Literacy Rate in India

Mains: *GS I - Social Empowerment |GSIII - Inclusive Growth and issues arising from it.*

Why in news?

Recently, Tripura attained the "full literacy" tag, citing data from Understanding Lifelong Learning for All in Society (ULLAS) – Nav Bharat Saksharta Karyakram.

What is known as literacy?

- **Literacy** – It was defined as "the *ability to read, write, and compute with comprehension,* i.e., to identify, understand, interpret and create, along with critical life skills such as digital literacy, financial literacy, etc."
- **Literate** - According to the *Office of the Registrar General of India,* a person ***aged 7 years and above*** who can read and write with understanding in any language is considered literate.

Status of Literacy Rate in India
• **Total literacy rate** - It accounts for 80.9% in the period 2023-24. • **Top states** - Goa-99.72%, Mizoram -98.2%, Kerala - 96.2, Tripura - 95.6%. • **Lowest states** - Andhra Pradesh- 72.6% and Bihar -74.3%.

What are the measures taken in India?

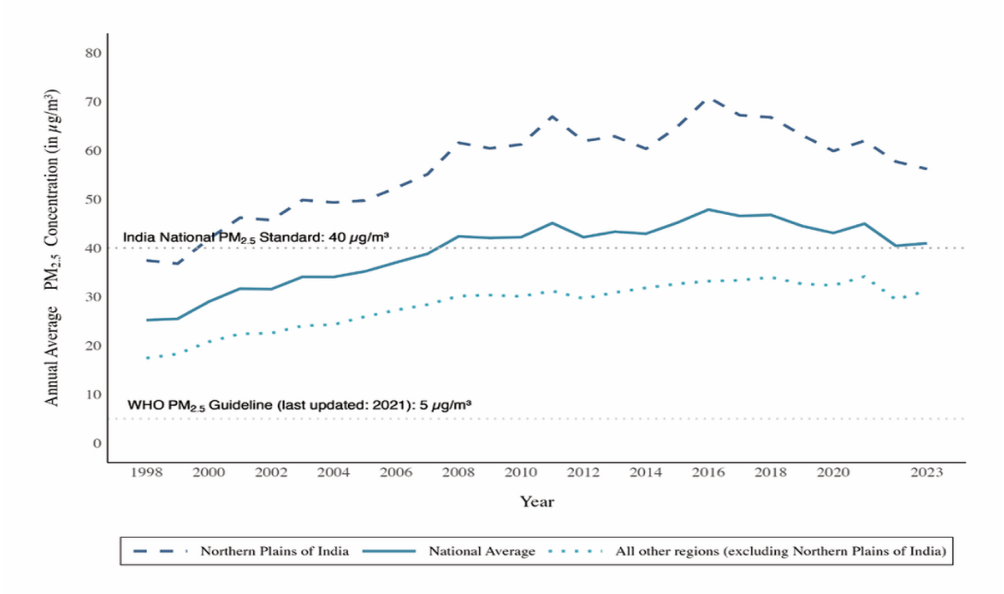
- **Right to Education (RTE) Act** – It was enacted in 2009, to mandate *free and compulsory education*, to establish minimum standards for schools, and to prohibits practices like discrimination and corporal punishment.
- **National Education Policy 2020** - It emphasizes foundational literacy and numeracy, promotes multilingualism, integrates vocational education, and fosters technology-enabled learning.
- It focuses on holistic development and *equips students with 21st-century skills.*
- **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan** – It is a *comprehensive school education program* which combines three Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS)
    - Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
    - Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)
    - Teacher Education (TE)
- **PM SHRI (PM Schools for Rising India)** - It intends to *improve 14,500 schools* to "showcase" the NEP, 2020, and be "exemplars" for other schools in their region.
- It is for existing elementary, secondary, and senior secondary schools run by the

central government and state and local governments around the country.

- **DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing**) – It aims provide *digital content and resources* to teachers and students.
- **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao** - It aims to promote the education of the girl child and *address gender disparities in education.*
- **PM Vidyalaxmi Scheme** - It is a Central Sector scheme to provide financial support to students so that financial constraints do not prevent anyone from pursuing higher studies.
- It *provides collateral free loans* to students who are admitted in to quality higher education institutions (QHEIs).

How effective are educational programs in India?

- **Increased literacy rate** - India's literacy rate was only 14% at the time of independence, which has increased over the years as more people have received better education.
- **Increased reading level** - The number of Class 3 children who can read a Class 2 textbook in government schools stands at 23.4%, up from 16.3% in 2022 and 20.9% in 2018.
- **Improved arithmetic ability** - The arithmetic level improved across both government and private schools.
- **Rise in enrolments** - The % of children aged between 3 and 5 who enrolled in some form of pre-school rose in 2024 over 2018 and 2022.
- This is in line with the NEP's focus on providing early childhood care and education to all children before Class 1.



What are the key challenges in attaining high literacy?

- **Inclusion issues**- Disparities persist based on socio-economic status, gender, and caste.
- Various marginalized communities often have limited access to quality education.
- **Disparities in quality** - Disparities exist between urban and rural areas, private and public schools, and among states.

- **High dropout rates** -Despite efforts, dropout rates at various educational levels remain high due to factors like poverty, child labour and lack of infrastructure.
- **Quality issues** - Teacher shortages, uneven qualifications, and inadequate training hampers the full potential of the educational landscape of India.
- **Administrative Challenges** - Bureaucratic red tape slows down policy implementation, hindering the effectiveness of educational programs.

What lies ahead?

- India should focus on restructuring the curriculum and pedagogy to bring innovative elements in the educational ecosystem.
- The education should be made more accessible, interactive, and tailored to the needs of diverse learners.

Quick facts

ULLAS (Understanding Lifelong Learning for All in Society)
• It is a centrally sponsored scheme implemented from 2022-2027. • It is also known as Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram or New India Literacy Programme (NILP) • **Objective** - It aims to *equip 5 crores 'non-literate individuals'* over the age of 15 across the country with foundational literacy and numeracy skills. • The teaching material is also meant *to impart 'critical life skills'* like financial and digital literacy • **Five components** - Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, - Critical Life Skills, - Basic Education, - Vocational Skills, and - Continuing Education. • **Significance** – It aligns with the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
Annual Status of Education Report (Rural)
• **Released by** - NGO Pratham • **Survey** - It is a nationwide rural household survey • **Objective** - To measure basic reading and arithmetic levels among school children, attendance in school, and other indicators. • **Categories** - The survey considered children in three age categories - Pre-primary (ages 3 to 5) - Elementary (6 to 14) - Older children (15 to 16)

Reference

[The Indian Express| Literacy Rate in India]



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