



Current Affairs of the Day

GS Paper II

- India-U.S. partnership has a truly global significance:
PM
- Literacy, numeracy mission deadline pushed to 2027
- More child marriages being foiled in Odisha

GS Paper III

- Chinese astronauts complete the first spacewalk at new station

Prelims

- Tigray rebels accept 'ceasefire in principle'



India-U.S. partnership has a truly global significance: PM

India's strategic partnership with the U.S. has a "truly global significance", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on July 4.

Highlights:

1. The message from the Indian leadership came as the United States began the process of withdrawing its troops from neighbouring Afghanistan, ending a nearly two-decades-long military operation that began in 2001.
2. The greeting from the Indian side is in contrast to the silence that Delhi maintained during the centenary celebration of the Communist Party of China (CPC) on July 1.
3. It is understood that top-level greetings to China were not sent as India views the celebration as a party affair. Neither the BJP nor the Congress greeted the CPC, though Left parties congratulated China.

Literacy, numeracy mission deadline pushed to 2027

No extra funds; money coming from Samagra Shiksha scheme.

Highlights:

1. The Centre's new mission to ensure that every Class 3 child has foundational literacy and numeracy within five years will be rolled out soon.
2. Although the National Education Policy had included a 2025 deadline to achieve the goal, the Centre has pushed back the target date to 2026-27, given that COVID-19 has already disrupted two academic years.
3. The School Education Department says no additional funding is being allocated for the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat).
4. Instead, money is being allocated from the flagship Samagra Shiksha scheme, which actually saw a 20% drop in its budget this year.
5. The vision of the NIPUN Bharat Mission is to create an enabling environment to ensure the universal acquisition of foundational literacy and numeracy, so that every child achieves the desired learning competencies in reading, writing and numeracy by the end of Grade 3, by 2026-27.



6. A five-tier implementation mechanism will be set up at the national, state, district, block and school levels. NIPUN Bharat is likely to emphasise goal setting and accountability for State governments and provide guidelines for teacher training, assessment and the creation of printed resources, according to people who helped develop the mission.

Mindset change:

1. The Pratham Education Foundation also provided feedback on the Centre's draft plan. It emphasised that money would not be the decisive factor, but rather a mindset change.
2. So far, the goal has simply been to enrol children in school, and then to ensure that they finish Class 10. This mission specifies stage-wise learning goals to ensure that students are acquiring the necessary building blocks.

More child marriages being foiled in Odisha

1. Odisha has witnessed a sharp increase in the number of child marriages prevented over the past four years, following increased awareness and better coordination among field-level staff.
2. As against 657 child marriages stopped in 2019, 1,108 were stopped in 2020. In the first five months in the current year, attempts to solemnize 726 such marriages have been foiled.
3. In 2017, 324 child marriages were stopped following the last-minute intervention from the community, NGOs and field-level officials. In 2018, the number grew marginally to 411. However, the last two years saw a massive jump in the number of marriages being stopped.

Action plan

1. According to the "Odisha strategic action plan to end child marriage", the prevalence among girls was reported to be 21.3% against the national average of 26.8% whereas for boys it was only 11% against the national average of 20.3% (NFHS-4, 2015-16).
2. Fifteen districts including many southern districts have higher percentages than the state average. There are eight districts where the practice is higher than the national average.



3. Odisha witnessed a decline of nearly 16 and 11 percentage points (between NFHS 2005-06 and 2015-16), for girls and boys marrying before the legal ages of 18 and 21 years respectively.
4. Still, one in five women was married by the age of 18 in Odisha.

Chinese astronauts complete the first spacewalk at the new station

1. Chinese astronauts successfully performed the country's first tandem spacewalk, working for seven hours outside the new Tiangong station in orbit around the Earth.
2. Tiangong's construction is a major step in China's ambitious space programme, which has seen the nation land a rover on Mars and send probes to the moon.
3. Three astronauts blasted off last month to become the station's first crew, where they are to remain for three months in China's longest crewed mission to date.

Tigray rebels accept 'ceasefire in principle'

1. Rebels in Ethiopia's war-torn Tigray region accepted "a ceasefire in principle" but posed strict conditions for it to be formalised.
2. Notable among those conditions was the withdrawal from the region of Eritrean forces as well as fighters from the neighbouring Ethiopian region of Amhara, who have been supporting the Ethiopian Army during the eight-month-long conflict.
3. Tigray has been on the scene of fighting since Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed sent the Army in November to topple the dissident regional authorities, which emerged from the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).