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Current Affairs - 20 December 2025

THE CHANGING PATTERNS OF INDIA'S STUDENT MIGRATION

- India is among the world's largest senders of international students. **Nearly 40% study in the United States and Canada**, followed by the United Kingdom, Australia, and Germany.
- This growing presence has positioned students as a significant segment of the Indian diaspora.
- While the scale signals global integration, it also masks **deep inequalities in institutional quality and post-study outcomes** across destinations.

The Illusion of Democratisation

- The expansion of overseas education is often interpreted as increased access across social classes.
- In reality, **many students are funnelled into lower-tier universities and vocational colleges** with limited academic credibility.
- Poorly regulated recruitment agencies play a central role, prioritising commissions over student welfare.
- These agencies often place students in courses misaligned with their academic backgrounds and labour market needs, resulting in **deskilling and underemployment**.

Financial Burden and Reverse Remittances

- Student migration represents a **high-risk investment for Indian middle-class households**.
- Most students rely on education loans or family savings, often mortgaging property to finance degrees costing **₹40–50 lakh**.
- Kerala illustrates this shift clearly: student migration doubled between 2018 and 2023, accounting for over **11% of total emigration**.
- When expected employment outcomes fail to materialise, families face debt, forced return, or prolonged underemployment, creating **reverse remittances**, where Indian households subsidise foreign economies.



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Contributions to Host Economies and Labour Exploitation

- While students bear mounting risks, **host countries derive substantial economic benefits.**
- International students contributed **\$30.9 billion to Canada's GDP in 2022**, supporting over **361,000 jobs**, with Indian students comprising nearly **45% of enrolments.**
- In the United States, Indian students spend an estimated **\$7–8 billion annually.** Despite this contribution, restrictive visa regimes, limited post-study work options, and rising living costs push many students into **low-wage, unskilled employment.**

Domestic Push Factors and the Search for Mobility

- Notably, Indian students rarely choose offshore campuses of Western universities in Asia despite lower costs.
- This reveals that migration is **not solely about education**, but about **permanent residency, social mobility, and escape from structural inequality.**
- Overseas education increasingly functions as a migration strategy rather than an academic pursuit.

From Brain Gain to Brain Waste

- This wave of student migration has produced a **new form of cheap labour for OECD economies.** The gap between aspiration and outcome converts potential brain gain into **brain waste, where educated migrants remain trapped in low-skilled work.**
- This contradiction highlights the structural inequalities embedded in global education and labour markets.

Conclusion

- India's expanding student migration exposes **deep contradictions between aspiration and outcome, opportunity and exploitation.**
 - Stronger regulation of education agents, comprehensive pre-departure counselling, and bilateral frameworks **ensuring institutional accountability are essential.**
 - Without such reforms, student migration risks becoming less a **pathway to empowerment** and more a mechanism reinforcing global inequality.
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INDIA'S QUEST FOR 100% LITERACY - BIHAR'S RELUCTANCE AND THE ULLAS CHALLENGE

- India has set an ambitious target of achieving **100% literacy by 2030**, in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-4: Quality Education).
- To realise this, the Union Government launched the **ULLAS** - Understanding Lifelong Learning for All in Society.
- However, the **non-participation of Bihar**—one of India's least literate states—has emerged as a major obstacle.

Overview of the ULLAS Scheme:

- **Launched:** It was launched in 2022 by the Union Education Ministry in line with the NEP 2020.
- **Target group:** Non-literate persons above 15 years of age.
- **Methodology to identify beneficiaries:**
 - Door-to-door identification of non-literates
 - Training in basic literacy and numeracy (Class 3 level)
 - Online/offline learning modes
 - Mandatory assessment and certification
- **Expanded definition of literacy** (as per August 2024 guidelines):
 - Reading, writing, and numeracy with comprehension
 - Digital literacy, financial literacy, and life skills
- **Benchmark:** 95% literacy treated as equivalent to 100% literacy.

Progress so Far:

- **Declared fully literate States/UTs:** Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Goa, Tripura, Ladakh.
- **Likely to join soon:** At least two southern states and one UT.
- **Assessment of impact:** Gains likely to reflect in upcoming **Census data**.



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Bihar - A Major Concern:

- Bihar literacy rate was **74.3%** (2nd lowest after Andhra Pradesh – 72.6%), with male literacy of 82.3%, and female literacy of 66.1%.
- **Non-literates (15–59 age group):** Nearly 2 crore, including 1.32 crore women.
 - **Historical trend:** Census 2011 literacy rate was **61.8%** (lowest in India).

Key Challenges and Way Forward:

- **Centre–State coordination deficit:** Union Education Minister urged Bihar CM to take immediate action, emphasised Bihar’s role in achieving national literacy goals, and directed Bihar to utilise released funds.
- **Duplication vs integration of literacy schemes:** Convergence of schemes - Align Akshar Anchal with ULLAS framework.
- **Gender gap in literacy, especially in Bihar:** Focus on female literacy as a multiplier for social development.
- **Underutilisation of central funds:** Incentivise participation through performance-linked funding.
- **Political and administrative inertia:** Strengthen cooperative federalism in education governance.
- **Monitoring and outcome-based evaluation:** Digital and community-based learning models to reach adult learners. Robust monitoring mechanism with third-party assessments.

Conclusion:

- The success of India’s mission to achieve 100% literacy by 2030 critically depends on bringing laggard states like Bihar on board.
 - A **cooperative, flexible, and outcome-oriented approach**—rooted in NEP 2020’s vision of lifelong learning—is essential to transform literacy from a statistical target into a social reality.
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CAG FINDINGS ON PRADHAN MANTRI KAUSHAL VIKAS YOJANA

- The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is the flagship skill development scheme of the Government of India, launched in July 2015 under the Skill India Mission.
- The scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) through the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).
- The core objective of PMKVY is to **enable Indian youth to acquire industry-relevant skills**, improve employability, and address the problem of educated unemployment.
- The scheme focuses on short-term training, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), certification, and placement support.
- PMKVY has been implemented in three phases:
 - PMKVY 1.0 (2015-16)
 - PMKVY 2.0 (2016-20)
 - PMKVY 3.0 (2021-22)
- Across these phases, the scheme aimed to provide skill training and certification aligned with the **National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF)**.

Key Features of PMKVY

- PMKVY provides **free skill training** to eligible youth across a wide range of sectors such as construction, manufacturing, healthcare, electronics, retail, and services.
- Training is conducted through approved Training Centres and Industry Partners.
- A distinctive feature of the scheme is outcome-based funding, where payments to training partners are linked to certification and placement.
- Each certified candidate is eligible for a monetary reward of Rs. 500, transferred through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).
- The scheme also emphasises digital monitoring through the Skill India Portal (SIP), Aadhaar-based authentication, and third-party assessments to ensure transparency.



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CAG Findings on PMKVY

- A recent CAG audit report, tabled in the Lok Sabha, has highlighted serious deficiencies in the implementation of PMKVY between **2015 and 2022**.
- One of the most glaring findings was the use of **invalid bank account numbers**, including entries such as “1111111111”, blank fields, or repeated account numbers for multiple beneficiaries.
- The audit found that over 94% of candidate records lacked reliable bank account details, raising concerns about beneficiary identification.
- The CAG also flagged that **payouts to more than 34 lakh certified candidates were pending**, even years after completion of training.
- Despite the ministry’s claim that Aadhaar-linked DBT would resolve payment issues, only 18.44% of candidates received successful DBT payments under PMKVY 2.0 and 3.0.
- Additionally, the audit revealed shut training centres, instances where training was shown as ongoing even when centres were physically closed, and the reuse of identical photographs for multiple beneficiaries across states such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan.
- The CAG also questioned the credibility of “Best-in-Class” employers involved in skill certification and highlighted weak monitoring of training quality and outcomes.

Government Response and Corrective Measures

- In response to the audit, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship stated that the scheme has since been significantly strengthened. Measures include:
 - Aadhaar-authenticated e-KYC
 - Face authentication and geo-tagged attendance
 - QR-coded digital certificates
 - Enhanced inspections through Kaushal Samiksha Kendras
 - Penalty framework, blacklisting, and recovery from non-compliant entities
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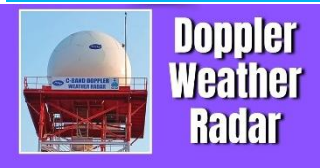
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BUREAU OF PORT SECURITY



- It shall be constituted as a statutory body under the provisions of the **Merchant Shipping Act, 2025**.
- It is being modelled on the lines of the **Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS)**.
- **Functions Bureau of Port Security:**
 - It shall ensure **timely analysis, collection and exchange of security-related information**, with a special focus on **cyber security**, including a dedicated division to safeguard port IT infrastructure from digital threats.
- It will be headed by a **Director General**, shall function under the aegis of **the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW)**
 - He /she shall be responsible for **regulatory and oversight functions** relating to the security of ships and port facilities.
 - During the transition period of one year, the **Director General of Shipping (DGS/DGMA)** shall function as the Director General, BoPS.
- The **Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)** has been designated as a **Recognised Security Organisation (RSO)** for port facilities with responsibility for undertaking security assessments and preparation of security plans for ports.

DOPPLER WEATHER RADAR



- A Doppler radar is a specialized radar that **uses the Doppler effect** to produce **velocity data about objects at a distance**.
- These radar systems can provide information regarding the **movement of targets** as well as **their position**.
- **Working of Doppler Weather Radars (DWRs)**
 - In radars, a beam of energy, **called radio waves**, is emitted from an antenna.



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- When this beam strikes an object in the atmosphere, the energy scatters in all directions, with some **reflecting directly back to the radar**.
 - The **larger the object** deflecting the beam, the **greater is the amount of energy** that the radar receives in return.
 - Observing the time required for the **beam to be transmitted and returned** to the radar allows weather forecasting departments to “see” raindrops in the atmosphere, and measure their distance from the radar.
 - **Types of weather Radar Bands:** Varying frequencies like **S-band, C-band and X-band** — are commonly used by the IMD in India.
 - **Applications:**
 - It is used to track the movement of **weather systems and cloud bands**, and gauge rainfall over its coverage area of about 500 km.
 - An **X-band radar** is used to **detect thunderstorms and lightning**, whereas a C-band radar helps in **cyclone tracking**.
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ANTARIKSH PRAYOGSHALA (SPACE LABS)



- It is an **initiative of the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe)**.
- It is a **first-of-its-kind** initiative aimed at **creating state-of-the-art space laboratories within Indian academic institutions**.
- These labs will provide **hands-on training to students** pursuing space tech courses in academic institutes spread across the country.
- This initiative is intended to enable meaningful **industry–academia collaboration** and support India’s long-term vision of becoming a leading global space economy.
- Under the scheme, **up to seven academic institutions** will be **selected in a phased manner from different zones** across the country.
- To ensure balanced regional representation, **one lab is proposed in each zone**.



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- These labs will also be available to Non-Governmental Entities (NGEs) for utilization in that zone.
- IN-SPACE will provide financial support to the institutions.
- The selection process will be carried out in two stages:
 - Institutions will first be screened based on eligibility criteria.
 - Shortlisted applicants will then be evaluated and ranked by an Empowered Committee (EC), following which final selections will be made on a zone-wise basis.

Key Facts about IN-SPACE:

- It is a **single-window, independent, nodal agency** that functions as an **autonomous agency in the Department of Space (DOS)**.
 - It is formed following the Space sector reforms to enable and **facilitate the participation of private players**.
 - IN-SPACE is responsible to promote, **enable, authorize and supervise various space activities of non-governmental entities (NGEs)**, including:
 - **Building launch vehicles & satellites** and providing space-based services;
 - **Sharing space infrastructure and premises under the control of DOS/ISRO.**
 - **Establishing new space infrastructure** and facilities.
 - The agency acts as an **interface between ISRO and NGEs** and assesses how to utilize India's space resources better and increase space-based activities.
 - It also assesses the needs and demands of private players, including educational and research institutions, and explores ways to **accommodate these requirements in consultation with ISRO.**
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