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Annual Status of Education Report

- Recently, the Annual State of Education Report (ASER) survey has been.
- It is a nationwide survey of rural education and learning outcomes in terms of reading and arithmetic skills that has been conducted by the NGO Pratham for the last 15 years.
- It uses Census 2011 as the sampling frame and continues to be an important national source of information about children's foundational skills across the country.
- It provides a glimpse into the levels of learning loss that students in rural India are suffering, with varying levels of access to technology, school and family resources resulting in a digital divide in education.
- Highlights of the report are

1. ASER 2020 is the first ever phone-based ASER survey and it was conducted in September 2020, the sixth month of national school closures.
2. Enrolments - 5.5% of rural children are not currently enrolled for the 2020 school year, up from 4% in 2018.
3. This difference is the sharpest among the youngest children (6 to 10) where 5.3% of rural children had not yet enrolled in school in 2020, in comparison to just 1.8% in 2018.
4. The proportion of boys enrolled in government schools has risen from 62.8% in 2018 to 66.4% in 2020, while for girls, that number has gone up from 70% to 73% in the corresponding period.
5. Patterns show a slight shift toward government schools, with private schools seeing a drop in enrolment in all age groups.
6. Among enrolled children, 61.8% live in families that own at least one smartphone which was merely 36.5% in 2018.
7. About 11% of families bought a new phone after the lockdown, of which 80% were smartphones.
8. WhatsApp is by far the most popular mode of transmitting learning materials to students, with 75% of students receiving input via this app.

Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)

- Recently, the National Statistical Office (NSO) released the quarterly

Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for October-December 2019.

- This dataset differs from the Annual Report of Periodic Labour Force Survey, which covers both rural and urban areas.
- However, unemployment data for urban areas is released quarterly.
- Highlights of the report are

1. Unemployment Rate is eased in urban areas to 7.9% in October-December 2019 compared to 9.9% in October-December 2018.
2. Female unemployment rate decreased to 9.8% in October-December 2019 compared to 12.3% in October-December 2018.
3. Male unemployment rate moderated to 7.3% in October-December 2019 from 9.2% in October-December 2018.
4. However, state-wise data showed that urban unemployment rate was higher than the national average in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Telangana, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi and Andhra Pradesh.
5. Labour Force Participation Rate rose to 37.2% in October-December 2019 from 36.3% in October-December 2018.

Terminologies of PLFS

1. **Unemployment Rate (UR):** UR is defined as the percentage of persons unemployed among the persons in the labour force.
2. **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR):** LFPR is defined as the percentage of persons in the labour force (i.e. working or seeking or available for work) in the population.
3. **Worker Population Ratio (WPR):** WPR is defined as the percentage of employed persons in the population.
4. **Activity Status:** The activity status of a person is determined on the basis of the activities pursued by the person during the specified reference period.
5. **Usual Status:** The activity status determined on the basis of the reference period of the last 365 days preceding the date of survey, it is known as the usual activity status of the person.
6. **Current Weekly Status (CWS):** The activity status determined on the basis of a reference period of the last 7 days preceding the date of survey is known as the current weekly status (CWS) of the person.

Maritime India Vision 2030

- It is a ten-year blueprint for the maritime sector which will be released at the Maritime India Summit in November 2020.

- It will supersede the Sagarmala initiative and aims to boost waterways, give a fillip to the shipbuilding industry and encourage cruise tourism in India.
- Key Features of the vision are

1. **Maritime Development Fund:** A Rs. 25,000-crore fund, which will provide low cost, long-tenure financing to the sector with the Centre contributing Rs. 2,500 crore over seven years.
2. **Port Regulatory Authority:** A pan-India port authority will be set up under the new Indian Ports Act (to replace the old Indian Ports Act 1908) for enabling oversight across major and non-major ports, enhance institutional coverage for ports and provide for structured growth of the ports sector to boost investor confidence.
3. **Eastern Waterways Connectivity Transport Grid project:** It will aim to develop regional connectivity with Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar.
4. **Riverine Development Fund:** Calls for extending low cost, long-term financing for inland vessels with the support of a Riverine Development Fund (RDF) and for extending the coverage of the tonnage tax scheme (applicable to ocean-going ships and dredgers) to inland vessels also to enhance the availability of such vessels.
5. **Rationalisation of Port Charges:** It will make them more competitive, besides doing away with all hidden charges levied by ship liners to bring in more transparency.
6. **Promotion of Water Transport:** For decongestion of urban areas, and developing waterways as an alternative means of urban transport.

Super Conductor in Room Temperature

- Recently, researchers have created a material that is superconducting at room temperature.
- A mixture of carbon, hydrogen and sulphur was put in a microscopic niche carved for this experiment.
- However, it only works at a pressure of 267 Gigapascals (GPa), which is equivalent to about three-quarters of pressure at the centre of Earth (360 GPa).
- As the experimental temperature was lowered, resistance to a current passed through the material dropped to a vanishingly small value below the critical temperature (Tc).
- The transition of the sample to become superconductive occurred the best at transition temperature of around 15°C at 267 GPa.

Superconductors

- A superconductor is a material that can conduct electricity or transport electrons from one atom to another with no resistance.
- No heat, sound or any other form of energy would be released from the material when it has reached critical temperature (Tc), or the temperature at which the material becomes superconductive.
- The critical temperature for superconductors is the temperature at which the electrical resistivity of metal drops to zero.
- Prominent examples include aluminium, niobium, magnesium diboride, etc.
- A superconducting material kept in a magnetic field expels the magnetic flux out its body when cooled below the critical temperature and exhibits perfect diamagnetism.
- It is also called the Meissner effect which simply means that magnetic lines do not pass through superconductors in a magnetic field.
- Their usefulness is still limited by the need for bulky cryogenics (production of and behaviour of materials at very low temperatures) as the common superconductors work at atmospheric pressures, but only if they are kept very cold.
- Even the most sophisticated ones like copper oxide-based ceramic materials work only below −140°C.

Diamagnetism

- It is a very weak form of magnetism that is induced by a change in the orbital motion of electrons due to an applied magnetic field.
- This magnetism is non-permanent and persists only in the presence of an external field.
- The magnitude of the induced magnetic moment is very small, and its direction is opposite to that of the applied field.

Meissner Effect

- When a material makes the transition from the normal to the superconducting state, it actively excludes magnetic fields from its interior and this is called the Meissner effect.
- This constraint to zero magnetic fields inside a superconductor is distinct from the perfect diamagnetism which would arise from its zero electrical resistance.

National Productivity Council (NPC)

- National Productivity Council (NPC) works under Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
- National Productivity Council (NPC) has been granted accreditation by National Accreditation Board for Certification Body (NABCB), Quality Council of India (QCI).
- This accreditation is valid for a period of three years.
- NPC has been conducting inspections/audit for different statutory bodies such as Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) and Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), and is already having high credentials in the area of inspections and audits.
- Present accreditation of NPC by NABCB conforming to ISO 17020:2012 will enable it to undertake Independent Third-Party Audits of Food Business Operators.

Meri Saheli

- The "Meri Saheli" initiative was started as a pilot project in South Eastern Railway in September 2020.
- Recently it was extended to all zones after getting encouraging response from lady passengers.
- It is initiative for focused action on security of women across all zones with an objective to provide safety and security to lady passengers travelling by trains for their entire journey from starting station to destination station.
- The Strategy entails interaction with lady passengers especially those travelling alone by a team of young lady RPF personnel at the originating station.
- These lady passengers are briefed about all precautions to be taken during the journey and told to dial 182 in case they face or see any problem in the coach.
- The platform duty RPF personnel at the stopping stations En-route keep unobtrusive watch over the concerned coaches and berths and if need arises, interact with the lady passengers.

Source: Live Mint, PIB, Indian Express



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