but can also detect drug resistance with the use of chips.
- **Advantages:**
 - High diagnostic accuracy as the initial tool for TB diagnosis.
 - Robust and most suited for Indian conditions.
 - Comparable in accuracy to similar tests currently in use.
- It has been recommended as a replacement for sputum microscopy tests.

About Tuberculosis

- Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by **bacteria** (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*) that most often affects the lungs.
 - Tuberculosis is curable and preventable.
 - TB is spread from person to person through the air.
- **Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB)** is a form of TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to first-line anti-TB drugs.
 - MDR-TB is treatable and curable by using second-line drugs.
- **Extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB)** is a more serious form of MDR-TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to the most effective second-line anti-TB drugs.
- **WHO End TB Strategy** is a blueprint for countries to end the TB epidemic by driving down TB deaths, incidence and eliminating catastrophic costs.
 - It was adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2014.
- **World TB Day is observed on 24 March.**

11. 5th Annual Day of CARA

Why in News?

Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) celebrated its 5th Annual Day recently.

- It has also carried out a number of advocacy programs through various mediums for creating awareness and sensitisation of the general public.
- It is giving emphasis to the **rehabilitation of older children and children with special needs** in various Child Care Institutions across the country.

Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)

- CARA has been set up as a **statutory body** of the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**.
- It is an apex body of the Government of India for the **adoption of Indian children**.
- It is mandated to **monitor and regulate in-country and inter-country adoption**.
- CARA is designated as the **Central Authority** to deal with inter-country adoptions in accordance with the provisions of The Hague **Conventions on Inter-Country Adoptions, 1993**.
 - It was ratified by the Government of India in 2003.
- It primarily deals with adoption of orphan, abandoned and surrendered children through its associated /recognised adoption agencies.

Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction

- Hague Convention is a **multilateral treaty** which came into existence on 1st December 1983.
- It is an international treaty to ensure the prompt return of the child who has been “abducted” from the country of their “**habitual residence**”.
- The Convention applies to **children aged under 16 years**.

12. Saksham

Why in News?

Recently Saksham- a fuel conservation mega campaign has been launched by the Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas.

Saksham

- It is a flagship Fuel Conservation mega campaign aimed to create public awareness about fuel conservation by organising activities such as Cycle Day, Cyclothons.
- It is aimed at showing the way forward for making a change and enhancing the conservation capabilities of people.

The Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA)

- It was established in 1978, under the aegis of the Indian Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- It is engaged in promoting energy efficiency in various sectors of the economy.
- It advises the government on policy formulation to decrease dependency on oil and reduce the environmental impact of oil use.