* In last academic year, 22% school had internet

    ↳ Ministry of Education released report on United District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) 2019-20

    ↳ About UDISE+
- online data collection from the schools
- developed in 2018-19
- Earlier UDISE from 2012-13 but data filling was manual

    ↳ Key highlights of the report
- Gross Enrolment ratio (GER) at all levels of school education has improved in 2019-20 compared to 2018-19
- Pupil Teacher ratio (PTR) improved at all levels
- enrolment of girls is more than 12.08 crore, ↑ by 14.08 lakh compared to 2018-19
- Gender Parity Index (GPI) has improved at secondary and higher secondary level, from 0.97 in 2012-13 to 1.04 in 2019-20
- 22% of schools had internet facilities → makes Digital divide

* Net loss (Editorial)

↳ Ministry of Education recently released <mark>unified District Information system for Education Plus (UDISE+)</mark>, 2019-20

↳ some of findings of the UDISE+ Reports

- mere <u>22% of the schools had Internet</u>
    ↳ gout inst. only 11%.
- <u>functional computer access</u> - national average 37%
    & for gout. schools - 28.5% .
        Regional difference → kerala (87.84%), Delhi (85.69%)
        where as odisha (6.46%), Bihar (8.5%)

↳ Above findings promote <u>digital divide</u> in school education system mainly during coronavirus crisis.

↳ <u>solutions</u> :

- <u>Installation</u> of computers and Internet facilities on priority basis.
    ↳ Expand <mark>National Broadband Mission</mark>, the BSNL Network and other service provider
- <u>utilise upcoming 5G technology</u>
- Public funding, communities, corporates and hardware makers can use <u>recycling and donation options</u>.

* We need more creators

- Indian education system requires creators
  - ↳ creation requires deep work.
  - ↳ person must be motivated enough to remain immersed in a specific activity to be creative & happy.
- Traditional teaching
  - Classroom based
  - Content heavy syllabus
  - focus on exam based learning rather than real world application
  - Some teachers indulge in plagiarism, lack basic writing & grammar skills.
- Future educators should
  - Use constructivism in classrooms
  - Constant engagement
  - Emotional connect & immersive learning
  - Use of Ed Tech apps
    - ↳ delivers content to multiple learning styles, learning curves & pace.

- <u>Challenges in becoming a creative Educator</u>
  - Tech tools force us to become consumers rather than creators.
    - ↳ Eg: Mindless scrolling of Social media
  - Addictive contents in Entertainment channels
    - ↳ suspends reality
  - With schools shut down
    - ↳ children lack personal contacts with their social groups
    - ↳ rely excessively on technology
  - Deepwork is rare with the presence of such distractions

✳ A language ladder for an education roadblock.

- <u>National Education Policy 2020</u>
  ↳ gives emphasis on mother tongue as medium of instruction

- <u>Steps taken</u>
  - 14 Engineering colleges in 8 states to offer courses in regional languages.
  - AICTE to permit B.Tech prog. in 11 native languages - Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Gujarati, Malayalam, Bengali, Assamese, Punjabi & Odia.
  - Vidya Pravesh programme
    ↳ promotion of mother tongue in elementary education
  - AICTE + IIT Madras collab to translate SWAYAM courses into 8 regional languages.

- Why focus on mother tongue?
  - Studies have proven that children who learn in their mother tongue in their early, formative years,
    ↳ perform better than those taught

in an alien language.

- Instile confidence in poor, rural & tribal students
- Improves learning outcomes.
- Builds self esteem & self-identity.

– Consequences of giving primacy to English.
- Courses in Engg, medicine, law in English
  ↳ excludes our own people
- Builds academic roadblocks
- impedes progress of majority of students
- makes regional language learning look inferior

– Global practices
  ◦ S. Korea
    ↳ 70% of the universities teach in Korean
    ↳ then also they are capable to play a role on international stage.
    ↳ 2018 → S. Korean Govt banned English teaching before 3rd grade in schools.
  • Japan
    ↳ majority of university prog. taught in Japanese.
  • China → universities use mandarin

- France
  - ↳ Strict 'French-only' policy as the medium of instruction in schools.
- Germany
  - ↳ Language of instruction in schools is predominantly German.
  - ↳ 80% of all Masters prog. in German.

- Situation in India
  - majority of professional courses in English
  - Native language courses non-existent in science, engg., medicine & law.
  - Biggest bottle neck
    - ↳ lack of high-quality text books in native languages.

- Way Forward
  - Use of Technology to ↑ accessibility of Indian language courses
  - Democratisation of higher Education by making high-quality textbooks in native languages
  - Strategy is not to ditch English but the approach is 'mother tongue plus English'

✳ RTE entitlements to be paid through DBT

- ==Right to Education Entitlements==
  ↳ textbooks, uniforms, transport allowance
  ↳ stipends for children with special needs
  ↳ all to be provided directly to the students as cash transfers through DBT.

- Tuition fee for EWS students in pvt. schools
  ↳ also an RTE entitlement
  ↳ but not clear whether it would be provided as DBT or not.

- ==Samagra Shiksha== extended till 2026
  ↳ integrated scheme for 11.6 lac govt & aided schools with 15 crore students
  ↳ ==60:40== funding by Centre : State
  ↳ Total financial outlay = ₹ 2.94 lac crore
  ↳ extends from pre school to Class XII
  ↳ Subsumes three schemes
      ↳ ==Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA)==
      ↳ ==Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyaan (RMSA)==
      ↳ ==Teacher Education==

✳ Access to knowledge

— In 1993 Supreme Court declared the right to education(RTE) as a FR under Article 21

— In 2002, Constitution amended and Art 21A inserted to guarantee every child between the ages of 6 and 14 access to free and compulsory education.

— Supreme Court has also held that state must take affirmative measures to secure the RTE at all levels and not just primary education.

— Despite such norms of RTE set in Constitution and by SC, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce report:

- Dismissed public access to affordable educational study material and favored copyright protection of the publishers
- Even suggested curtailing "fair dealing provisions" under Indian Copyright law — which enable access to the work without the copyright holder's consent

- It held that the provisions pose detrimental impact on the publishing industry and authors
- Report ignored state's obligation to secure the RTE.

Way Forward:
- Need is to ensure balance between
  - Copyright protection of the publishers and
  - Public access to affordable educational study material
- Fair dealing provisions are user rights which are no less important than the rights of publishers.
- DU photocopy case, the purpose of copyright is to increase the:
    - Harvest of knowledge,
    - Motivate the creative activity of authors in order to benefit the public
  - Access to copyrighted material for literacy and education does not curtail the market for these works.
  - It held that students are anyway not potential customers.

* Getting focus back on Early Childhood Education

- National Education Policy, 2020
  ↳ Achieve universal & equitable Early Childhood Education (ECE)
- ECE → Those attending pre schools.
  → ~14 lac enrolled in Anganwadis
- Importance of ECE –
  ↳ Impact on learning & even earning capabilities throughout their life time
- Challenges:
  (1) ECE at Anganwadis
    ↳ low attendance & instructional time
    ↳ Prioritisation of other early childhood development services.
  (2) Most parents prioritise their older child's education over ECE.
  (3) Lack of parental engagement in education of child in 3-6 year age group.
  (4) Lack of conducive home environment.
  (5) For those with insufficient socio-economic background –

- Lack of access to pre schools
- Lack of ability to invest in ECE
- Digital divide

(6) Households with limited time to invest in ECE, even if their socio-economic status permits it.

(7) Many parents lack knowledge of effective methods to facilitate learning within home.

— Way Forward —

- Change in mindset
  ↳ on significance of ECE among parents
- Support of state, schools & teachers
  ↳ for enabling parental engagement
- Minimise need for parents to purchase any additional resources.
- Support low-income households by rations & devices for education
- Decentralized approach through teachers & schools

Mid day Meal Scheme

A parliamentarian has recently asked the govt to re-start the mid-day meals in schools and to ensure that the meals provided are cooked and nutritious.

Mid-Day Meal Scheme-

- The Midday Meal Scheme is a school meal program designed to better the nutritional standing of school-age children nationwide.
- It was launched in the year 1995.
- It supplies free lunches on working days for children in primary and upper primary classes in:
  - Govt, govt aided, local body schools
  - Education Guarantee Scheme, and alternate innovative education centres,
  - Madarsa and Maqtabs supported under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, and
  - National Child Labour Project schools run by the ministry of labour
- The Scheme has a legal backing under the National Food Security Act, 2013.

Objective: To enhance the enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously improve nutritional

levels among school going children studying in <mark>Classes I to VIII</mark>

History of the scheme

- In 1925, a Mid Day Meal Programme was introduced for disadvantaged children in Madras Municipal Corporation.
- By the mid-1980s 3 States viz. <mark>Gujarat, Kerala and Tamil Nadu and the UT of Pondicherry</mark> had universalized a same scheme with their own resources for children studying at the primary stage.
- In 2001, the SC asked all state govts to begin this programme in their schools within 6 months.

Features: Calorie approach

- Primary (1-5) and upper primary (6-8) schoolchildren are currently entitled to 100 grams and 150 grams of food grains per working day each.
- It also include adequate quantities of micronutrients like <mark>iron, folic acid, Vitamin-A.</mark>

- The calorific value of a mid-day meal at various stages has been fixed at a minimum:

Calories Intake	Primary	Upper Primary
Energy	450 calories	700 calories
Protein	12 grams	20 grams

Hunger stats after the pandemic—

- The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020 estimated that as of April 2020 369 million children globally were losing out on school meals, a bulk of whom were in India.
- The recent Global Hunger Index (GHI) report for 2020 ranks India at 94 out of 107 countries and in the category 'serious', behind our neighbours Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

What measures were resorted to counter this?

- Govt announced that the usual hot-cooked mid-day meal or an equivalent food security allowance/dry ration would be provided to all eligible school-going children even during vacation.
- Nearly three months into this decision, States were still struggling to implement this.

A model struggling to deliver

Significance of Early Childhood Education:

- Available evidence suggests that children who engage in early and play-based learning activities have better developmental outcomes than those who don't.

- Research has shown that children who regularly participate in a preschool programme perform better than children who do not.

Govt efforts:

- The recent National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, envisions universalising Early Childhood Care and Education through Anganwadi Centres (AWCs).

- Anganwadi Centres fall under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme which offers six services with preschool education being one of them.

Challenges in Anganwadis:

- The anganwadis lack adequate and quality infra primarily owing to low public investment.

- The absence of adequate space and the lack of play-based learning materials.
- Anganwadi workers are underpaid and overburdened.
- Also, they lack the capacity to deliver quality teaching to the children.
- This results in inadequate inputs for the holistic development of young children.
- As a result, children's early learning outcomes were nowhere close to the expected levels.

Recommendations:

- Need to fill the infrastructural and human resource gaps.
- The funds for anganwadis should be increased to ensure adequate infrastructure.
- Also, the honorarium of Anganwadi workers should be adequately increased.
- There is also the need to build capacity and invest in research and development of a meaningful early childhood education curriculum.

Evaluation of the functioning of the Anganwadis centres.

About the Anganwadi system:

- Anganwadi system is a part of the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) of the govt.
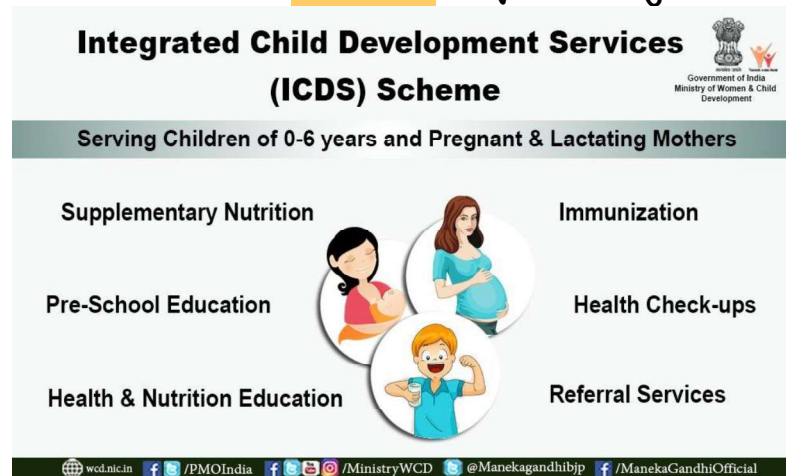
  - Umbrella ICDS is a centrally sponsored scheme.
- Serves over 30 mn children in the age group of 3-6 in 1.3 mn centres across the country.

Concerns associated with Anganwadis:

Scheme is yet to fulfil its potential due to the following reasons.

1. Problem of low attendance:
   - This adversely impact the development process of the children.
   - They fail to develop early language, early numeracy, socio-emotional, executive function, and motor skills.
2. Poor perception of anganwadis among the parents:
   - Most parents do not perceive Anganwadi centres as centres of learning and think

- The system instead focuses on local language-driven, play-based and activity-based learning for the children in the age group of 3-6 years.
3. Parents are leaving for private preschools:
   - Excessive focus on rote-based learning and memorisation of letters and numbers is not good for the development of the child.
   - Over 7 mn children in India attend private preschools.

Recommendations to improve the system:

1. Ensuring cognitive, literacy and numeracy skills among children:
   - Anganwadi centres should also try and inculcate teacher-led activities focused on developing cognitive, literacy and numeracy skills.
   - Children enrolled in anganwadis must be exposed to the English language at an early age in an age-appropriate, non-intimidating way.
   - While also recognising that the language spoken at home is the best way to reach fluency in any other language.
   - With respect to writing, the children must be made to use pencils for a few minutes a day.
   - This will help support fine motor skills and later writing in the children.

- Educators must try and exhibit the wonder of maths through fun activities like estimation, comparison, sorting, and seriation.

2.   Engaging with parents:
- Shiksha Choupals (parent-teacher meetings) must be conducted by Anganwadis to showcase the learning happening to the parents.
- Will help build trust in the Anganwadi system in the parent community.
- Also, regular engagement with the parents will help them support the learning process of the children in the confines of home as well.