



## Current Affairs of the Day

### GS Paper II

- In the last academic year, only 22% of schools had Internet
- 9 European nations clear SII job
- All WHO-approved jabs must be recognised for travel:  
UN

### GS Paper III

- DCGI nod sought for ZyCoV-D
- 'GNPA ratio may rise up to 11.2% in FY22'



## In the last academic year, only 22% of schools had Internet

Less than 30% govt. schools had computers: report

### Highlights:

1. In the academic year that ended with school closures due to COVID-19, only 22% of schools in India had Internet facilities, according to Education Ministry data.
2. Among government schools, less than 12% had Internet in 2019-20, while less than 30% had functional computer facilities. This affected the kind of digital education options available to schools during the pandemic, as well as plans for hybrid learning in the days ahead.
3. The Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) report collates data from more than 15 lakh schools across the country.
4. As the first wave of COVID-19 entered India in early 2020, schools were closed in mid-March, just weeks before the end of the 2019-20 academic year. The vast majority of the country's 26 crore schoolchildren have not set foot in a school since then, depending instead on various forms of distance education.
5. The availability of digital education — whether via live, synchronous teaching on apps like Zoom or through recorded lectures, emails, WhatsApp or educational apps — was largely dependent on whether schools, teachers and parents had access to the necessary infrastructure.
6. In many states, teachers came to school and taught in their own empty classrooms, using their blackboards and lab facilities, while facing a computer screen that communicated the lessons to their students at home.

### Digital divide:

1. However, the UDISE+ data makes clear the digital divide, which made this a viable option only in some States. In many Union Territories, as well as in the State of Kerala, more than 90% of schools, both government and private, had access to working computers.
2. In States such as Chhattisgarh (83%) and Jharkhand (73%), installation of computer facilities in most government schools paid off, while in others such as Tamil Nadu (77%), Gujarat (74%) and Maharashtra (71%), private schools had higher levels of computer availability than government schools.



3. However, in States such as Assam (13%), Madhya Pradesh (13%), Bihar (14%), West Bengal (14%), Tripura (15%) and Uttar Pradesh (18%), less than one in five schools had working computers. The situation is worse in government schools, with less than 5% of Uttar Pradesh's government schools having the facility.
4. The connectivity divide is even starker. Only three States — Kerala (88%), Delhi (86%) and Gujarat (71%) — have Internet facilities in more than half their schools.
5. This will make it hard for most schools to implement the options for hybrid learning as schools try to re-open with staggered attendance post the pandemic.
6. More encouragingly, 90% of schools across the country have facilities for handwashing, which will gain added importance as they implement COVID-19 safety protocols while reopening. More than 80% of schools conducted medical check-ups during the year before the pandemic.
7. Temperature testing and monitoring of symptoms need to become a daily activity, according to the Centre's health protocol for schools wishing to reopen.

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) improved in 2019-20, with 98% of students in Classes 1-8 attending school, though the GER for secondary and senior secondary students stood at 78% and 51% respectively. The dropout rate at the secondary level was 17% in 2019-20, with experts warning that dropouts are likely to surge due to the pandemic.

## 9 European nations clear SII job

EU starts 'Green Pass' travel facility for those who have taken authorised vaccines.

### Highlights:

1. Nine European countries have given recognition to the Covishield vaccine produced by the Serum Institute of India (SII), informed sources said. The confirmation came when the European Union (EU) started the "Green Pass" facility, which will allow people vaccinated with an authorised set of vaccines to travel within its zone, covering 27 countries.



2. The nine countries' move is a "national" move by them and not by the EU, headquartered in Brussels. The EU member-states that have recognised Covishield include Austria, Germany, Slovenia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland and Spain.
3. Estonia has confirmed that it would recognise all the vaccines authorised by the Government of India for the travel of Indians, said an informed source. As a Schengen state, Switzerland, though not an EU member, allows Covishield.
4. The nine European countries' clearance, however, is unlikely to translate into an automatic clearance of Covishield as an equivalent to the "Green Pass" that recognises Pfizer/BioNTech's Comirnaty, Moderna's Spike Vax, Oxford-AstraZeneca's Vaxzevria and Johnson & Johnson's Janssen.

## All WHO-approved jabs must be recognised for travel: UN

Vaccine divide should not widen, says global health agency

### Highlights:

1. The World Health Organization said that any COVID-19 vaccines it has authorised for emergency use should be recognised by countries as they open up their borders to inoculated travellers.
2. The move could challenge Western countries to broaden their acceptance of two apparently less effective Chinese vaccines, which the UN health agency has licensed but most European and North American countries have not.
3. In addition to vaccines by Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna Inc., AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson, the WHO has also given the green light to the two Chinese jabs, made by Sinovac and Sinopharm.
4. In its aim to restore travel across Europe, the European Union said that it would only recognise people as vaccinated if they had received shots licensed by the European Medicines Agency — although it is up to individual countries if they wish to let in travellers who have received other vaccines, including Russia's Sputnik V.
5. The EU drug regulator is currently considering licensing China's Sinovac vaccine, but there is no timeline on a decision.



## DCGI nod sought for ZyCoV-D

It will be the world's first plasmid DNA vaccine for COVID-19, says Zydus Cadila.

### Highlights:

1. Zydus Cadila said it has applied to the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) seeking Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) for ZyCoV-D, its plasmid DNA vaccine to counter COVID-19.
2. The company had conducted clinical trials at over 50 centres in India, it said. Phase III clinical trials had been conducted on over 28,000 volunteers. This was the first time that any COVID-19 vaccine had been tested in the adolescent population in the age group of 12-18 years in India.
3. Our vaccine has attained primary efficacy of 66.6% for symptomatic RT-PCR positive cases in the interim analysis. No moderate case of COVID-19 disease was observed post administration of the third dose, which suggests 100% efficacy for moderate disease.
4. No severe cases or deaths had been reported after administration of the second dose of the vaccine.
5. This breakthrough marks a key milestone in scientific innovation and advancement in technology. As the first-ever plasmid DNA vaccine for human use, ZyCoV-D has proven its safety and efficacy profile in our fight against COVID-19. The vaccine, when approved, will help not only adults but also adolescents in the 12 to 18 years age group.
6. The company said it had also evaluated a two-dose regimen for ZyCoV-D vaccine using a 3 mg dose per visit, and the immunogenicity results had been found to be equivalent to the current three-dose regimen. The gap between the first and second dose is 28 days.



## ‘GNPA ratio may rise up to 11.2% in FY22’

RBI sees banks' gross NPA ratio climbing to 9.8% under the baseline scenario, from 7.48% in March 2021.

### Highlights:

1. The gross non-performing asset ratio (GNPA) of India's scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) may climb by the end of the current fiscal year to as much as 11.2% under a severe stress scenario, from 7.48% in March 2021, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its Financial Stability Report.
2. The capital to risk-weighted assets ratio of SCBs increased to 16.03% and the provisioning coverage ratio stood at 68.86% in March 2021, the central bank said.
3. Going forward, as banks respond to credit demand in a recovering economy, they will need to reinforce their capital and liquidity positions to fortify themselves against potential balance sheet stress.
4. Sustained policy support, benign financial conditions and the gathering momentum of vaccinations were nurturing an uneven global recovery, the RBI noted.
5. Policy support has helped in shoring up financial positions of banks, containing non-performing loans and maintaining solvency and liquidity globally, the central bank said.