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Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)

- ASER is released annually by education non-profit Pratham.
- The report is based on a survey conducted in 26 districts across 24 states; it also highlights a gender gap in schooling.
- Recent estimates shows that only 37.4% of kids below six are able to recognize at least letters and only 25.6% can do additions, the survey has found
- The government-run preschool system is losing out to private schools in terms of enrolment.
- The lack of age-appropriate skills is alarming as this gap at an early age can impact the entire education supply chain in India.
- The report underlined the need to focus on the early years to improve the basics of education
- The study also showed how a better education level among mothers can lead to better outcomes among children in preschools and early schools.
- The findings also showed that more girls are enrolled in government institutions and more boys in private institutions.
- The gap in enrolment between boys and girls is larger among 6-8 year olds, with 61.1% of all girls versus 52.1% of all boys in this age group going to a government institution.
- It is to be noted that in India government preschool system is managed through the Centre's Integrated Child Development scheme, under the ministry of women and child development, while schools come under the education ministries at the Centre and in the states.

Northern White Rhinoceros

- The northern white rhinoceros or northern square-lipped rhinoceros is one of two subspecies of the white rhinoceros (the other being the southern white rhinoceros).
- Formerly found in several countries in East and Central Africa south of the Sahara, this subspecies is a grazer in grasslands and savanna woodlands.
- Since March 19, 2018, there are only two known rhinos of this subspecies left, both of which are female.
- Neither of the two living northern white females can carry a pregnancy.

- Barring the existence of unknown or misclassified male northern white rhinos elsewhere in Africa, this makes the subspecies functionally extinct.
- The two female rhinos belong to a Zoo in the Czech Republic but live in a Conservancy in Kenya.
- According to International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) the subspecies is considered "Critically Endangered (Possibly Extinct in the Wild)
- Recently scientists used IVF (In vitro fertilization) for Rhinos, they created a test-tube embryo by fertilizing the egg of a southern white female with the frozen sperm of a northern white male.
- The embryos have been preserved in liquid nitrogen, and will be transferred to a southern white surrogate.
- Since the gestation period for a rhino could be 18 months, the first northern white calf is expected to arrive in the world in 2022.
- The Indian rhinoceros is different from its African cousins, most prominently in that it has only one horn.
- There is also a Javan rhino, which too, has one horn, and a Sumatran rhino, which, like the African rhinos, has two horns.

Cornoviruses

- China's Wuhan has noted few cases of nCoV, it is a new strain of Cornoviruses and has not been previously seen in humans.
- Cornoviruses form a large family of viruses and the illness they cause can range from common cold to more severe diseases such as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV).
- These viruses are zoonotic, which means they are transmitted between animals and people.
- While the exact source of 2019-nCoV is yet to be identified, other strains of coronoviruses have previously been seen to be transmitted from civet cats to humans (in the case of SARS-CoV) and from dromedary camels to humans (in the case of MERS-CoV).
- There is limited information on the exact range of illness the virus can cause, its effects can range from cough and fever to kidney failure and even death.

TCEPF

- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) announced that all telecom service providers would need to deposit all unclaimed money of consumers, including excess charges and security deposit, in the Telecommunication Consumers Education and Protection Fund (TCEPF).
- According to TRAI while some service providers were depositing money only

because of excess billing revealed in the audit, others were depositing unclaimed money such as security deposits and plan charges of failed activations.
- It is prudent to deposit any such unclaimed / un-refundable amount belonging to consumers in the TCEP fund, as it will be utilized for the welfare measures of the consumers.
- An amendment in the TCEPF regulation may be carried out to remove any kind of ambiguity and facilitate deposit of any unclaimed money of the consumer such as excess charges, security deposit, plan charges of failed activations, etc.
- The TCEPF Regulations, 2007, which have now been amended, provide the basic framework for depositing unclaimed money of consumers by service providers, maintenance of the TCEPF and other related aspects.
- With this amendment, service providers will deposit any unclaimed consumer money of any form such as excess charges, security deposit, plan charges of failed activations, or any amount belonging to a consumer, which service providers are unable to refund to consumers, to the fund after providing time of 12 months or period of limitation specified under law whichever is later.

Youth Co:Lab

- Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) NITI Aayog and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) hosts it.
- It aims at fostering technology, promoting youth leadership and social entrepreneurship in India.
- It is co-created in 2017 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Citi Foundation.
- It aims to establish a common agenda for Asia-Pacific countries to invest in and empower youth to accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through leadership, social innovation and entrepreneurship.
- By developing 21st century skills, catalyzing and sustaining youth-led start-ups and social enterprises across the region, Youth Co:Lab is positioning young people front and center in order to solve the region's most pressing challenges.

Xenobots

- Scientists in the United States have created the world's first "living machines".
- These are tiny robots built from the cells of the African clawed frog, that can move around on their own.
- They have named the millimetre-wide robots "xenobots" — after the species

of aquatic frog found across sub-Saharan Africa from Nigeria and Sudan to South Africa, Xenopus laevis.

- The xenobots can move toward a target, perhaps pick up a payload (like a medicine that needs to be carried to a specific place inside a patient) and heal themselves after being cut.

Source: The Hindu, PIB, Indian Express, Live Mint

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