

## The price of inaction: The global private, fiscal and social costs of children and youth not learning Report Released

Report is prepared by **UNESCO** in collaboration with OECD and the **Commonwealth Secretariat**.

- It analysed the economic and societal cost of educational deficiencies for the first time.

### Key Findings

- Out-of-school children and educational gaps **cost the global economy \$10,000 billion annually**.
  - Around 250 million children and young people globally remain out of school despite decades of effort.
- 57 % of the world's children have not gained **basic skill levels**.
- Each year of **secondary education reduces** the risk of girls **marrying and having a child before age 18**.
  - Female early school leavers are linked to a 59% increase in early pregnancies.
- Reducing early school leavers or those without basic skills by 10% could boost annual GDP growth by 1 to 2% points.

### Recommendations:

- Improve **school infrastructure**, including providing single-sex water and sanitation facilities, reducing class sizes, etc.
  - Report highlighted that in India, **construction of toilets** decreased girls' dropout rate by 12% points and that of boys by 11% points.
- Promoting health and mental well-being of students through **comprehensive sex education**, etc.
- Promoting **vocational education and training** that meets **labour market** needs and addresses gender barriers to participation.

### Key Initiatives to reduce Educational Deficiencies

#### Global:

- Education was declared a "universal human right" in 1948,
- SDG 4:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" etc.

#### India

- Right to Education Act 2009
- Samagra Shiksha Programme, 2018
- National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020)
- Other:** PM Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI) 2022, PM-POSHAN Scheme (earlier known as Mid-Day Meal Scheme) etc.

## Tamil Nadu illicit liquor tragedy has claimed more than 50 lives

Deaths have been attributed to **methanol (methyl alcohol)** poisoning from illicitly produced **Hooch** /Spurious liquor.

- Hooch** is a commonly used term for poor quality alcohol. Sometimes, it also contains **methanol**, an industrial alcohol along with **ethanol**.

### About Methanol (CH<sub>3</sub>OH)

- Also known as **wood Alcohol or spirit** (traditionally produced by destructive distillation of wood).
  - Modern method of preparing methanol is based on **syngas** (a mixture of hydrogen and carbon monoxide) derived from biomass or other sources.
- Characteristics:**
  - A colorless and fairly volatile liquid with a faintly sweet pungent odor.
  - Completely mixable with water and it is an **antifreeze** agent.
- Applications:**
  - Used as solvent in paints, varnishes and chiefly for making formaldehyde.
  - Can be used as a **biodegradable energy resource**.
- Impacts:** Ingestion of even small quantities of methanol can cause blindness and large quantities causes' even death.

### Regulatory Framework

- Food Safety and Standards (Alcoholic Beverages) Regulations 2018** stipulate maximum permissible quantities of methanol in liquors.
- Manufacture, Storage and Import of Hazardous Chemical Rules 1989**, included in Schedule 1.
- Many States/UTs have prohibited sale of **alcoholic drinks** (including methyl alcohol). E.g. Bihar, Gujarat, etc.

### Way forward

- Strong central legislation**
- Tighten the inter-State methanol supply chain** under various laws such as Poisons Act, 1919.

### Ethanol (C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>5</sub>OH)

- It is obtained commercially by **fermentation**, oldest method is from sugars.
- It is colourless liquid, used as a solvent in paint industry and preparation of number of carbon compounds.
- Also, used as a renewable fuel.
- Impact on Body:** Ingestion of ethanol acts on central nervous system. In moderate amounts, it affects judgment and lowers inhibitions.

## Ministry of Coal initiates India's First Ever Pilot project for Underground Coal Gasification in Jharkhand

This initiative aims to revolutionize the coal industry by using in-situ coal gasification.

### About Coal Gasification

- It is a process to convert underground coal into valuable gases like methane, hydrogen, carbon monoxide (CO), and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>).
- In gasification process, coal is partially oxidised by air, oxygen, steam, or CO<sub>2</sub> under controlled conditions to produce a liquid fuel known as **syngas**.
  - Syngas (synthesis gas) can be used for **power generation, making methanol etc.**
  - Syngas is a **mixture of CO and hydrogen** and produce gaseous fuels like Methane etc.

### Advantages of Coal Gasification

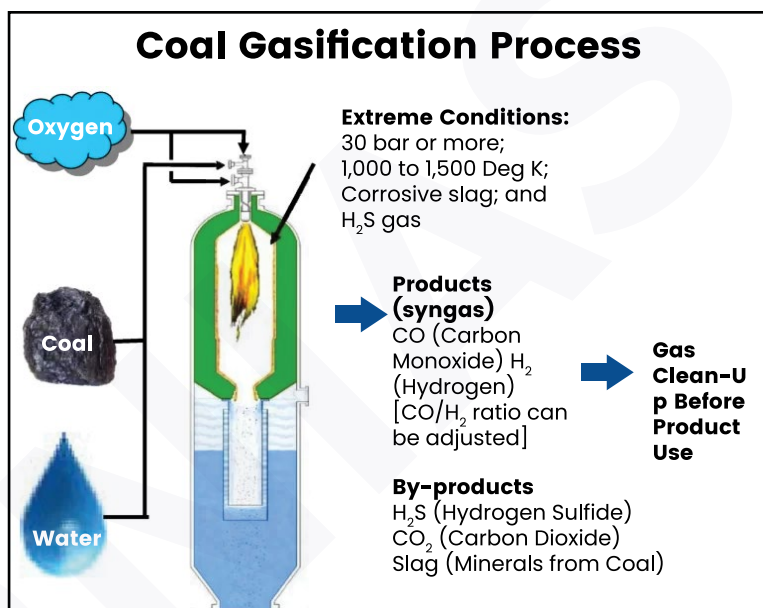
- Provide access to coal resources that are economically unviable through traditional mining methods.
- Sustainable and efficient use of India's huge coal reserves (third largest in world).
- India is highly dependent on imported fuel – crude oil and natural gas, 82% and 45% of total requirement.

### Associated concerns

- Lack of technology for conversion of India's coal (low grade and high ash content) to syngas.
- Huge quantity of waste, black water generation, costly systems for CO<sub>2</sub> removal etc.
- Produces more CO<sub>2</sub> than conventional coal-powered thermal power plant.

### Initiatives taken

- Under National Coal Gasification Mission, India aims for 100 million tons coal gasification by 2030.
- 100% FDI in coal mining.
- Viability Gap Funding scheme for promotion of Coal/Lignite Gasification Projects.



## UN unveils 'Global Principles' to combat online misinformation

### How Digital platforms fuelling Misinformation and disinformation Crisis?

- Due to technologies like **artificial intelligence** misinformation is created at unprecedented volume, velocity and virality.
  - Misinformation and disinformation have been identified among the top five risks (**Global Risk Report 2024**).
- Opaque Algorithm:** Creates information bubbles and reinforce prejudices, including racism, misogyny etc.
- Health-related misinformation:** Erroneous interpretation of scientific knowledge, opinion polarization, escalating fear and panic etc.

### United Nations Global Principles for Information Integrity

It is a set of **five principles** (refer to infographics), designed to address the widespread harm caused by **false information** on digital platforms.

- It offers a holistic framework to guide multi-stakeholder action to promote **information integrity**.

### Recommendations for Stakeholders

- Technology Companies:** Integrate safety and privacy from design to delivery, evaluate business models, content modernisation, etc.
- AI Actors (including Government and Private Sector):** Safe, secure, and trustworthy audits, respect for intellectual property, etc.
- News Media:** Ensure Information integrity, transparency, and human rights-responsible advertising.
- State and Political Actors:** Promote transparency, political participation, capacity building, access to information, etc.



## Pakistani delegation to inspect two Hydroelectric Power Projects (HEPs) under Indus Water Treaty (IWT)

Delegation arrived as a part of **Neutral Expert proceedings** to inspect **Kishenganga (330MW) and Ratle (850 MW) HEP** under IWT.

- **Kishenganga HEP:** Run-of-the-river hydroelectric project which diverts water from Kishenganga River to a power plant in Jhelum River basin in J&K.
- **Ratle HEP:** Situated on **Chenab River** in Kishtwar district, J&K.

### About IWT

- Signed in 1960 between India and Pakistan with **World Bank** being a signatory of it.
- Treaty allocates **Western Rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab)** to Pakistan and **Eastern Rivers (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej)** to India.
- India is **allowed to construct hydroelectric power facilities** on tributaries of Jhelum and Chenab rivers with certain restrictions under IWT, 1960.
- Disagreement between both countries is related to **design features of Kishenganga and Ratle HEPs.**
  - ⊖ World Bank is not financing either project.
- It provides **3 Step Dispute Resolution Mechanism viz.**
  - ⊖ **Step 1: Permanent Indus Commission** is required to meet at least once every year to resolve questions about implementation of treaty.
  - ⊖ **Step 2: Neutral Expert** to deal with unresolved differences on water-sharing.
  - ⊖ **Step 3: Court of Arbitration**, a Seven-member arbitral tribunal to deal with the disputes.

### Issues with IWT

- **Lack of collaboration and mutual trust** between countries.
- **No regular data sharing** as planned in treaty.
- Limited to a **conflict-resolution mechanism** instead of strengthening the interaction, trust and cooperation.

## Ministry of Mines launched Fourth Tranche of Auction of Critical and Strategic Minerals

In this tranche, 21 critical mineral blocks will be auctioned containing a variety of minerals including Graphite, Glauconite, Phosphorite, Potash, Nickel, Phosphate and Rare Earth Elements (REE).

### About Critical Minerals

- Critical minerals are elements that are **building blocks of essential modern-day technologies** and are at **risk of supply chain disruptions** due to limited global production and geopolitical factors.
- In 2023, **30 strategically important Critical Minerals were identified by Ministry of Mine** including Antimony, Beryllium, Bismuth, Copper, Gallium etc.

### Significance of Critical Minerals

- **Economic growth:** Cobalt, nickel, lithium are important for telecommunication industry, manufacturing of electric vehicles batteries etc.
- **Clean energy:** REE are critical for green technologies like semiconductors, solar panels and wind turbines etc.
- **National Security and Defense:** Cobalt is used in **military technologies like** smart bombs, aircraft, and precision-guided missiles.

### Associated concerns

- **Concentration of extraction or processing in few geographical locations** could lead to supply chain vulnerabilities.
  - ⊖ For instance, Lithium triangle consists of Argentina, Chile and Bolivia.
- **India relies** on imports for its silver, cobalt needs, predominantly sourced from China.

### Initiatives taken with respect to Critical Minerals

- **India- Australia Critical Minerals Investment Partnership.**
- **India has joined Minerals Security Partnership** that aims to catalyse public and private investment in critical mineral supply chains globally.
- **Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL)**, mandated to identify and acquire overseas mineral assets of critical and strategic nature like lithium, cobalt etc.

## Also in News



### Renaming of States

Kerala Assembly has passed resolution to rename State as 'Keralam'  
**Procedure for Renaming of States**

- It can be initiated by the **Parliament** or **State Legislature.**
- Renaming is governed by **Article 3** of Constitution.
  - ⊖ Article empowers Parliament to alter name of any State by law.
- Bill may be introduced in Parliament on recommendation of **President.**
  - ⊖ Then referred by the President to Legislature of that State for expressing their views.
- Bill is passed in each house by a **simple majority.**
- Following president assent, change in name of state is recorded in First and Fourth Schedule of Constitution.



### International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO)

IHO celebrates World Hydrography Day (21 June every year) to raise awareness about hydrography.

- Hydrography is the science that **measures and describes the physical features** of oceans, seas, coastal areas, lakes and rivers.

### About IHO

- Intergovernmental organization that works to **ensure all world's seas, oceans and navigable waters are surveyed** and charted.
- It **coordinates the activities of national hydrographic offices.**
- **IHO Secretariat** has been **hosted by Principality of Monaco** since its creation in 1921.
- **Members: 100 Member States including India.**
  - ⊖ **Indian Naval Hydrographic Department** under Indian Navy is nodal agency for Hydrographic surveys and nautical charting in India.



### Scheme for Partial Reimbursement of Exploration Expenses for Holders of Exploration License

Ministry of Mines has unveiled Scheme for Partial Reimbursement of Exploration Expenses for Holders of Exploration License.

#### About Scheme

- **Objective:** To provide partial reimbursement of exploration expenses for **Exploration License (EL) holders** from National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET).
  - ⊕ NMET was established in 2015 under Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Act, 1957 to expedite mineral exploration in country.
- **Eligibility:** EL holders granted under section 10BA of MMDR Act shall be eligible to apply.
  - ⊕ **Provision of EL** was introduced through an amendment in MMDR Act in 2023.



### Front Running

Recently, a Mutual Fund was alleged to have indulged in Front-Running.

#### About Front Running

- **Front Running** refers to usage of non-public information to directly or indirectly buy or sell securities, or enters into **options** or **futures contracts**, in advance of a substantial order. (**Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)**).
- It is illegal in India.
- It **undermines confidence in the financial markets** and creates an **uneven playing field** for other investors.
- In 2022, **Securities and Exchange Board of India (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 1996** was amended to incorporate provisions to counter front running.



### Central Civil Services (Leave) (Amendment) Rules, 2024

Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules, 2024 has been notified by the Ministry of Personnel Public Grievances and Pensions.

#### Key Amendments:

- **Surrogate** as well as **commissioning** mother with less than two surviving children, may be granted maternity leave of 180 days, in case either or both are Government servants.
  - ⊕ Commissioning mother means intending mother of child born through surrogacy.
- Central employee commissioning fathers with less than two living children, will also be entitled to get 15 days of **paternity leave** within six months of birth of child.
- Till now, there were no rules to grant maternity/paternity leaves for surrogacy.



### World Craft City (WCC)

Srinagar has been recognised as a 'World Craft City' by World Crafts Council.

- This recognition would **boost the handloom and handicraft sector, benefit tourism, foster infrastructure development**, attract greater investment and funding, etc.
- Council was founded in 1964 to empower artisans and safeguard craft heritage globally.

#### About WCC

- Launched in **2014 by World Crafts Council- International**.
- Establishes a **dynamic network of craft cities** across the globe, aligning with the principles of **creative economy**.
- Recognizes role of **local authorities, craftspeople, and communities** in cultural, economic, and social development worldwide.



### Oath of Members of Parliament

The newly elected Members of Parliament (MP) of the 18<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha have started taking oath.

- To debate and vote in the Parliament, an oath is taken.

#### Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 99** deals with **oaths of office** of the **MPs**, to be subscribed before the President or some person appointed by him.
  - ⊕ The forms of oath are provided in the **Third Schedule**.
- **Article 104** provides a penalty for a member if he/she sits in the House without the oath.
  - ⊕ **Exception to this rule:** An individual can become a minister without being elected to Parliament. And, he/she can take part in proceedings of the house (without having the power to vote).
- Oaths can be subscribed in English or any of the 22 Scheduled languages.



### Javelin anti-tank Weapon System

India and the US held discussions on the co-production of American javelin missiles in India, as per reports.

#### About Javelin anti-tank Weapon System

- World's premier **single man-portable medium-range anti-tank weapon system**.
- Missile automatically guides itself to the target after launch (**fire-and-forget principle**), this allows the **gunner** to take cover and avoid counter fire.
- Can be safely **fired from inside buildings** or bunkers.

### Places in News



### Philippines (Capital: Manila)

Recently, Philippines Ambassador said that BrahMos missiles offer a "credible defense" for Southeast Asian country.

#### Political features

- Island country of Southeast Asia in western Pacific Ocean.
- **Water bodies:** Philippine Sea (east), Celebes Sea (south), Sulu Sea (southwest), and South China Sea (west and north).

#### Geographical features

- **Highest Point:** Mount Apo.
- **Major Rivers:** Cagayan River (Río Grande de Cagayán), Mindanao, Agusan etc.
- **Climate:** Tropical and monsoonal.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI