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To

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News: India to join Biden’s new trade initiative for Indo – Pacific region

- India signaled its readiness to be part of a new economic initiative led by the U.S. for the region, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi joined U.S. President Joseph Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and leaders of 10 countries, who participated virtually, for the launch of the Indo – Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) in Tokyo.

Indo – Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF)

- Recently, India has shown its interest to join the US led Indo – Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF).
- The group focuses on trade, supply chain resiliency, clean energy and decarbonisation, and taxes and anticorruption measures.

- The grouping, which includes seven out of 10 members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), all four Quad countries, and New Zealand, represents about 40% of global GDP.
- Three ASEAN countries considered closer to China — Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos — are not members of the IPEF.

News: India to be the leader of green hydrogen: Puri

- India will emerge as the leader of green hydrogen, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri said recently.

Types of Hydrogen

Grey Hydrogen

- Grey Hydrogen is extracted from Hydrocarbons (Fossil fuels and natural gases). It constitutes the major chunk of India's Hydrogen production. Carbon dioxide is the major byproduct of Grey Hydrogen and so is considered less eco-friendly.

Blue Hydrogen

- Blue Hydrogen is also extracted from Hydrocarbons as Grey Hydrogen. The byproduct is captured and stored. So, Blue Hydrogen is considered to be better than Grey Hydrogen.

Green Hydrogen

- Green Hydrogen is generated from Electricity generated out of renewable sources like Solar energy and Wind. Thus generated electricity is passed into water, which is split into Hydrogen and Oxygen. Byproducts of Green Hydrogen are Water and Water Vapor. It is favoured by policy makers.
- The 'production cost' of 'Green hydrogen' has been considered to be a prime obstacle.
- According to studies by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IREA), the production cost of this 'green source of energy' is expected to be around \$1.5 per kilogram (for nations having perpetual sunshine and vast unused land), by the year 2030.

Pink hydrogen

- Similar to green hydrogen, pink hydrogen is made via electrolysis, but using nuclear energy as its source of power.

Yellow hydrogen

- Another type of hydrogen made by electrolysis is yellow, where electrolysis is achieved solely through solar power (unlike green which could use a combination of renewable energy sources such as wind or solar).

National Hydrogen Policy

Background

- Hydrogen and Ammonia are envisaged to be the **future fuels to replace fossil fuels.**
- Production of these **fuels by using power from renewable energy, termed as green hydrogen and green ammonia, is one of the major requirements towards environmentally sustainable energy security of the nation.**
- Government of India is taking various measures to facilitate the transition from fossil fuel / fossil fuel based feed stocks to green hydrogen / green ammonia.

The policy provides as follows:

- Green Hydrogen / Ammonia manufacturers **may purchase renewable power from the power exchange or set up renewable energy capacity themselves or through any other, developer, anywhere.**
- **Open access will be granted within 15 days of receipt of application.**
- The Green Hydrogen / Ammonia manufacturer **can bank his unconsumed renewable power, up to 30 days, with Distribution Company** and take it back when required.

- Distribution licensees can also procure and supply Renewable Energy to the manufacturers of Green Hydrogen / Green Ammonia in their States at concessional prices which will only include the cost of procurement, wheeling charges and a small margin as determined by the State Commission.
- Waiver of inter-state transmission charges for a period of 25 years will be allowed to the manufacturers of Green Hydrogen and Green Ammonia for the projects commissioned before 30th June 2025.
- The manufacturers of Green Hydrogen / Ammonia and the renewable energy plant shall be given connectivity to the grid on priority basis to avoid any procedural delays.
- The benefit of Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO) will be granted incentive to the hydrogen/Ammonia manufacturer and the Distribution licensee for consumption of renewable power.
- To ensure ease of doing business a single portal for carrying out all those activities including statutory clearances in a time bound manner will be set up by MNRE.
- Connectivity, at the generation end and the Green Hydrogen / Green Ammonia manufacturing end, to the ISTS for Renewable Energy capacity set up for the purpose of manufacturing Green Hydrogen / Green Ammonia shall be granted on priority.

- Manufacturers of Green Hydrogen / Green Ammonia shall be allowed to set up bunkers near Ports for storage of Green Ammonia for export / use by shipping. The land for the storage for this purpose shall be provided by the respective Port Authorities at applicable charges.
- The implementation of this Policy will provide clean fuel to the common people of the country. This will reduce dependence on fossil fuel and also reduce crude oil imports. The objective also is for our country to emerge as an export Hub for Green Hydrogen and Green Ammonia.
- The policy promotes Renewable Energy (RE) generation as RE will be the basic ingredient in making green hydrogen.

News: National Achievement Survey 2020 – 21

- Recently, the Ministry of Education released the National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2021 report.

National Achievement Survey 2020 – 21

- The Triennial Survey was conducted in November 2021.
- About 34 lakh students of 1.18 lakh schools in 720 districts from both rural and urban areas have participated in NAS 2021.

About

- National Achievement Survey 2020 – 21 is a nationwide survey to assess the learning outcomes and health of the education system.
- It is the largest, nationwide, sample-based education survey conducted across India.
- It is undertaken by the Ministry of Education.
- The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) conducted NAS 2021.
- The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) designed an assessment framework and tools for NAS-2021.
- It provides a system-level reflection on the effectiveness of school education.
- It collects information on relevant background variables such as school environment, teaching processes, and student home and background factors.
- It covers the whole spectrum of schools including Government schools (both State and Central government), Government-aided schools, and Private schools across India.

Medium and Grades

- The NAS 2021 was conducted in 22 mediums of instruction that covered English, Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Hindi, Malayalam, Marathi,

Manipuri, Mizo, Punjabi, Odia, Telugu, Tamil, Bodo, Urdu, Garo, Konkani, Khasi, Bhutia, Nepali, and Lepcha.

It was conducted in different subjects for different grades. The subject and grades wise break up is below:

- Grade 3 and 5: Language, EVS, and Mathematics
- Grade 8: Language, Science, Mathematics, and Social Science
- Grade 10: Language, Science, Mathematics, Social Science, and English

Objective

- To evaluate children's progress and learning competencies as an indicator of the efficiency of the education system, so as to take appropriate steps for remedial actions at different levels.

Significance

- It will help to unravel the gaps in learning and will support state/UT governments in developing long term, mid-term and short-term interventions to improve learning levels and orient on differential planning based on NAS 2021 data.

- The findings of NAS 2021 will help in diagnosing a systematic understanding of the consequences that prolonged closure of schools has had on the learning of students in terms of their socio-emotional and cognitive development.
- NAS findings will help in capacity building for teachers, officials involved in the delivery of education.

Findings of the NAS 2021

National Average

- The national average percentage of students for class third was 59%, which declined by 10% to 49% in class fifth.
- It further declined to 41.9% in class eight and then 37.8% in class 10.
- The performance recorded a decline in almost all subjects.
- For instance, the mathematics score nationally was 57% in class third, dropping by almost 10% to 44% in fifth, and to 36% in class eighth, and 32% in class 10th
- The language score nationally was 62% in class third, and dropped to 52% in class fifth, and to 53% in class eighth.
- For science, the national score declined from 39% in class eighth to 35% in class 10.

Rural and Urban Areas

- The average performance of schools in rural areas remained “significantly below” those urban areas in same states and union territories (UTs).

Social-Group Wise Performance

- The performance of students from the Schedule Caste (SC)/ Schedule Tribe (ST) / Other Backward Classes (OBC) categories remained lower than that of students from the general category.

Gender-wise Performance

- The average performance of girls remained better than the boys in almost all subjects across the classes, both nationally and at state level.

Perception of Students about Learning

- The perception of students about learning at home during the pandemic when the schools remained closed, and 78% of students termed it as burdensome with a lot of assignments.
- At least 38% of students faced difficulties in learning at home, while 24% said they did not have digital devices at home.

Performance of the States

- The majority of the states performed significantly below the overall national score, some states such as Kerala, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Punjab performed better than the national average.
- Delhi's performance in class eighth and class 10 was better when compared with the national average.
- Punjab has scored highest in all subjects for classes 3, 5 and 8.

News: Recognition of Sex Work as a profession

- Recently, in a significant order, Supreme Court has recognised sex work as a “profession” and observed that its practitioners are entitled to dignity and equal protection under law.

Highlights of the Supreme Court Judgment

Criminal Law

- Sex workers are entitled to equal protection of the law and criminal law must apply equally in all cases, on the basis of ‘age’ and ‘consent’.
- When it is clear that the sex worker is an adult and is participating with consent, the police must refrain from interfering or taking any criminal action.

- Article 21 declares that no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law. This right is available to both citizens and non-citizens.
- Sex workers should not be “arrested or penalised or harassed or victimised” whenever there is a raid on any brothel, “since voluntary sex work is not illegal and only running the brothel is unlawful”.

Right of Child of a Sex Worker

- A child of a sex worker should not be separated from the mother merely on the ground that she is in the sex trade.
- Basic protection of human decency and dignity extends to sex workers and their children.
- Further, if a minor is found living in a brothel or with sex workers, it should not be presumed that the child was trafficked.
- In case the sex worker claims that he/she is her son/daughter, tests can be done to determine if the claim is correct and if so, the minor should not be forcibly separated.

Medical Care

- Sex workers who are victims of sexual assault should be provided every facility including immediate medico-legal care.

Role of Media

- Media should take “utmost care not to reveal the identities of sex workers, during arrest, raid and rescue operations, whether as victims or accused and not to publish or telecast any photos that would result in disclosure of such identities”.

News: Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)

- The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) approved the implementation of the Centre’s flagship Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) for the residents in its area.

Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY)

- Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) is a flagship scheme of the Indian government's National Health Policy which aims

to provide free health coverage at the secondary and tertiary level to its bottom 40% poor and vulnerable population.

- PM-JAY is the world's largest and fully state sponsored health assurance scheme which covers a population of the combined size of USA, Mexico and Canada. It was launched in September 2018, under the aegis of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in India.
- It provides a cover of 5 lakh per family per year for medical treatment in empanelled hospitals, both public and private.
- It provides cashless and paperless service to its beneficiaries at the point of service, i.e. the hospital.
- E-cards are provided to the eligible beneficiaries based on the deprivation and occupational criteria of Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011 (SECC 2011).
- There is no restriction on family size, age or gender.
- All previous medical conditions are covered under the scheme.
- It covers 3 days of hospitalization and 15 days of post hospitalization, including diagnostic care and expenses on medicines.
- The scheme is portable and a beneficiary can avail medical treatment at any PM-JAY empanelled hospital outside their state and anywhere in the country.
- The Central government has decided to provide free testing and treatment of Corona virus under the Ayushman Bharat Yojana.

- The expenditure incurred in premium payment will be shared between **Central and State Governments in a specified ratio**. The funding for the scheme will be shared – 60:40 for all states and UTs with their own legislature, 90:10 in Northeast states and three Himalayan states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal and Uttarakhand and 100% Central funding for UTs without legislature.
- It will **be administered by newly created National Health Authority**. NHA will be **chaired by Union Health Minister with NITI Aayog as its administrative body**.
- **School Health Ambassador Initiative is one of the important aspects of Ayushman Bharat Programme**. 2 teachers from each govt. school will be identified as Health and Wellness Messengers.
- **Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Nidhi funds are utilized** for the implementation of Ayushman Bharat.

News: Exercise Bongosagar

- Recently, the third edition of Exercise Bongosagar, bilateral naval exercise between India and Bangladesh, commenced at Port Mongla, Bangladesh.

Exercise Bongosagar

- Exercise Bongosagar is an **annual exercise**. Second edition of the exercise, held in Northern Bay of Bengal in 2020.
- The exercise is **aimed at developing a high degree of interoperability and joint operational skills through the conduct of a wide spectrum of maritime exercises and operations between the two navies**.

Participants in the Third Edition

- Participating in the exercise are **Indian Naval Ships Kora, a guided missile corvette, and Sumedha, an offshore patrol vessel**.
- Bangladesh Navy is being represented by BNS Abu Ubaidah and Ali Haider, both Guided Missile Frigates.