

Current Affairs of the Day

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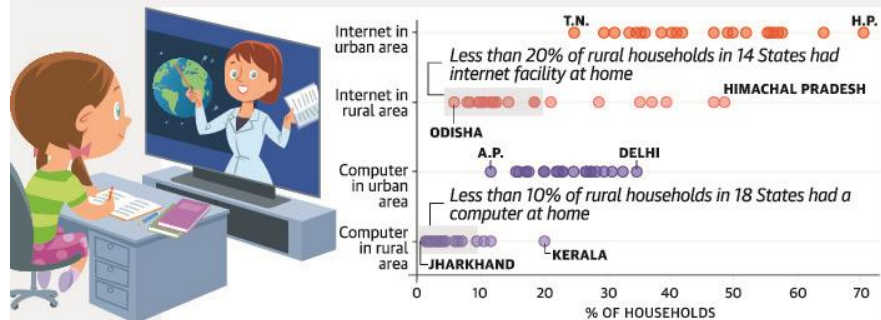
1. Digital divide shadows post-pandemic education

Digital divide shadows post-pandemic education

Key findings of the survey:

- Schools across the country have now been closed for six months due to COVID-19, but this means vastly different things for different people. For the child in urban Himachal Pradesh, where Internet penetration is higher than 70%, it likely means online schooling, Zoom classes and digital textbooks. For the child in rural Odisha, where less than 6% of households have Internet facilities, such options are out of the question.

Stark contrast | A majority of households in rural areas across most States neither had a computer nor an internet connection*, making it difficult for students to attend online classes. The graphs depict the percentage of households with a computer and an internet connection in rural and urban areas in select States



* AS PER THE NSS EDUCATION SURVEY CONDUCTED BETWEEN JULY 2017 AND JUNE 2018

- A recent report on the latest National Statistical Organisation (NSO) survey shows just how stark is the digital divide across States, cities and villages, and income groups. The survey on household social consumption related to education was part of the NSO's 75th round, conducted from July 2017 to June 2018. The final report was released recently.
- Across India, only one in 10 households have a computer — whether a desktop, laptop or tablet. However, almost a quarter of all homes have Internet facilities, accessed via a fixed or mobile network using any device, including smartphones.

Most in cities:

- Most of these Internet-enabled homes are located in cities, where 42% have Internet access. In rural India, however, only 15% are connected to the Internet.
- The national capital has the highest Internet access, with 55% of homes having such facilities. Himachal Pradesh and Kerala are the only other States where more than half of all households have Internet.



- At the other end of the spectrum is Odisha, where only one in 10 homes have Internet. There are 10 other States with less than 20% Internet penetration, including States with software hubs such as Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
- The biggest divide is by economic status, which the NSO marks by dividing the population into five equal groups, or quintiles, based on their usual monthly per capita expenditure. Even in Odisha, almost 63% of homes in the top urban quintile have Internet facilities. In the poorest quintile of rural Odisha, however, that figure drops to an abysmal 2.4%.
- Kerala shows the least inequality: more than 39% of the poorest rural homes have Internet, in comparison to 67% of the richest urban homes. Himachal Pradesh also fares well, with 40% of the lowest rural quintile having Internet.
- Assam shows the most stark inequality, with almost 80% of the richest urban homes having the Internet access denied to 94% of those in the poorest rural homes in the State.

Concerns:

- The Centre has directed State Education Departments to map the online access available to all their students in order to adequately plan curriculum and teaching methods that can reach such students.
- Although much of the focus has been on digital platforms, television and radio are also being used to deliver lessons.
- Of course, having Internet access is no guarantee that one can use it. The NSO report shows that 20% of Indians above the age of 5 years had basic digital literacy, doubling to just 40% in the critical age group of 15 to 29 years, which includes all high school and college students as well as young parents responsible for teaching younger children.
- Even as digital literacy is likely to grow during this pandemic, concerns remain about basic literacy, with September 8 celebrated as International Literacy Day. More than one in five Indians above 7 years still cannot read and write in any language. Over the last decade, literacy rates have increased from 71.7% to 77.7%, with the highest gains coming among rural women.
- A State-wise split of literacy rates also throws up some unexpected results. Andhra Pradesh has the country's lowest literacy rate, at just 66.4%,



significantly lower than less developed States such as Chhattisgarh (77.3%), Jharkhand (74.3%), Uttar Pradesh (73%), and Bihar (70.9%). Kerala remains at the top of the pile with 96.2% literacy, followed by three northern States: Delhi (88.7%), Uttarakhand (87.6%) and Himachal Pradesh (86.6%).

SC to Centre: adhere to Ministry circular on roads in Char Dham

- The Supreme Court on Tuesday ordered the Centre to adhere to a Union Road Ministry circular of March 2018, which had advised against building full-fledged roads cutting across the fragile Himalayan slopes, while implementing the ₹12,000-crore ambitious Char Dham project for better connectivity to pilgrimage centres in Uttarakhand.
- A Bench led by Justice Rohinton Nariman also directed the government to undertake reforestation of the area to make up for the loss of green cover caused by the construction.

Widening of roads:

- The project had proposed the widening of single-lane roads into double-lanes by up to 10 metres, developing the highways and thereby improving access to the **Char Dham (four shrines) — Yamunotri, Gangotri, Badrinath and Kedar Nath.**

40% children not fully vaccinated: NSO report

Key findings of 'Health in India' report:

- Although almost all children in India are vaccinated against tuberculosis, and receive their birth dose of polio vaccine, two out of five children do not complete their immunisation programme, according to the 'Health in India' report recently published by the **National Statistical Organisation (NSO).**
- Most of these children remain unprotected against measles, and partially protected against a range of other diseases.
- In the national capital, less than half of all children have been given all eight required vaccines.
- The report is based on the 75th round of the National Sample Survey (July 2017-June 2018) on household social consumption related to health.



➤ Across the country, only 59.2% of children under five years are fully immunised, according to the NSO report. This contradicts the Centre's Health Management Information System portal data, which claimed that full immunisation coverage for 2017-18 stood at 86.7%.

More work needed | The table depicts the percentage share of children below 71 months who received immunisation as per the NSS health survey conducted in July 2017-June 2018

	% of children immunised	
BCG	94.1	
Polio vaccine	Polio birth dose	93.9
	OPV-1	92.4
	OPV-2	87.8
	OPV-3	80.6
	Booster dose	58.1
DPT / Pentavalent*	DPT-1	91
	DPT-2	86.5
	DPT-3	78
	Booster dose	54
	Measles	67



*Prevents five diseases—diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, hepatitis B and Hemophilus Influenza type B (Hib)

Eight doses:

- Full immunisation means that a child receives a cocktail of eight vaccine doses in the first year of life.
- About 97% of children across the country received at least one vaccination — mostly BCG and/or the first dose of OPV at birth — a statistic that remains steady across income groups and geographies. However, only 67% of children are protected against measles.
- Only 58% got their polio booster dose, while 54% got their DPT booster dose.
- Among States, Manipur (75%), Andhra Pradesh (73.6%) and Mizoram (73.4%) recorded the highest rates of full immunisation. At the other end of the spectrum lies Nagaland, where only 12% of children received all vaccinations, followed by Puducherry (34%) and Tripura (39.6%).



RBI's Contingency Fund (CF)

- The RBI has retained an amount of Rs 73,615 crore within the RBI by transferring it to the Contingency Fund (CF).
- It shall lead to a sharp fall in the transfer of surplus to the government in the current year.

Value Added Information:

Contingency Fund (CF):

- It is a specific provision meant for meeting unexpected and unforeseen contingencies.
- It includes depreciation in the value of securities, risks arising out of monetary/exchange rate policy operations, systemic risks and any risk arising on account of the special responsibilities enjoined upon the Reserve Bank.
- This amount is retained within the RBI.
- **Section 47 of the RBI Act:** Profits or surplus of the RBI are to be transferred to the government, after making various contingency provisions.
- **RBI's main risk provision accounts:** Contingency Fund, Currency and Gold Revaluation Account (CGRA), Investment Revaluation Account Foreign Securities (IRA-FS) and Investment Revaluation Account-Rupee Securities (IRA-RS).

The Currency and Gold Revaluation Account (CGRA):

- It is maintained by the RBI to take care of currency risk, interest rate risk and movement in gold prices.
- Unrealised gains or losses on valuation of foreign currency assets (FCA) and gold are not taken to the income account but instead accounted for in the CGRA.

First World Solar Technology Summit

- The first World Solar Technology Summit (WSTS) is being organized by the International Solar Alliance (ISA) on 8th September, 2020.
- **Organized by:** The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).
- FICCI is also the convenor of ISA Global Leadership Task Force on Innovation.



Key takeaways:

- More than 26000 participants from 149 countries have registered to join the virtual Summit.
- It is expected to bring the spotlight on accelerating affordable and sustainable clean green energy.
- Three agreements shall be announced: (1) ISA and International Institute of Refrigeration, (2) ISA and Global Green Growth Institute and (3) ISA and National Thermal Power Corporation.
- A tripartite agreement between India's Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, the World Bank and the International Solar Alliance is also set to be inked.
- ISA's technology journal, Solar Compass 360 will also be launched during the summit.

Value Added Information

International Solar Alliance (ISA):

- The launch of ISA was announced by the Indian Prime Minister and former French President on 30th November 2015, at the 21st session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP-21) in Paris, France.
- **Headquarter:** Gurugram, India
- **Aim:** Lower the cost of technology and finance and thereby facilitate deployment of over 1,000 GW of solar energy and mobilize more than USD 1,000 billion into solar power by 2030 in Member countries.
- It was conceived as a coalition of solar-resource-rich countries (which lie either completely or partly between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn) to address their special energy needs.
- 67 countries have signed and ratified the ISA framework agreement.
- The Assembly of the ISA is the apex decision-making body which comprises representatives from each Member Country.
- It could play a significant role in achieving the universal energy access goal (SDG 7).