



News Analysis (16 Jan, 2020)

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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 population **>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**, 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 **cognitive skills** of children.
 - Tests included sorting images by colour and size, recognising patterns, fitting together a four-piece animal puzzle — as well as simple literacy and numeracy tests.
 - However, of those **children who could correctly do all three cognitive tasks, 52% could read words, and 63% could solve the addition problem.**
 - ASER data shows that children’s performance on tasks requiring cognitive skills is **strongly related to their ability to do early language and numeracy tasks.**
 - This suggests that focussing on play-based **activities that build memory, reasoning and problem-solving abilities is more productive** than an early focus on content knowledge.
- **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”.**
 - Global research shows that **90% of brain growth occurs by age 5**, meaning that the **quality of early childhood education** has a **crucial impact** on the development and long-term schooling of a child.
- **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.
 - This gap is further exacerbated by a **gender divide.**
 - More than a quarter of Class 1 students in government schools are only 4 or 5 years old, **younger than the recommended age.** These younger children struggle more than others in all skills.
 - At the same time, 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.

Learning levels

Five-year-old children in private schools fared better in learning tasks than those in govt. schools and anganwadis

<i>% of students who completed the tasks</i>	Govt. pre-school	Private kindergarten
COGNITIVE TASKS		
Sorting	77.5	87.2
Pattern recognition	43.4	49.9
BASIC LANGUAGE		
Picture description	63.7	76.6
Listening comprehension	23.5	40.4
BASIC MATHS		
Counting objects	36.8	57.6



Draft New Education Policy (NEP), 2019

- Draft NEP points out that close to 5 crore children currently in elementary schools do not have foundational literacy and numeracy skills.
- Several **possible reasons** for this:
 - Many children enter **school before age 6**. This is partly due to the **lack of affordable and accessible options for pre-schooling**. Therefore, too many children go to Std I with limited exposure to early childhood education.
 - Children from poor families have a **double disadvantage - lack of healthcare and nutrition** on one side and the **absence of a supportive learning environment on the other**.
 - School readiness or early childhood development and education activities have **not** had a high priority in the **Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)** system

Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)

- 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.

Way Forward

- There is considerable scope for **expanding Anganwadi outreach for 3 and 4 year-old** children. **Strengthen the early childhood components** in the **Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)** system for raising school readiness among young children.
- A **reworking of curriculum and activities** is urgently needed for the entire age band from 4 to 8, cutting across all types of preschools and early grades regardless of whether the provision is by government institutions or by private agencies.
- The year **2020 marks the 10th anniversary of the RTE Act**. This is the best moment to focus on the youngest cohorts before and during their entry to formal schooling and ensure that 10 years later they complete secondary school as well-equipped and well-rounded citizens of India.

Source:IE

Bru Refugee Crisis

Why in News

A **four party agreement** among the Centre, Mizoram Government, Tripura Government and Mizoram Bru Displaced People's Forum (MBDPF) which seeks to end the **22-year-old Bru refugee crisis may be signed on 16th January 2020**

Background

- **Bru or Reang** is a community **indigenous to Northeast India**, living mostly in **Tripura**, Mizoram and Assam. 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**.

- Since then, 5,000 have returned to Mizoram in eight phases of repatriation, while 32,000 still live in six relief camps in North Tripura.
 - In **June 2018, community leaders from the Bru camps signed an agreement with the Centre** and the two state governments, providing for repatriation in Mizoram. But **most camp residents rejected the terms of the agreement.**
 - The camp residents say that the **agreement doesn't guarantee their safety in Mizoram.**
- In October 2019, the supply of ration to relief camps was stopped on instructions of the Home Ministry in a bid to hastily complete the repatriation of refugees to Mizoram. Civil society outfits had alleged that at least six refugees died due to starvation.

Proposed New Agreement

- According to the 2018 agreement, the Bru tribals would have settled in Mizoram, but according to the new agreement, **they will now settle in Tripura.**
- 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.

Source: IE

Bidding Under Open Acreage Licensing Policy

Why in News

Recently, the Government has launched the **bidding process** offering **11 areas in oil and gas blocks.**

The 11 blocks under **Open Acreage Licensing Policy Round-V (OALP-V)** are spread across 8 sedimentary basins and include eight on land blocks, two shallow water blocks and one ultra deep water block.

Key Points

- The government has awarded 94 blocks so far under the **Hydrocarbon Exploration & Licensing Policy (HELP)** regime.
 - HELP adopts the revenue sharing contract model.

- **OALP-V** is expected to generate immediate exploration work commitment of around USD 400-450 million.

It is a giant step towards improving the '**Ease of Doing Business**' in the **Indian Exploration and Production (E&P) sector**.

Open Acreage Licensing Policy

- The OLAP was declared by the union government in June 2017.
- Under it, the potential investors choose the exact areas they are interested in, convey their interest to the government, which then places just those blocks up for bidding.
- Companies are **allowed to choose the areas** in which they want to explore oil and gas, under OALP. After choosing the area, companies put in an expression of interest which are then put on auction by the government.

The process offers attractive and liberal terms like reduced royalty rates, no oil cess, marketing and pricing freedom, round the year bidding, freedom to investors for carving out blocks of their interest, a single licence to cover both conventional and unconventional hydrocarbon resources, exploration permission during the entire contract period, and an easy, transparent and swift bidding and awarding process.

Source: FE

Fuel Conservation Campaign: Saksham

Why in News

An annual one-month long people **centric fuel conservation campaign** of the **Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA)** named **Saksham**, will be launched on 16th January, 2020.

This campaign aims to spread the message of fuel conservation and greener environment across India.

Petroleum Conservation Research Association

- PCRA is a registered society set up under the aegis of **Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas**.
- As a **non-profit organization**, PCRA is a **national government agency** engaged in promoting energy efficiency in various sectors of economy.
- It helps the government in proposing policies and strategies for petroleum conservation, aimed at reducing excessive dependence of the country on oil requirement.

- Its head office is located in **New Delhi**.

Other Initiatives Taken by the PCRA

- PCRA in association with the Institute of Petroleum-Dehradun has developed high energy efficient **Piped Natural Gas (PNG) burner/Gas** stove for household where piped gas is supplied which will save gas as compared to modified LPG stove for PNG.
- The **annual Saksham National Competition** which generally is launched in the month of July, has seen participation of 1.48 crore students.
- An **awareness Campaign on 100 busiest intersections of Delhi** through the Central Road Research Institute (CRRRI) on encouraging the behaviour of switching-off engine at red light was recently carried out by PCRA.
 - The campaign led to approximately 22% reduction in idling fuel losses for petrol.
 - Similarly, approximately 14%, 12% and 19% reduction in Diesel, CNG and LPG respectively was observed due to awareness campaign.

Source: PIB

Lucknow and Noida to Get Police Commissioner System

Why in News

Recently, the **Uttar Pradesh government** gave nod to the implementation of the police commissionerate system in the two cities, **Lucknow and Noida**.

- The Additional Director General of Police rank officer would be appointed as commissioner and will have two Inspector General of Police Rank officers as deputies.
- 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**. CCTV cameras would be installed at different places in these two cities for better traffic management and also for law and order.

Police Commissionerate System

- Under the **7th Schedule of the Constitution**, Police is under the State list. It means individual states can legislate and exercise control over this subject.
 - 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, as it is supposed 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**.
- In the commissionerate system, the **Commissioner of Police (CP)** is the head of a **unified police command structure**.
 - He/she 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.

Source: IE

Henley Passport Index 2020

Why in News

Henley & Partners, the residence and citizenship planning firm has published the Henley Passport Index for 2020 according to the number of destinations the respective passport holders can access without a prior visa.

- The ranking is based on data from the **International Air Transport Association (IATA)**, a trade association of some 290 airlines, including all major carriers.
- The index includes 199 different passports and 227 different travel destinations.
- The Henley Passport Index was launched in **2006** with the aim of providing a **global picture of freedom of travelling**.

MOST POWERFUL PASSPORTS, 2020

Passport	Henley rank	Access to destinations
Japan	1	191
Singapore	2	190
SKorea	3	189
Germany	3	189
Italy	4	188
Finland	4	188
Spain	5	187
Luxembourg	5	187
Denmark	5	187

All information: Henley Passport Index 2020 and earlier editions

Key Points

- **Japan** has the **world's strongest passport** whereas **Afghanistan (107th rank)** has the **weakest**.
Japan has been topping the Index for **three years continuously**.
- **Singapore**, in **second place** (same as in 2019) followed by **Germany and South Korea** both shares the **third position** in the index.
- The **Indian passport** is closer to the bottom, ranked **84th** in the world.
The Indian passport ranked higher in both 2019 (82nd) and 2018 (81st).
- **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.
- The **USA** and **the UK** both countries are in **eighth** place in **2020**; a significant **decline** from the **rank 1** they **jointly held in 2015**.
- The **top 10 most powerful passports** for 2020 are Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Germany, Italy, Finland, Spain, USA and UK, Luxembourg, Denmark.

Source: IE

5th Annual Day of CARA

Why in News

- The **Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)** has celebrated its **5th Annual Day** recently.
- CARA has conducted various training programmes and workshops at national and state levels for all the stakeholders of the adoption programme.
- It has also carried out a number of advocacy programs through various mediums for creating awareness and sensitization of the general public.
- It is giving emphasis to the rehabilitation of older and special needs children in various Child Care Institutions across the country.

Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)

- Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) has been set up as a **statutory body** of the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**.
- It functions as a **nodal body** for the **adoption of Indian children** and 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, ratified by the Government of India in 2003.
- CARA 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 age under 16 years.

Source: PIB

Naval Variant of LCA Tejas

Why in News

Recently, the **naval version of the indigenously built Mk1 Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)** landed for the first time on an aircraft carrier, **INS Vikramaditya**.

- This has taken India into a select group of nations — the US, UK, Russia, France, and China — that have developed aircraft capable of landing and taking off from the severely constrained confines of an aircraft carrier deck, which is barely 200 metres long.
- The **Naval LCA-Mk1** made its maiden flight in April 2012 and two prototypes have been flying as part of the development.
- The **Tejas, or 'radiance'**, is an indigenous fighter aircraft jointly developed by Aeronautical Development Agency and **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited**. It is the smallest lightweight, multi-role, single-engine tactical fighter aircraft in the world and is being developed in single-seat fighter and twin seat trainer variants for the Indian Air Force and Indian Navy.
- INS Vikramaditya (a former Russian ship) is the **newest and largest aircraft carrier to join Indian Navy** in 2013.

Source: TH
