



Current Affairs of the Day

PAPER 2:

➤ Polity & Governance:

1. Cabinet approval for school education reform project

➤ International Relations:

1. Army chief to visit Nepal in November
2. Pakistan re-elected to UN rights body
3. South Asia Economic Focus Report released by World Bank

Army chief to visit Nepal in November

- Chief of the Army Staff General Manoj Mukund Naravane will visit Nepal in November, the Nepal Army has announced.

Significance:

- The visit will be keenly watched as it will take place months after Nepal revised its political map and claimed the strategically important region of Kalapani-Lipulekh-Limpiyadhura in the Pithoragarh district of India.

Cabinet approval for school education reform project

- The Union Cabinet has approved a project partially funded by the World Bank to carry out a reform agenda in the governance of school education, and improve data and assessment systems at the national level, as well as teaching and learning outcomes in six States, especially for early childhood and vocational education.

Key takeaways:

- The project includes an emergency response component to help the government respond to disaster situations which lead to school closures and loss of learning, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, according to an official statement issued after the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday.
- The Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States (STARS) project will have a total project cost of ₹5,718 crore, with the World Bank's support amounting to about ₹3,700 crore (\$500 million), said the statement.
- A major component of the project is the establishment of **PARAKH ((Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development))** as a National Assessment Centre. Included in the National Education Policy 2020, this autonomous institution under the Union Education Ministry will set norms for student assessment and evaluation for all school boards across the country, most of which currently follow norms set by State governments.
- At the State level, the project seeks to improve education outcomes and school-to-work transition strategies for better labour market outcomes in



Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Odisha.

- A similar project to be funded by the Asian Development Bank will cover Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Assam and every State will partner with one other State to share best practices, said the statement.

Pakistan re-elected to UN rights body

- Pakistan has been re-elected to the United Nations Human Rights Council despite opposition from activist groups over its abysmal human rights records.

Key takeaways:

- Among the five candidates from the Asia-Pacific region vying for four seats in the UN's premier human rights body, Pakistan secured the highest number of votes, the Foreign Office said.
- In a secret-ballot voting in the 193-member UN General Assembly on that race, Pakistan secured 169 votes, Uzbekistan received 164, Nepal 150, China 139 and Saudi Arabia 90.
- Under the Human Rights Council's rules, seats are allocated to regions to ensure geographical representation. Except for the Asia-Pacific contest, the election of 15 members to the 47-member Human Rights Council was all but decided in advance because all the other regional groups had uncontested slates.

Human rights records:

- Last week, a coalition of human rights groups from Europe, the U.S. and Canada called on UN member states to oppose the election of China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Cuba, Pakistan and Uzbekistan, saying their human rights records make them unqualified.
- Russia and Cuba, running unopposed, also won the seats.
- Pakistan is currently serving on the HRC since January 1, 2018. With its re-election, Pakistan will continue as a member for another three-year term commencing on January 1, 2021.



South Asia Economic Focus Report released by World Bank

- Biennial South Asia Economic Focus report was recently released.
- **Released by:** World Bank
- **Title of the edition:** “Beaten or Broken? Informality and Covid-19”.

Key takeaways:

- The report includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- It predicts that the extended closure of schools amid the Covid-19 pandemic could reduce India’s future earnings by between 420 billion USD and 600 billion USD.
- This is so because depleted learning levels of students will translate into poorer productivity.

Impact on Education:

- Around 5.5 million students could drop out of schools across South Asia.
- 391 million students have been kept out of school in primary and secondary education due to lockdown.
- Dropouts and learning losses would cost South Asia as much as 622 billion USD in future earnings and GDP.
- Also, due to the closure of schools, the children may have forgotten their previous learnings.
- The average child in South Asia may lose 4,400 USD in lifetime earnings once having entered the labour market, equivalent to 5% of total earnings.

Impacts on Economy:

- **Impact on Informal Sector:** The report has flagged damage to businesses, consumption patterns and imposed social hardship on poor and vulnerable households, especially urban migrants and informal workers in the South Asia region.
- **GDP:** The regional GDP of the South Asia region is estimated to contract by 7.7% in 2020. India’s GDP can contract by 9.6% in 2020-21.
- **Labour productivity** will also take a greater hit from Covid-19 than most previous natural disasters.