

# **The Indian Express**

## **Front Page**

**Average maths score of first-year engineering students below 40%: AICTE (Page no. 3)**

**(GS Paper 2, Education)**

First-year engineering students, across major disciplines, struggle with mathematics more than any other core subject, according to a learning assessment survey carried out by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) — a finding which underlines the crisis plaguing engineering education in the country.

The survey, undertaken to evaluate the quality of technical education and identify learning gaps affecting employment prospects of engineering graduates, found civil engineering students to be the “lowest performers” in “fundamental subjects”.

The findings of the survey, in which 1.29 lakh students from 2,003 AICTE-approved institutes participated between last September and June 7 this year, indicate that the struggle with maths, which sets in at the foundational learning level in primary classes, remains unaddressed in the school education system for a vast majority of students.

The survey was carried out through a specially designed online test named PARAKH. Besides an aptitude test for all levels, first-year students were tested on physics, chemistry, maths, while second, third and fourth-year students were assessed on competency in their area of specialisation.

For third and fourth-year students, the overall scores also took into account their performance in emerging areas such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Internet of Things (IoT).

**Hate speeches starting point of targeted attacks: Delhi High Court (Page no. 3)**

**(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)**

Calling for action against hate speeches by elected representatives, political and religious leaders, the Delhi High Court Monday said that such utterances are the “beginning point of attacks” against the targeted community, and persons who are mass leaders and occupy high offices must conduct themselves with utmost integrity and responsibility.

While he dismissed a petition challenging a 2020 order of a trial court which had rejected an application by CPM leaders Brinda Karat and KM Tiwari seeking an FIR under IPC sections 153 A, 153 B, 295 A, 298, 504, 505 and 506 against Union Minister Anurag Thakur and BJP MP Parvesh Verma for their alleged hate speeches in connection with the anti-CAA protests.

Hate speeches are the beginning point of attacks against the targeted community that can range from discrimination to ostracism, ghettoisation, deportation, and, even to genocide.

## **The City**

**Sisodia: 65% attendance at ‘Mission Buniyaad’ camps daily (Page no. 6)**

**(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)**

Despite summer vacations, Mission Buniyaad camps have been seeing more than 65% attendance every day. He visited two government schools during the day to review the implementation of Mission Buniyaad, which has been in force since April 1, when schools in the city began functioning fully after Covid-induced disruptions.

Under this programme, all students of classes III to IX are being taught foundational reading, writing and numeracy. While summer vacations began last month, all children have been asked to attend summer camp in their schools.

Our primary objective is to help children strengthen their foundational skills, instead of getting them burdened by the syllabus. Along with this, after the pandemic, we have also increased coverage of Mission Buniyaad till Class IX to guide students better.

Currently, about 10 lakh students are part of this mission, and attendance has always been recorded at over 65% every day.

## **Govt. and Politics**

**China takes over as biggest importer of Indian broken rice (Page no. 8)**

**(GS Paper 3, Indian Economy)**

China emerged as the top buyer of Indian rice during the pandemic, with the neighbouring country importing 16.34 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) — or 7.7 per cent — of India’s total rice export of 212.10 LMT in financial year 2021-22, according to an analysis of trade data.

The analysis shows that out of China's total rice import from India of 16.34 LMT, nearly 97 per cent, or 15.76 LMT, was broken rice, which has seen a spike in demand from that country.

In fact, China is now the top buyer of Indian broken rice, which was earlier exported mostly to African countries.

In 2021-22, India's total rice exports — both basmati and non-basmati — was 212.10 LMT, which is 19.30 per cent higher than 177.79 LMT exported in 2020-21. In the same period, rice export to China jumped by 392.20 per cent: from 3.31 LMT to 16.34 LMT.

### **In Bombay HC, 40% posts of judges vacant, 5.88 lakh cases pending (Page no. 8)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, Judiciary)**

The Bombay High Court is facing acute shortage of judges as appointments are not made in expedited manner. As on date, the court's current strength is closer to half the sanctioned strength with 11 judges retiring this year and two senior judges have been recommended for elevation as Chief Justices of other High Courts.

According to the National Judicial Data Grid ( NJDG), there are 5.88 lakh cases pending before the Bombay High Court of which 1.14 lakh fresh cases were filed in the last one year and more than 16,000 criminal cases are pending for more than 10 years.

While the Supreme Court collegium in February recommended the names of ten lawyers as judges of Bombay HC, the central government has not cleared them yet, keeping the number of judges less than 60, with nearly 40 per cent vacant posts.

On June 3, the central government notified appointment of two judicial officers as Additional Bombay HC judges. While the SC collegium had recommended their names for elevation to HC in September last year, the Centre had returned their files, prompting collegium to reiterate its recommendation in February this year.

## **The Editorial Page**

### **Trust on Trial (Page no. 12)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)**

The SIT report indicting the para commandos of the Army for the botched operations on December 4 last year in Nagaland's Mon district is on expected lines. The army personnel have been accused of not adhering to the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) — this led to indiscriminate firing on the vehicle carrying the miners, resulting in the death of six of them.

Two others were seriously injured. Had it not been for these two survivors, much crucial evidence would have been lost. The Army commandos resorted to firing “without ensuring positive identification” and thereafter, reportedly, attempted to cover up the wanton killings by covering the bodies with a tarpaulin and sitting over them.

After the villagers rushed to the spot in search of their kin, they spotted the bodies and questioned the soldiers. The attempt to cover up the killings infuriated the villagers, leading to further violence in which six more villagers and a jawan of the Assam Rifles lost their lives.

Though the Nagaland Government had sent the report to the Department of Military Affairs in the first week of April and even issued a reminder, the officers have not yet been prosecuted because the civil courts cannot try them without the Centre's sanction.

Meanwhile, a Court of Inquiry, constituted by the Army authorities, headed by a Major General is reported to have been completed. Under Section 6 of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958, (AFSPA), “no prosecution, suit or other legal proceedings shall be instituted, except with the previous sanction of the Central Government, against any person in respect of anything done or purported to be done in exercise of powers conferred by the Act.”

## **The Idea Page**

### **The way forward on 5G (Page no. 13)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, Science and Tech)**

In January, “telecom neutrals” among others heaved a collective sigh of relief when the government, driven to the edge of the precipice, announced a rescue package that allowed breathing space for some telecom companies (telcos).

Vodafone Idea (Vi) got a respite in the form of government equity against spectrum and licensee fee dues. Airtel breathed easy on account of easier and longer payment terms, while Jio and BSNL were largely unaffected for opposite reasons. For Jio, the dues were an insignificant share of their expanding balance sheet while for BSNL the toll was only on paper. BSNL has largely become redundant to the narrative of preserving competition in the sector, the chief inspiration for the rescue package.

Imagine, to borrow from John Lennon, if there was no Vi, subscribers would be at the mercy of a virtual duopoly. Not a pretty sight when just a few years ago we boasted of a hypercompetitive market with the lowest tariff in the world when the dominant narrative was the need for consolidation.

In 1994, the task was much easier — trying to save the sector from the dominance and abuse of a public sector monopoly that operated largely on fulfilling the demands of the elite rather than the public.

The irony of a public sector monopoly serving the elite was largely lost since the public sector was commonly accepted as an instrument of state patronage in India's dirigiste political economy.

In the following years, the combined forces of technology and deregulation helped break the shackles of public sector dominance despite the latter's stiff resistance.

How does one break the monopoly of the private sector that embraces cutting-edge technology and has established its dominance, arguably through the market rather than administrative fiat?

Admittedly, it is much harder this time, because neither deregulation nor technology is available today as tools to boost competition. Only redesigning policy will help. But, that as we argue, will require dollops of political will.

## **Economy**

### **Retail inflation eases a bit but still over 7% (Page no. 15)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, Indian Economy)**

After rising to a 95-month high of 7.79 per cent in April, retail inflation rate for May moderated to 7.04 per cent, helped by a high base, data released by National Statistical Office.

With this print, retail inflation has remained above the upper tolerance level of the RBI's medium-term inflation target for the fifth consecutive month.

With inflation rate set to remain elevated in coming quarters as well, the RBI is expected to undertake another rate hike in August and may also have to explain its failure to keep the inflation in check to the government if the average inflation rate breaches the 2-6 per cent target for three consecutive quarters, as per the mandate by the monetary policy framework. Though there was moderation from the previous month, food inflation continued to remain high. Core inflation — the non-food, non-fuel component — was at 6.07 per cent, remaining above 5 per cent for the 25th consecutive month.

The impact of duty cuts on fuel is expected to show full impact in June's inflation print and thereafter as it was undertaken on May 22. Combined food price inflation eased to 7.97 per cent in May from 8.31 per cent in April but was up from 5.01 per cent in May 2021.

Rural inflation was recorded at 7.01 per cent in May as against 8.38 per cent in April. It also eased to a lower level than urban inflation of 7.08 per cent in May after being higher than urban inflation of 7.09 per cent in April.

The highest inflation rate was recorded by Telangana at 9.45 per cent, followed by Maharashtra at 8.52 per cent and Andhra Pradesh at 8.49 per cent.

### **RBI regulations authority bats for updation, periodic review of returns (Page no. 15)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, Indian Economy)**

The Regulations Review Authority of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recommended withdrawal of 714 regulatory instructions which have either become obsolete or redundant and have not been explicitly withdrawn.

Based upon a comprehensive review of the returns submitted by the regulated entities, the RRA has recommended complete elimination of paper-based returns and has identified 65 regulatory returns which should either be discontinued or merged with other returns or should be converted into online returns.

In its report submitted to the RBI, the RRA has also suggested that review and revocation of time-barred and old regulations may be taken up for alignment with the recent circulars and this exercise can be institutionalised in such a manner that only the current and updated instructions are available in public domain.

It has proposed a periodic review of regulatory or supervisory returns at least once in three years. The RRA has recommended that ad hoc returns introduced for capturing specific data should be prescribed with a sunset clause of not more than six months and any extension beyond the initial period or converting them to a permanent return must be done after going through the rigour of scrutiny and approval of the Returns Governance Group (RGG).

## **Explained**

### **Managing type 1 diabetes (Page no. 16)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, Science and Tech)**

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) released guidelines for the diagnosis, treatment, and management for type-1 diabetes.

This is the first time the ICMR has issued guidelines specifically for type 1 diabetes, which is rarer than type 2 — only 2% of all hospital cases of diabetes in the country are type 1 — but which is being diagnosed more frequently in recent years.

Today, more and more children are being diagnosed with type 1 diabetes in our country. This may be because the actual prevalence of the disorder is going up in India.

It may also reflect better awareness and therefore, improved diagnosis of type 1 diabetes. Finally, it could be that children are surviving more due to early diagnosis and better treatment.

India is considered the diabetes capital of the world, and the pandemic disproportionately affected those living with the disease. Type 1 or childhood diabetes, however, is less talked about, although it can turn fatal without proper insulin therapy.

### **What is Web 5.0, Jack Dorsey's vision for the internet of the future (Page no. 16)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, Science and Tech)**

Former Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey recently announced his vision for a new decentralized web platform that is being called Web 5.0 and is being built with an aim to return “ownership of data and identity to individuals”.

Web 1.0 was the first generation of the global digital communications network. It is often referred to as the “read-only” Internet made of static web-pages that only allowed for passive engagement.

The next stage in the evolution of the web was the “read and write” Internet. Users were now able to communicate with servers and other users leading to the creation of the social web. This is the world wide web that we use today.

### **Are chatbots person? Google engineer's claim and larger debate (Page no. 16)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, Science and Tech)**

A senior engineer at Google claimed that the company's artificial intelligence-based chatbot Language Model for Dialogue Applications (LaMDA) had become “sentient”.

The engineer, Blake Lemoine, published a blog post labelling LaMDA as a “person” after having conversations with the AI bot on subjects like religion, consciousness and robotics.

The claims have also spurred a debate on the capabilities and limitations of AI-based chatbots and if they can actually hold a conversation akin to human beings.

Google first announced LaMDA at its flagship developer conference I/O in 2021 as its generative language model for dialogue applications which can ensure that the Assistant would be able to converse on any topic.

In the company's own words, the tool can “engage in a free-flowing way about a seemingly endless number of topics, an ability we think could unlock more natural ways of interacting with technology and entirely new categories of helpful applications”.