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DAILY NEWS DIARY

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FOR PRELIMS AND MAINS

Warm Greetings.

- DnD aims to provide every day news analysis in sync with the UPSC pattern.
- It is targeted at UPSC – Prelims & Mains.
- Daily articles are provided in the form of Question and Answers
- To have a bank of mains questions.
- And interesting to read.
- Providing precise information that can be carried straight to the exam, rather than over dumping.

Enjoy reading.

THE HINDU - TH  
INDIAN EXPRESS - IE  
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ECONOMIC TIMES - ET  
TIMES OF INDIA - TOI



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## ESSAY PAPER

### Editorial

**Q – As states reopen schools, govts must start paying attention to learning gaps the pandemic has widened. Elucidate?**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

After over a year-and-a-half of closures, as Covid-19 cases decline and vaccination picks up, several states have begun to reopen schools. This is enormously welcome. By forcing schools shut since March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has thrown students and teachers into a deep crisis. The Centre's short-sightedness in not including teachers as frontline workers whose inoculation must be prioritised, shares the blame for compounding school closures. Unless faced with emergency situations such as the question of holding board exams, governments have paid little attention to an education catastrophe in the making.

According to a parliamentary standing committee report, "around 320 million children in India have not stepped into a classroom for more than a year." The brunt of this blow has fallen on the vast majority of children who have no means to enter the digital classroom. Even for those able to access online classes, one-way digital learning has been a poor substitute for the physical classroom.

#### **CONCERNS:**

- Teachers and educationists fear that the consequences of this schooling gap in learning, an area of concern even before Covid, might be formidable.
- A study carried out in January this year in five states by a research group from Azim Premji University found not only evidence of a learning loss, but an alarming regression in children's abilities.
- Ninety-two per cent had lost one specific language ability and 82 per cent at least one specific mathematical ability from the previous year across all classes.
- The measure of the absence of school from the lives of children is not only in the loss of learning. It has had emotional costs — the loss of friendship and social skills — and most likely led to poor nutrition in the absence of hot cooked mid-day meals.
- For the most vulnerable, the pandemic has meant an end to education, or being forced into marriage or child labour.

Going back to school, therefore, comes with a set of daunting challenges — and not just involving social distancing protocols. From mapping the number of children who have dropped out of education and coaxing students back, to bridge courses that can help restore their skills and confidence, schools must be ready with nimble solutions.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

The urgent need to return primary school children to the physical classroom, too, can no longer be ignored if the inter-generational loss of learning is not to become permanent. On their part, governments must resist imposing top-down technocratic solutions — and allow schools to take the lead in designing interventions or adapt to the developing Covid situation in their respective areas.

## GS 2

### ❖ International Relations

**Q- Explain how UNSC Resolutions have come into place in addressing key concerns on Afghanistan and India’s role in furthering them?**

**BACKGROUND:** The United Nations Security Council, under the current Presidency of India, on August 30, 2021, adopted a resolution on the situation in Afghanistan, demanding that the war-torn country not be used to threaten or attack any nation or shelter terrorists.

Despite the abstention of two “P5” countries — Russia and China — from the India-led United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2593, the Government of India said it was a “matter of satisfaction” that the resolution addressed India’s “key concerns” on Afghanistan.

P5 refers to the five permanent members of the UNSC — China, France, Russia, the U.K. and the U.S.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESOLUTION:**

- The resolution, which called on the Taliban to keep their commitments on preventing terror groups in Afghanistan and urged them to assist the safe evacuations of all Afghan nationals wishing to leave the country, was the result of a careful coordination and “high-level” official contacts with UNSC members, including a call to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.
- “The resolution demands that Afghan territory should not be used to threaten or attack any country or to shelter and train terrorists and plan or finance terrorist attacks. It mentions individuals designated by Resolution 1267, (which includes the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad)

### **NON-INVOLVEMENT – RUSSIA & CHINA**

Explaining the split within the P5, Russia and China said they wanted all the groups, especially the Islamic State and the Uighur East Turkestan Islamic Movement to be named specifically in the document and listed a number of objections to the drafting of the resolution. They accused the U.S., the U.K. and France, the sponsors of the resolution, of having rushed it through on a “tight schedule” while seeking to absolve the U.S. of responsibility and distinguishing between “their and our terrorists”.

**INDIA'S WAY FORWARD –**

India is expected to chair the 1988 Sanctions committee that looks at Taliban sanctions next and participate in the decision to extend the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), where it will also have to balance competing demands from the U.S., the U.K. and France bloc ranged against Russia and China.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's travel plans in September will be watched closely, as he has been invited to attend the SCO summit in Dushanbe, of countries including Russia, China, Pakistan and Central Asian states on September 16-17, as well as the Quad summit in Washington, including the U.S., Australia and Japan, expected to be held on September 26-27.

**❖ Polity****Q- What are the grounds on which Centre defends decision to regulate digital news media?****BACKGROUND**

The Centre on Tuesday defended before the Delhi High Court its decision to regulate news and current affairs content on digital media under the new Information Technology (IT) Rules saying that there have been past incidents of disinformation on digital media leading to disturbance of public order.

The Centre's affidavit came in response to a bunch of petitions filed by several online news portals such as The Wire, The News Minute, Quint Digital Media Ltd., Foundation for Independent Journalism, and the Press Trust Of India over its attempt to regulate digital news media.

"The consequences of fake and misleading audio-visual news on digital media has in the recent past led to deaths of innocent people on false pretexts such as in the case of rumours of child lifters, loss of lives of innocent migrant workers during the pandemic induced lockdown, risk of social strife and communal tensions in the society due to sensationalist reportage of religious congregations in the context of the pandemic, etc.," the affidavit said.

The affidavit,said the risk of false or misleading information is greater over the Internet as the same can be spread rapidly within society. It stated that "individuals or groups can use digital media with very low barriers of entry or regulation to disseminate false, sensationalist or misleading news online, which can then be rapidly transmitted among the people".

**Code of ethics**

- The ministries also stressed that "news portals/websites even of organisations having newspapers or TV news channels will be covered under the IT Rules, 2021".
- The petitioners had challenged the IT Rules 2021 claiming that it seeks to regulate online news portals by imposing sweeping government oversight and a vaguely worded 'Code of Ethics'.
- The pleas argued that the IT Rules will "usher in an era of surveillance and fear, thereby resulting in self-censorship, which results in abridgment/ violation of Fundamental Rights as enshrined under Part III of the Constitution of India".

The Centre, however, defended the IT Rules saying it "only empower the audience to bring to the notice of the publishers such content which may be violative of the Code of Ethics".

## GS 3

## ❖ Economic Development

**Q- Critically analyse recent trends in GDP and GVA of the nation****BACKGROUND**

India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 20.1% in the first quarter of 2021-22, compared with the 24.4% contraction recorded in the corresponding quarter a year ago, but economic activity remained well below the pre-pandemic levels.

- Gross Value Added (GVA) in the economy during the April to June period rose 18.8%, as per the National Statistical Office (NSO), from a 22.2% dip in the first quarter of 2020-21.
- GVA from agriculture, forestry and fishing, the only sector to grow amid last year's national lockdown, picked up pace to grow 4.5% in Q1 this year from 3.5% in Q1 2020-21.
- Overall GVA in Q1 was still 7.8% lower than the first quarter of 2019-20, at ₹30,47,516 crore, while GDP remained 9.2% lower, indicating that the economy still has some way to go before it returns to activity levels prevalent prior to the pandemic.
- Electricity, gas, water supply and other utility services, whose GVA grew 14.3% in Q1 of 2021-22, compared with a 9.9% fall last year, was the only sector along with agriculture, forestry and fishing, to recover beyond the pre-pandemic levels of 2019-20.
- The first quarter GDP was even lower than that of the first quarter of 2018-19.

**MASKING THE IMPACT**

"The growth rates in 2021-22 in some cases are unduly high due to the low base," the NSO pointed out as a caveat for interpreting the GDP estimates that show all major industries rebounding from sharp contractions in the first quarter of last year.

Construction and Manufacturing GVA recorded a 68.3% and 49.6% uptick between April and June this year, compared to a 49.5% and 36% contraction, respectively, last year.

GVA from Trade, Hotels, Transport, Communication & Services related to Broadcasting recorded a 34.3% jump after dipping 48.1% in the same quarter last year. However, this employment- and contact-intensive services sector was still 30.2% below 2019-20 levels, suggesting a contraction of ₹2.1 lakh crore, said EY India chief policy advisor D.K. Srivastava.

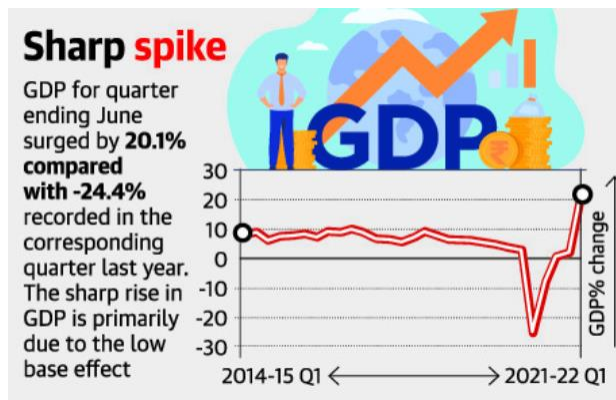
"The main disappointment comes from the contribution of the government sector, both from the demand and output sides," pointing to government final consumption expenditure (GFCE) contracting by 4.8% in Q1 this year — the only demand segment to show a fall.

On the output front, public administration, defence and other services such as education, health and recreation grew 5.8% but remained 5% lower than the pre-pandemic level.

“This is a clear indication that the government has been far too cautious in increasing its expenditures to contain the fiscal deficit,” noted M. Govinda Rao, chief economic advisor at Brickwork Ratings.

“Manufacturing and construction were the key drivers of the pickup in GVA growth in Q1, whereas on the expenditure side, private consumption and investment powered the turnaround in the GDP performance,” Ms. Nayar said.

Chief Economic Advisor Krishnamurthy Subramanian said growth for the full year is likely to remain around the ‘ballpark’ of 11% as projected by the Economic Survey. India is poised for stronger growth, driven by structural reforms, the government’s push for capital expenditure to enable private investment and a rapid COVID-19 vaccination drive, he said.



### SPENDING LAGGING

However, economists were worried about a decline in public capital and revenue spending in July indicated by data released by separately by the Controller General of Accounts.

“Despite the lifting of State-wise restrictions, revenue and capital spending contracted by 23% and 28%, respectively, in July 2021,” Ms. Nayar said.

The Reserve Bank of India and the International Monetary Fund had revised their growth projections for the year to 9.5%. CARE Ratings revised its GDP growth estimate for the year to 9.1% from 9.2%, following Tuesday’s data, as it expects growth rates in the next three quarters to be progressively lower with the base effect wearing off.

### Snippets

#### ❖ Economic Development

#### **Q- Comment on the recently launched most convenient land and sea channel linking the Indian Ocean with southwest China?**

The first shipments on a newly launched railway line from the Myanmar border to the key commercial hub of Chengdu in western China, that provides China a new road-rail transportation channel to the Indian Ocean, were delivered last week, state media reported on Tuesday.



A “test cargo” through what is being called the China-Myanmar New Passage arrived at the Chengdu rail port in Sichuan province on August 27, the official China News Service reported.

The transport corridor involves a sea-road-rail link. Goods from Singapore reached Yangon Port, arriving by ship through the Andaman Sea of the northeastern Indian Ocean, and were then transported by road to Lincang on the Chinese side of the Myanmar-China border in Yunnan province. The new railway line that runs from the border town of Lincang to Chengdu, a key trade hub in western China, completes the corridor.



“This passage connects the logistics lines of Singapore, Myanmar and China, and is currently the most convenient land and sea channel linking the Indian Ocean with southwest China,” the China News Service said, adding that “the one-way journey saves 20 to 22 days”.

China also has plans to develop another port in Kyaukphyu in the Rakhine state, including a proposed railway line from Yunnan directly to the port, but the progress there has been stalled by unrest in Myanmar.

Chinese planners have also looked at the Gwadar port in Pakistan as another key outlet to the Indian Ocean that will bypass the Malacca Straits. Gwadar is being developed as part of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to the far western Xinjiang region, but has been slow to take off amid concerns over security. The costs and logistics through CPEC are also less favourable than the Myanmar route with the opening of the rail transport channel from the Myanmar border right to western China’s biggest commercial hub, Chengdu. Transportation time on the railway line from the Myanmar border to Chengdu takes three days.

The Irrawaddy website that focuses on Myanmar news said the route is “the first to link western China with the Indian Ocean”.

The railway line currently ends in Lincang on the Chinese side opposite the Myanmar border trade town of Chin Shwe Haw. Plans are underway to develop Chin Shwe Haw as a “border economic cooperation zone” under the Belt and Road Initiative.

The Irrawaddy said the route goes through Mandalay, Lashio and Hsenwi on the Myanmar side and “is expected to become the lifeblood of international trade for China and Myanmar, while providing a source of income for Myanmar’s military regime”.



**Q- Consider the following statements –**

1. The deficit figure at 21.3% this fiscal appears better than it did a year earlier, when it had soared to 103.1%
2. The Centre's total receipts stood at ₹6.83 lakh crore or 34.6% of budget estimate (BE) up to July.

**Which of the above figures trend with regards to the budget estimates are INCORRECT?**

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both
- d. Neither



**Q- The Centre had prepared the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) in 2009 and asked the states to prepare their own specific plans. On those lines which of the following state was the last to submit it in 2019?**

- a. Bihar
- b. Nagaland
- c. Delhi
- d. Karnataka

**Ans – c**

**NOTE:** Delhi submitted its plan to combat climate change in 2019, becoming the last state to do so. "The plan remained mostly on paper and could not be implemented properly. It expired in 2020. Now, we are due for a new plan

The previous plan focused on six areas, including energy, transport, green cover and urban development, and projected a significant decrease in cold days and nights and increase in heavy rainfall events in Delhi. All extreme weather events of the last 10 years are being analysed to prepare a comprehensive plan which will focus on air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy, transport issues, air conditioning, heat islands, agriculture patterns, etc.

It will set targets to be achieved in phases over the next 10 years, whose discussions will be finished in 2 months and be in place this year.

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