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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS



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S.NO.	TOPIC
1.	ANNUAL STATUS OF EDUCATION REPORT (ASER), 2023
2.	PRELIMS POINTERS

ANNUAL STATUS OF EDUCATION REPORT (ASER), 2023

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

TAG: GS Paper II- Education

UPSC PRACTICE QUESTION

Prelims

Q. Which of the following statements is correct based on the ASER 2023 report on rural Indian adolescents?

- (a) Over 60% of 14 to 18-year-olds demonstrated proficiency in basic 3-digit by 1-digit division.
- (b) The report indicates significant improvement in reading and arithmetic skills among adolescents in higher secondary education.
- (c) Gender disparities were observed, with boys consistently outperforming girls in applying basic numeracy and reading skills.
- (d) Less than 40% of surveyed youth could calculate the number of hours a child had slept based on bedtime and waking time.

Correct Answer: C

WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ *The latest edition of the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), 2023 released on 17th January 2024 has revealed that 25% of the teenagers in rural India between the ages of 14 and 18 struggle to read Grade-II text with fluency and cannot do class III Math.*
- ❖ *The report further indicates that this struggle continues even after they reach senior classes such as class X and the higher secondary levels of education, notably class XI and XII.*

ABOUT ANNUAL STATUS OF EDUCATION REPORT (ASER)

- ❖ **ASER, or the Annual Status of Education Report, is an annual household survey conducted by citizens.**
- ❖ **The primary goal of ASER is to assess whether children in rural areas of India are not only enrolled in school but also to gauge their learning levels.**
- ❖ **Since its inception in 2005, ASER has been conducted annually in all rural districts of India, making it the largest citizen-led survey in the country.**
- ❖ **The surveys generate representative estimates of the enrolment status of children aged 3-16 and assess the basic reading and arithmetic proficiency of children aged 5-16 at the national, state, and district levels.**
- ❖ **The ASER Centre, established in January 2008 as a specialized unit within the Pratham network, operates with an approach rooted in Pratham's broader efforts to enhance basic skills in reading and arithmetic among children in both urban and rural India.**

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT:

- ❖ **Skill Deficit among Adolescents:**
 - ☛ **More than half (56.7%) of 14- to 18-year-olds in rural India struggle with a basic three-digit division problem, usually taught in Class 3-4.**
 - ☛ **Basic skills, including determining time and doing basic calculations, pose challenges for many adolescents.**
- ❖ **Reading and Arithmetic Struggles:**



- Even after reaching Class 10 and **higher secondary levels**, children continue to **face difficulties with basic reading and arithmetic skills**.
- 26.5% could not read a Class 2-level textbook** in their regional language, and **42.7% could not read sentences in English**.
- 26.5%** of those who could read sentences did not understand their meaning.

❖ **Mathematics Challenges:**

- More than half (56.7%) of surveyed students cannot solve a simple 3-digit by 1-digit division problem**, reflecting a challenge in basic arithmetic.

❖ **Everyday Application Skills:**

- Only around 45% could calculate the number of hours a child slept based on bedtime and wake-up time.**
- 85% could calculate the length of an object correctly if placed at the '0' mark on the ruler, but less than 40% could do so if the object was moved.**

❖ **Gender Disparities:**

- Boys outperformed girls across various tasks testing basic numeracy and reading skills.
- For instance, **45% of boys could do division, while only 41.8% of girls could.**

❖ **Enrolment Rates and Educational Streams:**

- Despite poor foundational skills, **86.8% of youth aged 14 to 18 are enrolled in educational institutions.**
- More than half (55.7%) of youth** in this age group were **enrolled in the Arts/Humanities stream**, followed by **STEM (31.7%) and Commerce (9.4%).**

❖ **Digital Skills:**

- Around 89%** of surveyed youth had a **smartphone in the household, and 92% claimed they knew how to use it.**

A REPORT CARD FROM THE CLASSROOM

% of children who can do everyday calculations

	Time	Weights	Length (easy)	Length (hard)	Unitary method
Male	50.5	65.8	87.5	45.7	55.9
Female	41.1	45.4	82.1	33.3	42.0
All youth	45.4	54.8	84.6	39.0	48.4

% of children at different arithmetic levels on the ASER test

Arithmetic level	Male	Female	All
Division	45.0	41.8	43.3
Subtraction	20.2	21.6	21.0
Number recognition*	34.8	36.6	35.8

*(11-99 or below)

INITIATIVES OF GOI IN EDUCATION SECTOR:

❖ **The Right to Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act):**

- It has been instrumental in broadening its scope to encompass all **children between the ages of three to 18 years**.
- This extension includes a focus on **early childhood education as well as secondary school education**, demonstrating the Act's commitment to providing educational opportunities across a comprehensive age range.

❖ **NISHTA:**

- MoE has launched '**National Initiative for School Heads and Teachers Holistic Advancement (NISHTA)**', a national mission to improve learning outcomes **at the elementary level**.

❖ **NIPUN (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy) Bharat Scheme:**

- It aims to cover the learning needs of **children in the age group of 3 to 9 years**.
- To create an enabling environment to ensure universal acquisition of foundational literacy and numeracy, so that every child achieves the desired learning competencies in reading, **writing and numeracy by the end of Grade 3, by 2026-27.**





❖ **SAMAGRA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN: Holistic approach to education**

- Treat school education holistically as a **continuum from Pre-school to Class 12**.
- Inclusion of **senior secondary levels and pre-school levels** in support for School education for the first time.

CONCLUSION:

- ❖ *The **ASER 2023** report concludes that despite significant strides in enrollment rates, a substantial number of adolescents in rural India face persistent challenges in foundational learning, with more than half struggling with basic arithmetic and language skills.*
- ❖ *The **skill deficit** poses concerns for their readiness to enter the job market.*
- ❖ ***Gender disparities** persist, and the ability to apply learned concepts to practical situations is lacking.*
- ❖ ***Policymakers are urged to address these challenges**, emphasizing the crucial role of foundational learning for academic and real-world success.*
- ❖ *The report underscores the **need to enhance the quality of education, bridge the digital divide, and ensure that youth are adequately prepared** to contribute to India's economic growth and leverage its demographic dividend.*





TOPIC	DESCRIPTION
PLACES IN NEWS - BALOCHISTAN	<p>WHY IN NEWS?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ <i>Two children died and three girls were injured in Balochistan province, Pakistan, following Iran's claimed strikes on two "important" bases of the Jaish ul-Adl terror group, according to the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).</i> <p>BALOCHISTAN OVERVIEW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Geographical Significance:<ul style="list-style-type: none">☛ Largest among the four provinces in Pakistan.☛ Located in the southwestern part of Pakistan.☛ Westernmost province of Pakistan with Quetta as its capital.☛ Diverse geography includes flat plains along the coast, mountains, arid desert regions (Chagai, Kharan, Makran), and swamps (Lora and Mashkel).☛ Borders with-<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Iran to the west✓ Afghanistan to the northwest✓ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces to the northeast and east✓ Sindh province to the southeast✓ The Arabian Sea to the south.❖ Natural Resources:<ul style="list-style-type: none">☛ Extremely rich in natural resources, including gas, oil, copper, and gold. <p>HISTORICAL CONTEXT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Pre-Independence, Balochistan had several tribes, with chiefs in treaty relationships with the Britishers.❖ The Khan of Kalat was a key figure, leading to the formation of the Balochistan States Union.❖ British established direct rule over the Khanate of Kalat in 1876. <p>Post-Independence Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ After accession to Pakistan in 1948, there were revolts against the integration.❖ Pakistani forces suppressed revolts, leading to imprisonment of leaders.





ANNUAL STATUS OF EDUCATION REPORT (ASER), 2023

❖ Ongoing demand for an independent state of Balochistan.

WHY IN NEWS?

❖ *The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2023 has been released, highlighting a significant skill deficit among adolescents in rural India.*

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT

- ❖ SER 2023 reveals a significant skill deficit among rural Indian adolescents.
- ❖ Over half (56.7%) of 14- to 18-year-olds struggle with basic 3-digit division.
- ❖ Challenges persist in basic reading and arithmetic skills, even in higher classes.
- ❖ 26.5% can't read Class 2-level regional language textbooks; 42.7% struggle with English sentences.
- ❖ More than half (56.7%) can't solve a simple 3-digit by 1-digit division problem.
- ❖ Boys outperform girls in various tasks testing numeracy and reading skills.
- ❖ 86.8% of youth aged 14-18 are enrolled in educational institutions.
- ❖ 55.7% of youth in this age group are enrolled in Arts/Humanities, 31.7% in STEM, and 9.4% in Commerce.
- ❖ 89% of surveyed youth have a smartphone in the household.
- ❖ The report underscores the need for foundational learning and life skills for academic and daily life success.

A REPORT CARD FROM THE CLASSROOM

% of children who can do everyday calculations

	Time	Weights	Length (easy)	Length (hard)	Unitary method
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MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS (MS)

WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ *Ancient DNA from Europeans up to 34,000 years ago reveals genetic variants now linked to MS initially protected against animal-borne diseases.*
- ❖ *The migration of Yamnaya people 5,000 years ago, carrying protective traits, contributed to higher prevalence of Multiple Sclerosis (MS) in Northern Europeans; population replacements and improved sanitation later increased MS risk.*

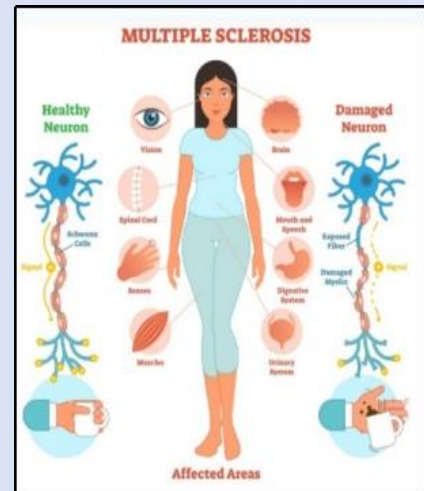
ABOUT MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS (MS)

❖ Disease:



- Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a persistent, inflammatory, and demyelinating disorder affecting the **central nervous system (CNS)**, comprising the brain and spinal cord.

- In MS, the **immune system erroneously targets** the safeguarding **myelin sheath** enveloping nerve fibers, causing **disruptions in communication between the brain and the rest of the body.**



❖ **Symptoms:**

- Vary widely; fatigue, difficulty walking, numbness, vision problems.**

❖ **Causes:**

- Susceptibility may pass down in the genes, **Smoking, stress, Vitamin D and B12 deficiency** and environmental factors.

❖ **Diagnosis:**

- No single test; clinical evaluation, history, imaging.**

❖ **Treatment:**

- No cure; symptoms can be managed through therapy, Lifestyle changes like Exercise, healthy diet, stress management, Counseling, support groups aid coping with MS challenges.**

INFORMATION AND CREDIT RATING AGENCY (ICRA)

WHY IN NEWS?

- ICRA predicted a significant slowdown in real **GDP growth for the October to December 2023** quarter, projecting it to be below 6%, citing **softening indicators and concerns about sustaining growth momentum***

ABOUT ICRA

- ❖ Indian independent investment information and credit rating agency.
- ❖ **Established in 1991** as Investment Information and **Credit Rating Agency of India Limited (IICRA India).**
- ❖ Originally a joint venture between **Moody's and Indian commercial banks.**

CREDIT RATING AGENCIES

Credit Rating Agencies In India

There are 7 main credit rating agencies in India namely





- ❖ Went public on **April 13, 2007**, listed on the **Bombay Stock Exchange and the National Stock Exchange**.
- ❖ It provides **tips and guidance to institutional and individual creditors** or investors and enhances **lenders/borrowers' capacity** to access financial markets for capital.
- ❖ It **also assists regulatory authorities in promoting financial market clarity** and develops tools for intermediaries to increase fundraising system efficacy.

ABOUT CREDIT RATING & CREDIT RATING AGENCIES (CRAS)

- ❖ **Assessment of a borrower's creditworthiness** for general or specific **debt obligations** involving qualitative and quantitative assessments.
- ❖ Companies that rate debtors based on their ability to **repay debt and likelihood of default**.
- ❖ In India, **regulated by SEBI (Credit Rating Agencies) Regulations, 1999**.

RED SEA CRISIS

WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ *Attacks from the Houthis on shipping vessels **have increased in response to the war in Gaza**, with **BP halting all shipments of oil and gas through the region***

ABOUT RED SEA-

❖ **Geographical Overview:**

- ☛ The **Red Sea is a semi-enclosed marginal seawater inlet of the Indian Ocean** situated between Africa and Asia.
- ☛ It is underlain by the **Red Sea Rift, a part of the Great Rift Valley of Africa**.

❖ **Bordering Countries:**

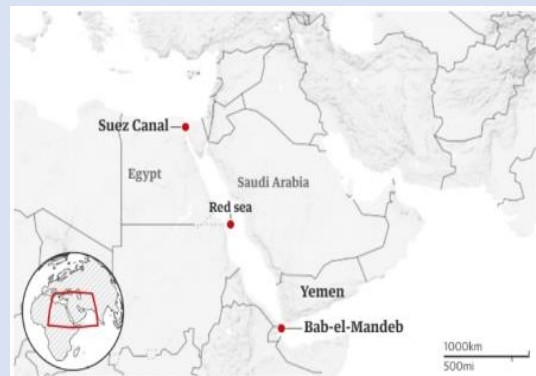
- ☛ **DESSEY:** Djibouti, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Eritrea, and Yemen.

❖ **Location and Connections:**

- ☛ Bordered by the **Sinai Peninsula, the Gulf of Aqaba, and the Gulf of Suez in the north**.
- ☛ Connects to the Mediterranean Sea through the **Suez Canal in the north**.
- ☛ It is linked to the **Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea** through the **Bab-el-Mandeb Strait** in the south.

❖ **Salinity and Climate:**

- ☛ The **Red Sea is one of the world's saltiest bodies of water** due to high evaporation, low precipitation, the absence of





**REWIND,
REJOICE, REBOOT
& REIMAGINE
EVENT: MINISTRY
OF CULTURE**

significant rivers, and its **connection to the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean.**

- ☛ The region experiences **little precipitation, leading to excess evaporation.**
- ☛ **Summer temperatures are high**, accompanied by relatively high humidity.
- ❖ **Monsoon Seasons:**
 - ☛ **The climate of the Red Sea is influenced by two monsoon seasons:** northeasterly and southwesterly monsoons

WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ *Celebrating the **Success of the Culture Working Group** under India's G20 Presidency*

EVENT OVERVIEW:

- ❖ **"Rewind, Rejoice, Reboot, and Reimagine"** event by the Ministry of Culture celebrated the success of the **Culture Working Group (CWG) under India's G20 Presidency.**
- ❖ Held on **January 17, 2024**, at the India International Centre (IIC).

THEME AND SIGNIFICANCE:

- ❖ **Theme: "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" – "One Earth, One Family, One Future."**
- ❖ **Digital Initiatives by CWG:**
 - ☛ **"Sur Vasudha" Orchestra:**
 - Unique orchestra **uniting musicians from G20 countries.**
 - Digital launch on Spotify, **celebrating global musical traditions.**
 - Promotes **inclusivity and harmony through music.**
- ❖ **Publications and Exhibitions:**
 - ☛ **"Together We Art" Catalogue:**
 - Explores cultural sustainability, ecology, and the environment through contemporary art.
 - Features works from 19 G20 members and 7 invitee countries.
 - ☛ **"Under the Same Sky" Anthology:**
 - Features poems from 29 countries.
 - Bridges cultural divides and fosters understanding through language and literature.
 - ☛ **"Bharat: Mother of Democracy" Exhibition:**
 - Highlights India's democratic history since 6000 BCE.
 - Published a booklet in 16 international languages.





☛ **"Roots and Routes" Exhibition:**

- Explores core values of Indian artistic traditions and their connection to Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.
- Showcases a curated collection of Indian art from ancient to contemporary times.

☛ **"Re(ad)dress: Return of Treasures" Catalogue:**

- Explores repatriation and restoration of cultural property.
- Features stories of 26 repatriated Indian objects and global case studies.

☛ **"Sustain: The Craft Idiom" Online Exhibition:**

- Focuses on harnessing India's living heritage for a sustainable future.
- Showcases over 35 crafts and features live teaching demonstrations.

☛ **"Woven Narratives" Online Exhibition:**

- Explores the significance of **Indian handlooms in the cultural** and creative economy.
- Showcases diverse **geography, ecological contexts**, and historical features.

❖ **Cultural Unity Message:**

- ☛ A canvas with the phrase **"Culture Unites All"** in native languages presented to India's G20 Sherpa, Mr. Amitabh Kant.

❖ **CWG's Impact and Conclusion:**

- ☛ CWG initiatives enriched **global cultural understanding and highlighted the role of cultural exchange** in addressing contemporary challenges.
- ☛ Event concluded with a **message on the unifying power of culture** and a call for continued collaboration to build a more interconnected and empathetic world.
- ☛ Emphasizes that **"Culture Unites All."**

CERT - IN

WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ *The Corporate Affairs Ministry finally resolved a **critical vulnerability**, identified by a cybersecurity expert, which had **exposed the personal details of prominent industrialists, celebrities, sports personalities, and others in the country.***

What Is CERT-IN?

- ❖ **CERT-IN is a Indian Computer Emergency Response Team, a functional arm of the Ministry of Information & Electronics Technology.**
- ❖ It serves as the **national nodal agency for promptly addressing computer security incidents.**
- ❖ Established with the **objective of securing the Indian cyberspace.**



- ❖ CERT-In has been actively **operational since January 2004.**
- ❖ **Under Section 24(2) of the RTI Act, the Centre has exercised its authority to exempt CERT-In from the provisions of the transparency law.**
- ❖ **Consequently, CERT-In will now function beyond the purview of the RTI Act, 2005, thereby restricting public access to information regarding its activities and operations.**



**TRADE UPS AND DOWN:
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY**

WHY IN NEWS?

Ministry of Commerce and Industry released **the data on exports.**

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ **Sector-wise Export Performance:**
 - ☛ **Out of 30 key merchandise sectors, 17 exhibited positive export growth.**
 - ☛ Sectors such as **electronic goods (14.4% growth), engineering goods (10.2% growth), and gems and jewellery (14% growth)** showed notable performance.
- ❖ **Year-to-Date Export and Import Trends (April-December):**

☛ Aggregate exports for the year so far are nearly 6% lower than the same period last year.

- ☛ **Despite the overall decline, 14 sectors demonstrated positive growth, with electronic goods (22% growth) and drugs/pharmaceuticals (8.2% growth) performing well.**
- ☛ Overall imports for the year so far have **decreased by almost 8%, with certain segments like iron and steel, non-ferrous metals, machinery and machine tools, electronic goods, and gold remaining healthy.**
- ❖ **Global Trade Uncertainty:**
 - ☛ **Houthi attacks in the Red Sea have created uncertainty in global trade.**

Table 1: Trade during December 2023*

		December 2023 (USD Billion)	December 2022 (USD Billion)
Merchandise	Exports	38.45	38.08
	Imports	58.25	61.22
Services*	Exports	27.88	31.19
	Imports	13.25	15.81
Overall Trade (Merchandise + Services) *	Exports	66.33	69.28
	Imports	71.50	77.03
	Trade Balance	-5.17	-7.75

*Note: The latest data for services sector released by RBI is for November 2023. The data for December 2023 is an estimation, which will be revised based on RBI's subsequent release. (ii) Data for April-December 2022 and April-September 2023 has been revised on pro-rata basis using quarterly balance of payments data.



- The attacks **have led to increased transportation costs**, insurance premiums, and rerouting of vessels through the Cape of Good Hope.
- **Europe, accounting for 15% of India's merchandise exports**, might be adversely **affected as 80% of outbound shipping to Europe** typically occurs through the Red Sea region.

❖ **Future Impact on Trade Deficit:**

- Analysts at **Nomura anticipate** the **current account deficit** to reach around **1.6% of GDP in the quarter**.
- The full impact of the Red Sea attacks on **India's exports will become clearer** in the coming weeks and months.
- If **India's exports are significantly impacted**, there is a possibility that the **merchandise trade deficit could widen more than expected in the last quarter** of the financial year.

