Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), 2024

Why in News?

The ASER 2024 annual education report based on household surveys across 618 rural districts, reveals high enrolment but serious learning gaps in rural India, with basic reading and math skills still a challenge.

- It is a nationwide household survey that captures the status of ***children's enrollment and learning outcomes in rural India*** every year since 2005.
- It is a ground level survey released by ***NGO Pratham Foundation.***
- Schooling status is recorded for children in the ***age group of 3-16,*** and children in the ***age group of 5-16*** are tested on their ability to read simple text and do basic arithmetic.



Key Highlights of the report

- **Enrolment & Dropouts** - Over 90% of children aged 6-14 are enrolled in school.
- Hike in government school enrolment in several states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh, alongside declining private school enrolment.
- But among 15-16-year-olds, nearly 8% are not in school. This dropout rate is even higher in states like Uttar Pradesh (13%), Bihar (8.6%), Assam (5%), and West Bengal (5.4%).
- **Learning gaps –** Despite high enrolment the report shows that only about 50% of Class 5 students can read a Class 2-level text.
- The learning gap starts early by Class 3, only 27% of children can read at the expected level, and just 22% can do simple subtraction.
- In some states, reading levels have even declined. Also, less than 30% of Class 5 students can do a basic division problem. Even in Class 8, many students struggle with fundamental arithmetic.
- States like Punjab, Kerala, and Himachal Pradesh have shown signs of improvement in reading and arithmetic skills.
- Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh continue to struggle with foundational learning.
- **Digital learning gap -** Over 80% of children ***aged 14-16*** have access to a smartphone, and many are comfortable using basic digital tools.
- But the problem is only about 57% use it for educational purposes (57.7% of boys vs 50.1% of girls).
- **Infrastructure gap in schools -** School facilities have improved in recent years, with most schools offering essential services.
- Over 90% of schools provide mid-day meals, and nearly 80% of schools have drinking water

facilities and functional toilets, though some regions still struggle with maintenance.
- However, while electricity access has expanded, library usage remains low, with many schools having books that students rarely use.
- **Community and Parental Involvement –**Local initiatives and support networks have helped bridge learning gaps.
- Parental involvement in learning activities at home has increased by nearly 10% since 2022.
- In states like Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu, local initiatives have also been introduced to help bridge learning gaps.
- **Top-performing states** - Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, and Punjab continue to lead in learning levels, with better school infrastructure and teacher training.
- **Struggling states -** Bihar, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh have some of the lowest learning outcomes, with students struggling in reading and math.
- **Mixed results -** States like Maharashtra and Gujarat have good enrolment numbers but show stagnation in learning progress.
- These state-wise differences highlight the need for region-specific policies rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

References

1. ASER Centre | ASER Report, 2024
2. India Today | ASER, 2024

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering