

ASER 2022: IT'S TIME TO RECONSIDER STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN WHO HAVE GONE BEYOND THE FOUNDATIONAL STAGE

Context

- The 17th Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) report for 2022 was recently released after a gap of four years and surveyed 7 lakh children across 19,060 villages in 616 districts in the country.
- The article analyses data from 2018 and 2022 ASER reports and compares it with longer run trends over the last decade to see how the COVID-19 years have impacted India.
- It also put emphasis to stress upon older children in upper primary grades as the current policies majorly focus on early years in primary school.

About ASER Report

- ASER is conducted by the NGO Pratham, which has been surveying children aged 6 to 14 since 2005 to track trends in school enrolment, attendance and reading and arithmetic abilities (foundational learning and numeracy (FLN)).
- It is a nationwide **household survey** (with each sampled child in the household in one-on-one oral format) that **covers entire rural-urban areas** of the country and generates data for schooling and basic learning for every State in India.
- The highest reading task on the ASER tool is reading a text of **Grade II level** In mathematics, the highest level is a **numerical three-digit by one-digit division** problem.

Challenges Ahead

- **High competition after tertiary education:** With more and more students going through the middle school pipeline and attending secondary schools, there is **increased competition for post-secondary opportunities**.
- **Unintended consequences of high enrolment:** There are consequences of high enrolment and completion rates owing to following factors:
 - Acute examination stress



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- Grade inflation in school-leaving examinations
- Difficulties of gaining admission into college
- Lack of appropriate jobs for school leavers
- **Lag in learning outcomes:** In the last 10 years new technologies, new knowledge domains, and new ways of operating have emerged.
- However, within India’s school systems, many children are reaching standard eight without being sufficiently equipped with FLN skills, let alone higher-level capabilities.
- **Lack of in-school mechanisms:** In the absence of in-school mechanisms for “catch up” and rectification, children fall further and further behind academically.
- **Lack of motivation factors:** An “overambitious” curriculum and the linear age-grade organisational structure of Indian schools, result in a vast majority of children getting “left behind” early in their school career.
- This leads to low motivation to learn and a lack of self-confidence.
- **Lack of relevant market qualifications:** Academic content in schools, driven by preparations for Board examinations, implicitly assumes that students are being prepared for college.
- This is accompanied by increased parental and family aspirations for the child’s future as he reaches higher grades.
- However, the hard reality is that a college degree is neither relevant nor possible for most students who finish secondary school.
- It is also not clear that a college degree will lead to the prized **white-collar jobs** that most students and their families are aspiring for.

WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY?

The lifting of COVID-19 restrictions in China is set to boost global oil demand this year to a new record high, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said recently, while price cap sanctions on Russia could dent supply.



About the International Energy Agency:

- What is it? It is an international intergovernmental organization



based in Paris that was established in 1974.

- **Mandate:** To maintain the stability of the international oil supply.
- It was **founded in response to the 1973 oil crisis**, in which the supply chain for oil temporarily broke down.
- IEA **operates within the broader framework** of the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD).
- As of 2022, the **IEA has 31 member nations**.
- **India became an associate member of IEA** in 2017.
- According to the IEA, a member country must maintain "**crude oil and/or product reserves equivalent to 90 days of the previous year's net imports, to which the government has immediate access** (even if it does not own them directly) and could be used to address disruptions to global oil supply".

[AH-64E APACHE ATTACK HELICOPTER](#)

The first fuselage for the Indian Army's contract for six AH-64E Apache attack helicopters has recently been rolled out of the Tata Boeing Aerospace Limited (TBAL) facility in Hyderabad.



Why in News?

- The first Apache is scheduled to be delivered to the Army in February 2024 and training of Army Aviation pilots and technicians commenced in the U.S. recently.

About AH-64E Apache:

- It is the world's **most advanced multi-role combat helicopter**.
- **Country of Origin:** United States
- **Manufacturer:** Boeing
- It is also known as **Apache Guardian**.
- The AH-64E attack helicopter is the **latest version of the AH-64, used by the US Army**.

- **Other purchasers: India, Egypt, Greece, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Kuwait, Netherlands, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, UAE, UK.**
 - **Features:**
 - It is designed and equipped with an **open systems architecture** to incorporate the latest communications, navigation, sensor, and weapon systems.
 - Has **greater thrust and lift, joint digital operability, improved survivability and cognitive decision aiding.**
 - The AH-64E includes a new **integrated infrared laser** that allows for easier **target designation and enhanced infrared imagery** that blends infrared and night vision capabilities.
 - **Apache for Indian defence forces: The Indian Air Force has a fleet of 22 AH-64E Apache attack helicopters, and in 2020, Boeing signed an agreement with the Government of India for the acquisition of six more Apache helicopters for the Indian Army.**
- Tata Boeing Aerospace Limited (TBAL):**
- **It is a joint venture between Tata Advanced Systems Limited and aircraft manufacturer Boeing.**
 - Boeing's first equity joint venture in India.
 - TBAL manufacturing facility is located in Hyderabad.
 - TBAL is the sole global producer of fuselages for AH-64 Apache helicopters

KEN-BETWA LINK PROJECT

Recently, the Third Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Ken-Betwa Link Project (SC-KBLP) was held under the Chairmanship of the Secretary, DoWR, RD & GR,



Ministry of Jal Shakti.

About Ken-Betwa Link Project:

- Under this, the transfer of excess water from the River Ken to the Betwa basin through the use of a concrete canal is proposed.
- It is the first project under the **National Perspective Plan** for the interlinking of rivers.

- It aims to provide irrigation to the **Bundelkhand region**, which is one of the worst drought-affected areas in India.
- A Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Centre and the governments of UP and MP for the project.
- **Implementing Agency:** A Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) called **Ken-Betwa Link Project Authority (KBLPA)** will be set up to implement the project.
- The National Interlinking of Rivers Authority (NIRA) has the power to set up SPV for individual link projects.

WHAT IS TITANOSAUR?

Recently, a group of Indian researchers found rare cases of fossilised dinosaur eggs - an egg within an egg - among 256 newly discovered eggs from the Narmada Valley.



Why in news?

- The discovery suggests that Titanosaurs displayed a notable reproductive trait unique to modern-day birds.
- Fossilised eggs provide clues on reproductive biology, nesting behaviour and parental care.
- This region falls between the easternmost Lametta exposures at Jabalpur in the upper Narmada Valley (central India) and Balasinor in the west in the lower Narmada Valley (western central India), according to the document.
- **Lametta exposure** is a sedimentary rock formation known for its dinosaur fossils. These sedimentary rocks are mostly exposed along the Narmada Valley.
- The fossil records here are largely concealed by Deccan volcanic flows, which prevents their removal by erosion.

Key facts about the Titanosaur:

- They belong to the **sauropod group**.
- It is a humongous plant-eating lizard with a long neck and tail.

- A recently discovered 20-meter Ninjatitan Zapata may be the oldest titanosaur to be ever discovered.
- It was found in the Neuquen province of southwest Argentina in 2014.
- It may have lived approximately 140 million years ago at the initial stages of the Cretaceous period.

WHAT IS INTERNATIONAL NORTH-SOUTH TRANSPORT CORRIDOR (INSTC)?

Recently, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, in association with India Ports Global Ltd, conducted a workshop on the 'Linking Chabahar Port with INSTC' in Mumbai.



Key facts about International North-South Transport Corridor:

- It is a multimodal transportation agreement formed with a trilateral agreement between India, Iran and Russia at the Euro-Asian Conference on Transport in 2000.
- It links the **Indian Ocean** to the Caspian Sea via the Persian Gulf onwards into Russia and Northern Europe.
- The corridor encompasses **sea, road and rail routes**.
- The main purpose of the corridor was to **reduce carriage costs** and transit time between India and Russia. The transit time is expected to reduce to almost half, once the corridor becomes fully functional.
- The agreement has been **ratified by 13 countries** namely, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Armenia, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Oman, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Ukraine.

About Chabahar Port:

- It is located off the Gulf of Oman in Iran's southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchistan & is the only Iranian port with direct access to the ocean.

108 INDIAN ARMY WOMEN OFFICERS TO BE PROMOTED AS COLONELS

Why in news?

- The Indian Army is conducting women officers Special Selection Board for promotion from the rank of Lieutenant Colonel to Colonel.
- Nearly 80 women officers in the Army have been cleared so far for the rank of Colonel, making them eligible to command units in their respective arms and services for the first time.
- As many as 244 women officers are being considered for promotion against 108 vacancies in various arms and services.

Participation of Women in Defence Sector

- **Navy**
 - The induction of women as officers in the Indian Navy commenced in the year 1991.
 - Since then, the Indian Navy has gradually opened all branches to women officers including induction through NDA.
 - In Navy, women are engaged in activities such as firing torpedoes and missiles at enemy warships.
 - Women officers also serve on board naval warships in combat, although discharging non-combat roles.
 - In 2020, the Indian Navy started deploying its first batch of women pilots on the Dornier maritime aircraft.
 - Further, for the first time, women are also being recruited for sailors' entries under the Agnipath Scheme w.e.f. 2022.
 - 20% vacancies are reserved for women.
- **Air Force**
 - Officers' recruitment in the IAF is gender neutral. Women officers are inducted in all the branches and streams of IAF.
 - In 2015, Indian Air Force had opened new combat roles for women as fighter pilots.
 - This experimental scheme to induct women officers in all combat roles has now been regularised into a permanent scheme.
- **Army**

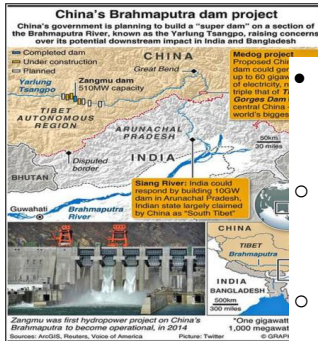
- Initially, woman officers were permitted permanent commission (PC) in only two services – the Judge Advocate General’s Branch and the Army Education Corps.
- In February 2020, the defence ministry permitted SSC women officers in **another** eight arms/services to be granted PC.
- This happened after the Supreme Court, in February 2020, granted **women the right to permanent commission (PC), and the right to command.**
- Hence, at present, the women are being commissioned in Indian Army in **ten Streams.**
- Now the prestigious National Defence Academy (NDA) has started accepting women cadets.
- In 2021, the Supreme Court allowed women to appear for the upcoming entrance exam of the National Defence Academy (NDA).
- So far, **no combat role has been given to women in Army.**
- **Recent developments in Army**
- For the first time, five women officers have cleared the prestigious Defence Services Staff Course (DSSC) and Defence Services Technical Staff Course (DSTSC) Exam.
- Recently, a women officer has been deployed, for the first time, to a post in the Saichen Glacier.
- The Army has so far recruited six meritorious sportswomen into the Corps of Military Police under its **Mission Olympic Programme.**
- The Indian Army was the first among the three Services to open its soldier ranks to women in the Corps of Military Police.
- In January 2023, Indian Army deployed its largest-ever contingent of women soldiers for UN peacekeeping operations in the volatile oil-rich Abyei region of Africa.
- This is **India’s largest single unit of women peacekeepers** in a UN Mission.

[FEARING ‘WATER WAR’ BY CHINA, GOVT PUTS ARUNACHAL DAMS ON FAST TRACK](#)

Why in News?

- Fearing a Chinese threat of “water wars”, India has initiated its biggest hydroelectric project of 11,000 megawatt (MW) in upper Subansiri in Arunachal Pradesh.

Background:



- China is building a **60,000 MW** dam on the **Yarlung Tsangpo River**. The project was announced in 2021.
- The Yarlung Tsangpo is the upper stream of the Brahmaputra River located in the Tibet Autonomous Region, China.
- It is the longest river of Tibet.
- Once completed, it will be the **world's largest hydroelectric dam**.
- The under-construction dam is in **Medog country, Tibet** which is in close proximity to Arunachal Pradesh.
- India is concerned about the construction of this dam in China.

What will be the Impact on India?

- **Agriculture –**
 - Such a huge dam could hold back massive amount of silt carried by the river.
 - Silty soil is more fertile than other types of soil and it is good for growing crops.
 - This could affect farming in the areas downstream.
- **Water Resources –**
 - The construction of dams upstream will have a significant effect on areas downstream.
 - China has claimed that it is building a run-of-the river hydropower project, which do not involve storage or diversion of the waters of the Brahmaputra.
 - Run-of-the-river hydroelectric systems harvest the energy from flowing water to generate electricity.
 - However, experts say it could still reduce water flow downstream, especially during the dry season.



- India is also worried about the release of water during the monsoons, when north-eastern states such as Assam experience floods.
- If China released water from the dam, it could be disastrous for an already inundated Assam.
- **Seismological Impact –**
 - The Himalayan region is vulnerable to earthquakes and other seismic activities.
 - The sheer size of the infrastructure projects undertaken there poses a significant threat to the populations living downstream.
- **Ecological Impact –**
 - Several species of flora and fauna are endemic to this part of the world and some of them are critically endangered.
 - The ecosystem in the Himalayan region is already on the decline. The glaciers have been retreating due to climate change.
 - Deforestation, soil erosion and landslides are some of the other issues here.
 - The combined dam plans of China and India could have disastrous consequences in this ecologically sensitive zone.

Water as a Weapon?

- Being an upstream area, China has a clear advantage in building dams and other infrastructure to store or divert the flow of the river system.
- There is the potential to significantly change the flow rate during times of standoff between the countries.
- India has agreements with China that require the latter to share hydrological data of the river during monsoon season between May and October.
 - The data is mainly of the water level of the river to alert downstream areas in the event of floods.
- However, during the **Doklam border standoff (2017)** between India and China, China stopped communication of water flow levels from its dams.
- Though data sharing resumed in 2018, India has reasons to believe that China may withhold data.



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India's Response:

INDIA'S PLAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 11,000 MW Upper Siang multipurpose storage project in Arunachal Pradesh > Project feasibility report submitted on 	<p style="text-align: center;">December 30, 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 3 stalled hydro projects in Arunachal Pradesh for possible allocation to NHPC after recommendations of 	<p>evaluation committee and in-principle approval by ministry of power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 2,880 MW Dibang multipurpose Project
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- For India, the Brahmaputra accounts for nearly 30% of freshwater resources and 40% of total hydropower potential of the country.
- In order to protect her interests, India has initiated its biggest hydroelectric project of 11,000 MW in upper Subansiri in Arunachal Pradesh.
- India is **also expediting three stalled projects** for possible allocation to National Hydro Electric Power Corporation (NHPC).
- India's **2,000 MW project on Subansiri could be completed by the middle of 2023.**
- These multiple hydroelectric projects, apart from generating electricity, are expected to help mitigate water scarcity for up to a year in case of a Chinese diversion.
- These projects will also help in controlling flooding in case China releases unusually high volumes of water.