

### NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

Numbering over 500 million according to the Census 2011, children below 18 years of age face a high degree of risk while commuting to and from school due to poor road planning, limited enforcement and poor traffic behaviour across 14 Indian cities, according to a study. The pandemic had added another layer of danger to these existing factors for school students and there was a need for safety policies for students at both the national and State level, the report observed. The study, titled 'National Study on Safe Commute to School', and carried out by the SaveLIFE Foundation and Mercedes Benz Research and Development India (MBRDI) to highlight gaps in road safety for children, posited that although millions of students travel to school everyday, many schools do not provide the option of school affiliated transport.

Journalists Maria Ressa of the Philippines and Dmitry Muratov of Russia won the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize for their fight for freedom of expression in countries where reporters have faced persistent attacks, harassment and even murder. "Free, independent and fact based journalism serves to protect against abuse of power, lies and war propaganda," said Berit Reiss-Andersen, chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, explaining why the prize went to two journalists. "Without freedom of expression and freedom of the press, it will be difficult to successfully promote fraternity between nations, disarmament and a better world order to succeed in our time," she said.

After 68 years, Air India is all set to return to the Tata fold. Tata Sons subsidiary Talace Pvt. Ltd. emerged as the winning bidder for the debt-laden national carrier after quoting an enterprise value of ₹18,000 crore. The government will take a hit of ₹28,844 crore. The Tatas will own a 100% stake in Air India, as also 100% in its international low cost arm Air India Express and 50% in the ground handling joint venture, Air India SATS. Apart from 141 aircraft and access to a network of 173 destinations, including 55 international ones, Tatas will also have the ownership of iconic brands such as Air India, Indian Airlines and the Maharajah.

### STATE OF THE EDUCATION REPORT IN INDIA 2021

1.The UNESCO released the 2021 State of the Education Report for India: No Teachers, No Class. Findings - The gross enrolment ratio (GER) for elementary schools has increased from 81.6 in 2001 to 102.1 in 2019-2020. But the overall retention is 74.6% for elementary education and 59.6% for secondary education in 2019-20. Number of Teachers - 89% of the total 1.2 lakh single-teacher schools in the country are in rural areas.

2.India needs 11.16 lakh additional teachers to meet the current shortfall. Tripura has the least number of women teachers, while Chandigarh leads the chart. The proportion of teachers employed in the private sector grew from 21% (2013-14) to 35% (2018-19). Lack of Digital Infrastructure - Overall availability of computing devices in schools is 22% for all India, with rural areas seeing much lower provisioning (18%) than urban areas (43%).

3.Access to the internet in schools is 19% all over India - only 14% in rural areas compared to 42% in urban areas. There are a range of issues - lack of devices and Internet bandwidth for students, lack of preparedness of teachers in the use of technology, and lack of resources in Indian languages.

4.Recommendations - The focus of this decade should be on teachers and teaching as the Quality of education is the core challenge of the next decade. As schools in India have not been functioning physically from March 2020, foundational learning is set to slide even further down from current low levels.

### MOSQUIRIX

1.Mosquirix or RTS,S/AS01 (RTS.S), which was endorsed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) is the first and only vaccine shown to have the capability of significantly reducing malaria. This is the first malaria vaccine that has completed the clinical development process and acts against Plasmodium falciparum. Mosquirix provides short-term protection that could potentially save lives in the age group most at risk from malaria.

2.Mosquirix also helps protect against infection of the liver with the hepatitis B virus but should not be used only for this purpose. The active substance in Mosquirix is made up of proteins found on the surface of the P. falciparum parasites and the Hepatitis B Virus. The vaccine thus limits the ability of the parasites to mature in the liver.

3.Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by parasites transmitted to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes and disease is preventable and curable. WHO has recommended that the RTS,S/AS01 malaria vaccine be used for the prevention of P. falciparum.

### AIR QUALITY

1.The Global Burden of Disease estimates that India lost 1.67 million lives in 2019 directly as a result of breathing polluted air. India's economic growth is built on fossil fuels. Coal, oil, and natural gas account for roughly 75% of our power generation come at the cost of heavy CO, SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub>, ozone, and particulate matter emissions. The air quality in India is measured by Central pollution control board using National Air Quality Index.

2.The mandate provided to the Central pollution control board under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1981 empowers it to set standards for the quality of air. Poor air quality was found to counter 67% of the cost advantage of using solar panels over grid power, as ground-level smog and the particulate matter chokes their power output.

3.Essential step is to expand the country's air quality monitoring network with low-cost monitors that capture readings for PM<sub>2.5</sub> and 10 & gases like NO<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>, methane, and secondary volatile organic compounds.

### SPIKE IN CRUDE OIL PRICES-IMPACTS

1.The recent spike in global crude oil prices above the \$80-per-barrel mark led to a dip in key indices in the stock market.Why

Some Chinese soldiers of a large patrol were detained for a few hours by the Indian Army after a minor faceoff near Yangtse in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh last week, according to official sources. "Some Chinese soldiers were detained for a few hours and let off after the issue was resolved at the ground level as per established protocols between the two countries," an official source said. Faceoffs occurred because of the differing areas of perception due to the demarcated boundary, and as both sides undertook patrolling activities up to their line of perception, another source said.

The Supreme Court said the Uttar Pradesh Government's resolve to seriously investigate the Lakhimpur Kheri violence and deaths, including allegations of murder against a Union Minister's son, seemed just all talk and no action. "Your seriousness is only in words and not in your actions," Chief Justice of India (CJI) N.V. Ramana addressed the government.

The digital divide caused by online classes will defeat the fundamental right of every child to education, the Supreme Court warned on Friday. The court rued how the right to education now hinged on who could afford "gadgets" for online classes and who could not. Little children whose parents are too poor to afford laptops, tablets or an "optimum" Internet package at home for online classes during the pandemic have dropped out of school and even run the danger of being drawn into child labour or worse, child trafficking, the court said.

"I am giving a special push for ethanol as a fuel," Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said. "With 100% use of 20% blend of bio ethanol we will be able to save ₹30,000 crore on import of fossil fuel. Further, the use of ethanol blended petrol decreases emissions of carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides by 40%," Mr. Gadkari said at a FICCI event on alternative fuels.

The Union Government is considering increasing the unit cost of deep sea fishing vessels under the Palk Bay scheme to make it more attractive to fisher folk, L. Murugan, Union Minister of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Information and Broadcasting, said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to new Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Friday evening, in their first conversation since the latter took charge this week, committing to strengthen bilateral

are oil prices rising? The oil prices hit a low of \$16 per barrel on April 22 last year. It has risen nearly 58% from about \$51.8 per barrel to about \$81 at close on Wednesday. Recovery in global demand as the world economy recovers from the pandemic is a major reason for increase in prices. Supply restrictions maintained by the OPEC+ grouping have kept international oil prices high. A shortage of gas in Europe and Asia has boosted demand for oil for power generation. High taxes by the central and state governments too have contributed to retail prices being far higher.

**2.What will be the impact of rising oil prices?** Impact on stocks - A sharp surge in oil prices can create short-term panic in the equity markets. Equities often deliver more than the expected inflation that the oil surge may lead to. Impact on bonds - Sustained high inflation can result in rising yields and falling bond prices. For bonds, central bank policies will play a far greater role than the direct impact of rising oil prices. In sectors where oil is a major cost component, a negative reaction on returns can be expected. Impact on currency - Rising crude prices tend to depress the rupee as India being a major importer of oil. It will lead to expansion in the import bill as it is expected that Brent crude can test the \$ 90/barrel mark.

**3.Impact on inflation** - Rise in prices could lead to a surge in inflation, forcing the RBI to go for liquidity tightening measures followed by rate hikes. An increase in crude prices means an increase in the cost of producing and transporting goods thus adding to inflation. Impact on government finances - A surge in crude prices tends to increase India's expenditure and adversely affects the fiscal deficit.

**4.Impact on market** - Sectors including refining, lubricants, aviation and tyres are sensitive to oil price movement. Rise in crude oil prices impact their input raw material cost and profitability thereby hurting their share prices.

## DISASTER RESILIENCE- AN INHERENT PART OF COMMUNITY CULTURE

1.With the expansion of Panchayati Raj systems and Gram sabhas becoming more vibrant, it is imperative to make disaster resilience an inherent part of community culture.

2.What is the role of PRIs? The Panchayati Raj was first adopted by Nagaur in Rajasthan on October 2, 1959. In the system of local self-governance people in the villages participate in the decision-making process. It aids in the decentralisation of power. PRIs are considered as the backbone of democracy. It gives political education to the people and creates a new consciousness among them. The People's Plan Campaign aims to ensure the preparation of Gram Panchayat Development Plans for economic development and social justice.

**3.How PRIs performed in the recent Covid times?** PRIs through their bottom up approach helped reduce Covid 19 risks, responded swiftly and thus helped people recover quickly. It provided essential leadership at the local level. They performed both regulatory and welfare functions. **During nationwide lockdown, PRIs set up containment zones, arranged transport and provisioned food for e incoming migrants.** Effective implementation of welfare schemes like MGNREGA and NRLM quickened the pace of recovery while ensuring support to the vulnerable population.

4.Gram sabhas provide a platform to build consensus and make resolutions in the community's interest such as adherence to Covid norms. They organised community-based surveillance systems involving village elders, youth and SHGs to keep a strict vigil in quarantine centres and monitor symptoms in households. The role of PRIs in mobilising citizens for COVID-19 vaccination is commendable.

**5.How to strengthen the PRIs for effective disaster management? The Yokohama strategy emphasises on disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness rather than disaster response alone to reduce vulnerability.** It is crucial to include disaster management chapters in Panchayat Raj Acts to ensure citizen-centric mapping and planning of resources. Regular location-specific training programmes for the community can be conducted. Platforms can be organised for sharing best practices that will strengthen individual and institutional capacities. Since community is usually the first responder in case of a disaster, community-based disaster management plans can be formulated where traditional wisdom of local communities can complement modern practices. Financial contributions from

**relations and opposing the use of military and economic force in the Indo-Pacific region through the Quad with the U.S. and Australia.**

the community should be encouraged through the establishment of community disaster funds in all gram panchayats.