

18.1.2018

CURRENT AFFAIRS

**1. WEF: EXPERTS FORECAST RISKS TO INTENSIFY IN 2018**

The world is entering a critical period of intensified risk in 2018, the World Economic Forum said in the Global Risks Report 2018.

- ❑ According to the annual report, structural and interconnected nature of risks in 2018 threaten the very system on which societies, economies and international relations are based.
- ❑ The global risks perception survey indicated that experts are preparing for another period of heightened risk. They cited deteriorating geopolitical landscape for the pessimistic outlook in 2018.
- ❑ Among the 30 global risks the experts were asked to prioritize in terms of likelihood and impact, all five environmental risks namely extreme weather; biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse; major natural disasters; man-made environmental disasters; and failure of climate-change mitigation and adaptation - were ranked highly on both dimensions, the report said.
- ❑ Extreme weather events were seen as the single most prominent risk.

**2. NGT: DENY CLEARANCE TO THERMAL PLANTS TILL THEY COMPLY WITH STANDARDS**

The National Green Tribunal directed the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) and state environment impact assessment authorities to “not grant any new environment clearances” to new thermal power plants until they comply with the standards set by the ministry.

The MoEF had on December 7, 2015 issued a notification revising the standards for coal-based thermal power plants across the country that aimed to reduce emissions such as sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter, and regulate the amount of water consumption. These power plants were given a December 2017 deadline to set up appropriate mechanism and technologies to cut emissions.

**3. SUPREME COURT CRISIS: FOUR JUDGES HAVE A PLAN**

- ❑ THE four Supreme Court judges, who made public their grievances against Chief Justice met with two other Supreme Court judges and finalised a proposal which they hope will break the current impasse.
- ❑ The proposal, expected to be handed over to the CJI deals with formalising a “rational, orderly and transparent system” to allocate cases to different benches of the Supreme Court.
- ❑ Its details were not available but the idea is to insulate the roster from allegations of favour.

#### **4. SC HAS BEGUN AADHAAR HEARING**

A five-judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court has begun the final hearing in the Aadhaar case. The bench is hearing the petitions challenging the validity of Aadhaar contending that it violates an individual's fundamental right to privacy. Petitioners told the five-judge Constitution bench that Aadhaar may cause death of citizens civil rights.

#### **5. ISRAEL MISSILE DEAL THAT WAS SHELVED IS BACK ON TABLE**

- ❑ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that the \$500-million Spike anti-tank guided missile deal between India and Israel, which had been scrapped earlier, was back on the table.
- ❑ Netanyahu's comment comes two months after The Indian Express reported that the Ministry of Defence had called off the \$500-million deal for Spike anti-tank missiles with Israel's Rafael, in favour of indigenous development by DRDO. Rafael confirmed earlier this month that the deal had been called off, but Israeli officials promised to press the Indian government to reinstate it.

#### **6. HOME MINISTRY PITCHES FOR BUDAPEST CONVENTION ON CYBER SECURITY**

- ❑ Making a strong pitch to sign the Budapest Convention on cyber crime, the Ministry of Home Affairs flagged the need for international cooperation to check cyber crime, radicalisation and boost data security. India was reconsidering its position on becoming a member of the Budapest Convention because of the surge in cyber crime, especially after a push for digital India.
- ❑ The move, however, is being opposed by the Intelligence Bureau (IB) on the grounds that sharing data with foreign law enforcement agencies infringes on national sovereignty and may jeopardise the rights of individuals.
- ❑ The Budapest Convention provides for the criminalisation of conduct, ranging from illegal access, data and systems interference to computer-related fraud and child pornography, procedural law tools to make investigation of cybercrime and securing of e-evidence in relation to any crime more effective, and international police and judicial cooperation on cybercrime and e-evidence. The Convention has 56 members, including the US and the UK.

#### **7. Left behind: on the right to free, compulsory education-The right to free and compulsory education must be extended to the 14-18 age group**

- ❑ If there is one strong message from the findings of the Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2017, it is that the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act should cover the entire spectrum of 18 years, and not confine itself to those aged 6 to 14

- ❑ Guaranteed inclusion will empower those in the 14-18 age group who are not enrolled anywhere, and help them acquire finishing education that is so vital to their participation in the workforce.

#### OTHER FINDING

- ❑ The ASER sample study estimates that 14% of this age group — a total of 125 million young Indians in this category — **are not enrolled**.
- ❑ Moreover, **learning outcomes** for those who had progressed to higher levels of schooling were shockingly low: only 43% of the youth could solve an arithmetic problem involving division of a three-digit number by a single digit;
- ❑ There are also **discrete differences among States** on the number of youth who are not on the rolls in appropriate levels of schooling, with 29.4% of both boys and girls aged 17-18 not enrolled in a Chhattisgarh district, compared to 4.5% and 3.9%, respectively, in a Kerala district.
- ❑ The ASER data point to a **massive digital divide**, with 61% of respondents stating they had never used the Internet, and 56% a computer, while mobile telephony was accessible to 73%.

#### WAY FORWARD

To translate the objectives of the RTE Act into a comprehensive guarantee, expanding its scope to cover all levels of education. This will remove the lacuna in policy that awaits remedy seven decades after Independence.

#### PRELIMS MCQ

1. Annual Status of Education Report is published by
  - a. MINISTRY OF HRD
  - b. PRATHAM – NGO
  - c. Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation
  - d. None of the above
  
2. Budapest is the capital of
  - a. Hungary
  - b. Spain
  - c. Croatia
  - d. Belgium
  
3. The National Green tribunal (NGT) hears matters relating to
  1. biodiversity
  2. climate change
  3. forests
  4. water

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

- a) 1, 2 and 3 only
- b) 1, 3 and 4 only
- c) 2, 3 and 4 only
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

**Mains question**

1. National education policy has accomplished little improvement. By implementing the recommendations of ASER report do you think the learning outcomes will improve? Suggest your measures.