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A New era for girls: Report

- 'A New era for girls: Taking stock on 25 years of progress is a report recently unveiled by UNICEF, Plan International and United Nations Women.
- The report reveals that though the rate of drop-outs for girls in schools has decreased from 20% to 13.5% from 2008 to 2018, a greater empowerment has not taken place.
- It also states that many girls still face an unequal violent environment and one in every 20 girls in the age group of 15-20 has experienced rape, both within and outside marriage.
- According to the report Gender disparities in the number of out-of-school children have narrowed substantially over the past two decades.
- At the secondary level, they have shifted to the disadvantage of boys.
- Still, despite the remarkable gains made for girls in the past two decades, they are still more disadvantaged at the primary level, with 5.5 million more girls than boys of this age out of school worldwide.
- The report mentions a term called "learning crisis"; this means, even when girls are in school, many do not receive a quality education.

INDIA Nano 2020

- INDIA Nano conference and exhibition was held in Bengaluru, it showcased technologies and products developed by academia and companies in nanotechnology.
- It is organized by the Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of Karnataka and Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR).
- JNCASR is an autonomous institution of the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India.

Zn-Air Battery

- Zinc–air batteries (non-rechargeable), and zinc–air fuel cells (mechanically rechargeable) are metal–air batteries powered by oxidizing zinc with oxygen from the air.

- These batteries have high energy densities and are relatively inexpensive to produce.
- Sizes range from very small button cells for hearing aids, larger batteries used in film cameras that previously used mercury batteries, to very large batteries used for electric vehicle propulsion.
- The fabricated Zn-air battery had been displayed in INDIA Nano Expo.
- It uses Metal-Organic Framework (MOF) derived core-shell nanocomposite as a cathode material.
- It is trifunctional in nature, which means active for

1. ORR (Oxygen reduction reaction),
2. OER (Oxygen evolution reaction)
3. HER (Hydrogen evolution reaction) catalytic reactions.

- The fabricated Zn-air battery is safe, lightweight, and is recharged electrically as well as mechanically.
- Along with this, to exploit the HER activity, the same material was used as anode and cathode in water electrolyser which is powered by the fabricated Zn-air battery and thus showing self-powered overall water splitting process.

Coronavirus Pandemic

- WHO made the assessment that #COVID19 can be characterized as a pandemic.
- This decision has been taken after the alarming levels of spread and severity and by the alarming levels of inaction of the disease.
- According to the WHO, a pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease.
- The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines a pandemic as “an epidemic that has spread over several countries or continents, usually affecting a large number of people.”
- The same body defines an epidemic as “an increase, often sudden, in the number of cases of a disease above what is normally expected in that population in that area.”
- Thus, the ‘pandemic’ status has to do more with the spread of the disease, than its severity.
- Declaring the disease a pandemic won’t mean the WHO gets more funds or more powers to fight it.
- However, the declaration is a formal announcement that the WHO assesses the impact of COVID 19 to have reached a new level.
- Describing the situation as a pandemic does not change WHO’s

assessment of the threat posed by this #coronavirus.
- It doesn't change what WHO is doing, and it doesn't change what countries should do.

Epidemic Disease Act

- Recently a high level meeting to tackle COVID-19 has been decided that all States/Union Territories should be advised to invoke provisions of Section 2 of the Epidemic Disease Act, 1897.
- Epidemic Disease Act, 1897, is expedient to provide for the better prevention of the spread of dangerous epidemic
- It is routinely enforced across the country for dealing with outbreaks of diseases such as swine flu, dengue, and cholera.
- The State Government may take measures and prescribe regulations for the inspection of persons travelling by railway or otherwise, and the segregation, in hospital, temporary accommodation or otherwise, of persons suspected by the inspecting officer of being infected with any such disease.
- Under the act the Central Government may take measures and prescribe regulations for the inspection of any ship or vessel leaving or arriving at any port.
- Any person disobeying any regulation or order made under this Act shall be deemed to have committed an offence punishable under section 188 of the Indian Penal Code.
- It was introduced by colonial government to tackle the epidemic of bubonic plague that had spread in the erstwhile Bombay Presidency in the 1890s.

United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC)

- The United Nations Statistical Commission (StatCom) is a Functional Commission of the UN Economic and Social Council established in 1946.
- Since July 1999 the Commission meets every year, as set forth by the Economic and Social Council.
- It oversees the work of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.
- Its 24 member states are elected by the Economic and Social Council on the basis of the following geographical distribution:

1. African states (5),
2. Asian States (4),
3. Eastern European States (4),
4. Latin American and Caribbean States (4),

5. Western European and other States (7).

- One of the best known subunits of the Statistics Division is the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), also known as the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN).
- This unit attempts to standardize the names of locations across languages, alphabets, and cultures.

Changes to SDG

- The SDGs, officially known as transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a set of 17 Global Goals with 169 targets between them.
- They are a new, universal set of goals, targets and indicators that UN member states will be expected to use to frame their agendas and political policies over the next 15 years.
- The SDGs follow, and expand on, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were agreed by governments in 2000, and ended on 2015.
- United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) made 36 major changes to the global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- These changes are based on the '2020 comprehensive review' conducted by the UN Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and presented to the UNSC on the first day of the three-day session, according to an official statement.
- The revised global framework will have 231 indicators, approximately the same number as in the original framework, the statement said.
- Eight additional indicators were added across six SDG goals — 2, 3, 4, 10, 13 and 16, These include:

1. Indicator 13.2.2 on the total greenhouse gas emissions per year for the SDG target 13.2 to integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.
2. Prevalence of anemia in women aged 15-49 years, by pregnancy status (percentage) under the target 2.2 to end forms of malnutrition by 2030.
3. A new indicator on reducing the percentage of bloodstream infections due to selected antimicrobial-resistant organisms has been added under the Global health goal (SDG 3).
4. Indicator 10.7.3 on the number of migrants killed while attempting to cross maritime, land and air borders.

5. Indicator 10.7.4 on the proportion of the population who are refugees, by country of origin.

- Six indicators across six SDG goals — 1, 4, 8, 11, 13 and 17 — have been deleted, These include:

1. Indicator 1.a.1 on the proportion of domestically-generated resources allocated by the government directly to poverty reduction programmes.
2. Indicator 4.2.1 on the proportion of children under five years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex.
3. The portion of the indicator that measures progress for children between 0 and 23 months of age, which is currently in tier III was proposed for deletion by the IAEG.
4. Under the SDG goal on combating climate change, the indicator 13.3.2, quantifying the number of countries that have communicated the strengthening of capacity-building for implementing adaptation, mitigation and technology transfer, and development actions has been deleted.
5. When a total of 13.6 per cent of young people globally are unemployed, sustainable tourism could be an important source of employment and an important indicator under the SDGs.
6. The indicator 8.9.2 on the proportion of jobs in sustainable tourism industries out of total tourism jobs has been deleted by the UNSC from the global SDG framework.

AT-1 Bonds

- AT-1, short for Additional Tier-1 bonds, are a type of unsecured, perpetual bonds that banks issue to shore up their core capital base to meet the Basel-III norms.
- These bonds are perpetual and carry no maturity date.
- Instead, they carry call options that allow banks to redeem them after five or 10 years.
- But banks are not obliged to use this call option and can opt to pay only interest on these bonds for eternity.
- Banks issuing AT-1 bonds can skip interest payouts for a particular year or even reduce the bonds' face value without getting into hot water with their investors, provided their capital ratios fall below certain threshold levels, These thresholds are specified in their offer terms.
- If the RBI feels that a bank is tottering on the brink and needs a rescue, it can simply ask the bank to cancel its outstanding AT-1 bonds without

consulting its investors.

- AT-1 bonds are complex hybrid instruments, ideally meant for institutions and smart investors who can decipher their terms and assess if their higher rates compensate for their higher risks.
- But in India, these bonds seem to have been sold to a fair number of retail investors as fixed deposit or NCD substitutes.
- AT-1 bonds carry a face value of ₹10 lakh per bond.
- There are two routes through which retailers have acquired these bonds

1. Initial private placement offers of AT-1 bonds by banks seeking to raise money; or
2. Secondary market buys of already-traded AT-1 bonds based on recommendations from brokers.

Basel III Norms

- After the global financial crisis in 2008, central banks got together and decided to formulate new rules called the Basel-III norms to make banks maintain stronger balance sheets.
- The Basel III norms limit the amount of debt a bank can owe even further, this is called the Leverage Ratio.
- This is especially applicable for banks that trade in high-risk assets like derivatives.
- Capital is money that is invested in assets like equity or government bonds.
- In India, one of the key new rules brought in was that banks must maintain capital at a minimum ratio of 11.5 per cent of their risk-weighted loans.
- Of this, 9.5 per cent needs to be in Tier-1 capital and 2 per cent in Tier-2.
- Tier-1 capital refers to equity and other forms of permanent capital that stays with the bank, as deposits and loans flow in and out.

Source: PIB, Hindu Business Line, Indian Express



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