

NEWS TODAY

LEARNING - TEACHING MATERIAL (LTM) FOR FOUNDATIONAL STAGE LAUNCHED

- 'Jadui Pitara' - a play-based LTM tailored for children between the age group of 3-8 years- has been developed under National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (NCF-FS).

➤ It is designed to create curiosity and accommodate diverse needs of learners in foundational stage.

- National Education Policy 2020 envisages 5+3+3+4 (Foundational + Preparatory + Middle + Secondary) curriculum pedagogical structure.

➤ A National Steering Committee headed by Prof. K. Kasturirangan will develop NCF for each of the stages.

- NCF-FS was launched by Ministry of Education in October, 2022 and accordingly, NCERT has developed LTM.

➤ NCF-FS emphasises play based learning for foundational stages.

➤ Accordingly, LTM for foundational stage was launched using the concept of Jaadui Pitara.

- Key features of Jadui Pitara

➤ Applies to Class 1 & 2 also (age 6-8).

➤ It is available in 13 Indian languages.

➤ Comprises of playbooks, toys, puzzles, posters, story books etc. as well as reflecting local culture, social context and languages.

➤ Learning and Development in several domains including Physical Development, Socio-emotional and Ethical Development, Cognitive Development etc.

IMPORTANCE OF FOUNDATIONAL STAGE LEARNING

Brain development is most rapid in the first eight years of a child's life.

Lays the foundation for life-long learning and development.

Quality early education helps to promote long-term economic growth of the nation.

BANK MERGERS HAVE BENEFITED THE BANKING SECTOR: RESERVE BANK OF INDIA (RBI)

- Evaluating bank mergers in India since 1997, a RBI paper highlighted that:

➤ Mergers benefited both the acquirer and the Acquiree.

▪ Efficiency of acquirers improved because of factors like geographical diversification, improvement in share of interest income etc.

▪ Acquired bank benefitted because of addition to shareholder value.

➤ Combined entity relatively more resilient to financial risks.

➤ Most of the mergers amongst private sector banks were market-driven and those between PSBs (public sector banks) were government-led mergers.

- Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A) refers to transactions between two companies to combine in some form i.e.

➤ Merger or combining of two firms to form a new legal entity, and

➤ Acquisition or an outright purchase of one company by another.

Benefits of M&A	Dangers of M&A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved Economies of Scale • Increased Market Share and Distribution Capabilities • Reduced Manpower costs and Talent Retention • Enhanced Financial Resources • Fills Business Gaps, i.e. product, geographical or technology gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execution Risk due to lack of commitment from executives • It can have negative impact on customers perception • Reduced Competition and creation of too-big-to-fail (TBTF) banks that may have a systemic impact

FAO PUBLISHES ITS FIRST GLOBAL ASSESSMENT OF SOIL CARBON IN GRASSLANDS

- It measured stocks of **Soil Organic Carbon (SOC)** in both semi-natural and managed **grasslands**.
 - It was funded by **FAO LEAP Partnership**, a **multi-stakeholder initiative** to improve environmental sustainability of **livestock sector**.
- SOC is **carbon held within the soil that is measurable**. It helps in **improving soil biological, chemical, and physical properties**, water-holding capacity, and structural stability.
 - SOC is a **cost-effective nature-based solution** to mitigate effects of **climate change** by reducing atmospheric carbon dioxide.
- **Key highlights of Assessment**
 - **Grasslands**, contain approximately 20% of world's SOC, **have suffered losses because of human activities** such as intensive livestock grazing, agricultural activities etc.
 - **Most of world's grasslands have a positive carbon balance**, meaning land is stable or well-maintained.
 - However, **negative carbon balance** was found in **East Asia, Central and South America, and Africa south of Equator**.
 - SOC's are **not included in national climate plans** due to **lack of incentives for farmers** to improve management practices and **difficulty in accurately monitoring** SOC stocks.
 - **Recommendations:** Improve geostatistical methods and data accuracy related to SOC, reversing grasslands loss by stimulating plant growth, capturing carbon in the soil, and protecting carbon in highly organic soils.

ABOUT GRASSLANDS

- Grasslands are generally **open and continuous, fairly flat areas of grass**. Grasslands are **found on every continent except Antarctica**.
- There are **two main kinds of grasslands**: tropical and temperate.
- **Location:** Prairies of North America, Pampas of South America, Veldt of South Africa, Steppes of Central Eurasia, and Downs in Australia.

INDIA IS THE FIRST RESPONDER TO ANY CALAMITY IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD: PM

- **Congratulating members of Operation Dost** (Disaster response in Syria and Turkiye), PM stated that India has **consistently carried out similar relief and rescue missions** in multiple places.
 - Some **humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR)** activities by India: Helping **Maldives in 2014 water crisis**, **Nepal in 2015 Earthquake**, **Vaccine diplomacy post COVID-19**, **Operation Ganga** to rescue students from Ukraine etc.
 - India also **helped Sri Lanka in reconstruction** after the **Civil War** and also provided **humanitarian assistance** through several **peacekeeping missions**.
- **Guided by the philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**, India's **HADR capacities** tying into its diplomacy have **grown significantly** in recent years.
- **Benefits of Disaster Diplomacy:**
 - **Improved Bilateral ties and cement India's image** as a helping hand in **developing world**.
 - **Shows India's reach and ability** as a first responder to global crises. E.g. After 2004 Tsunami.
 - Help **build capacities on a people-to-people level**.
 - **Build capacities and skills** to respond to **increasing disasters** due to climate change.
- **Limitations**
 - **Limited Resources and Manpower** with National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).
 - **Limited long-term impact** of Disaster Diplomacy. E.g. India-Nepal ties remain strained even after the 2015 help.

TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA (TRAI) RELEASED RECOMMENDATIONS ON RATING OF BUILDINGS OR AREAS FOR DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY





- **Emphasis is on** providing a framework for making **Digital Connectivity Infrastructure (DCI)** an **intrinsic part of building development plans** similar to other building services such as water, electricity etc.
- **Major Recommendations**
 - **Amend Model Building Bye-Laws (MBBL) and National Building Code of India (NBC)** to incorporate necessary provisions on DCI.
 - **Buyer-builder agreements** under **Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016** should **specify requirements** for DCI.
 - **Establish a Council of DCI** under **Department of Telecommunications** for taking decisions in respect of certification, registration and capacity building of DCI professionals.
 - **Establish a system for rating buildings** for digital connectivity in the MBBL on lines of green buildings rating.
- **Need for DCI**
 - **Online services** such as **banking, ecommerce, citizen centric services and infotainment** like gaming, social networking, etc. **are feasible only with good digital connectivity**.
 - **Rapid adoption of frontier technologies** such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Blockchain, Internet of Things (IoT) etc. **with building operations**.
 - **COVID-19** has also brought spotlight on **importance of good digital connectivity**.
 - **Penetration of digital services** and smart devices **requires meaningful connectivity**.



NOD TO COMMERCIAL RELEASE OF NANO-DIAMMONIUM PHOSPHATE (NANO-DAP)

- Reported to be approved by Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, **Nano-DAP is expected to reduce the subsidy burden, and India's import dependence** of DAP.
 - > **More than half of India's DAP requirements** are imported, mainly from **West Asia and Jordan**.
- Nano-DAP** is a next-generation fertilizer produced by IFFCO and Coromandel International with nanoparticles of Nitrogen and Phosphorus, the primary macronutrients for plants.
 - > A **nanoparticle** is a **small particle** that ranges between **1 to 100 nanometres** in size.
 - > In 2021, **IFFCO launched Nano-Urea**.
 - > It is also **planning to launch nano-potash, nano-zinc and nano-copper fertilizers**.
- Advantages of using Nano-DAP**
 - > **Higher Use-Efficiency** as a 500-ml bottle of nano-DAP will have the same effectiveness as a bag of conventional soil nutrient.
 - > **Reduced input cost to agriculture**, helping to double the income of farmers.
 - > **Improved agriculture sustainability** through higher nutrient uptake, lower water consumption and reduction in environmental losses.
- Concerns:**
 - > **Increased nanoparticles** in soil and crops from continued nanoparticles use.
 - > **Potential health hazard** from nano-size particles at higher concentrations.

ALSO IN NEWS

 <p>Senior Advocates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central Government is seeking to change guidelines for designation of Senior Advocates. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Guidelines were issued by Supreme Court (SC) in Indira Jaising vs. Union of India (2017). Senior Advocates are amongst various categories of Advocates that are entitled to practice law before SC. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > An advocate is designated as senior by SC or a High Court based on virtue of their ability. > Under the guidelines, they are designated by a Committee for Designation of Senior Advocates or a Permanent Committee. Senior Advocate is not entitled to appear without an Advocate-on-Record in SC or without a junior in any other court or tribunal in India.
 <p>SDG Agrifood Accelerator Programme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO and SEED partnership launched the Programme. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > SEED is a global partnership for action on sustainable development and green economy. > It was founded by UN Environment Programme (UNEP), UN Development Programme (UNDP) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). SDG Agrifood Accelerator Programme is designed to help agrifood system start-ups develop their businesses while contributing to UN's SDGs. Operating across Africa and Asia, 12 SMEs who joined the Programme will be supported in three areas: financial readiness, innovation potential, and market reach.
 <p>Litigation Finance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Also known as litigation funding, it is a practice where a third party financier provides a claimant with financial resources in litigation matters in return for a share in profit or financial recovery. Litigation finance comes in two variations: recourse and non-recourse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Under recourse, a short-term loan is given to a company going through insolvency to remain operational during corporate insolvency resolution process. > Under non-recourse, funding is given to plaintiff on the agreement that a portion of legal settlement will be paid back if the case is won.
 <p>First loan default guarantee (FLDG) structure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In absence of clarity from RBI, Banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) have almost paused tie-ups with fintech players/digital lending apps, under FLDG structure. FLDG is a lending model, a credit-risk sharing agreement, between a fintech and a regulated entity. In FLDG, a third party guarantees to compensate up to a certain percentage of default in a loan portfolio of regulated entities.

 <p>Quality Control Orders (QCOs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government has extended QCOs for ferronickel grade for six months. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Ferronickel is a ferroalloy containing Iron and Nickel. > It is used to produce stainless steel and nickel alloy steels, commonly used in white goods, metro trains, railways etc. QCOs are issued by various Ministries/Departments in exercise of powers conferred under Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) Act, 2016. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Items, under these orders, cannot be produced, sold/traded, imported and stocked unless they bear BIS mark. Purpose: Ensure products compliance to compulsory Indian Standards, safety of environment, prevention of unfair trade practices etc.
 <p>Anubhuti Inclusive Park</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foundation Stone of world's largest and unique Divyang Park - Anubhuti Inclusive Park in Nagpur, Maharashtra was laid. Park will have adapted facilities for all 21 types of disabilities, identified under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016. It will have facilities like touch and smell garden, hydrotherapy unit, water therapy etc.
 <p>Gross Domestic Climate Risk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Released by Cross Dependency Initiative (a global organisation specialising in climate risk analysis), It is the world's 1st index assessing physical environment risk to built environments. Physical Climate Risk refers to vulnerability from several climate change events including heat waves, coastal flooding, forest fire, soil movement, riverine and surface flooding etc. Key Findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > India, China and U.S are home to 80% of most vulnerable cities and centres of economic activity. > 9 States, including Bihar, UP, Assam, Rajasthan etc. from India are among world's top 50 regions. > Jiangsu and Shandong of China topped it.
 <p>Solar Radiation Management (SRM) technologies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SRM technologies aims to cool Earth by artificially reflecting more of Sun's energy into space. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > There are different ways of SRM: on the ground, in atmosphere, or out in space. Some SRM technologies include Stratospheric Aerosol Injection, Marine Cloud Brightening, Cirrus Cloud Thinning etc. Recently, researchers have proposed that dust can be launched from moon to a Lagrange point to achieve SRM objectives. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Putting lunar dust in a stable orbit will block out sunlight by absorbing or scattering radiation, resulting in a cooling effect.
 <p>Climate Performance Index (CPI)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observer Research Foundation has released a CPI to evaluate performance of G20 countries in climate change mitigation. On CPI, India ranks first among all G20 members in terms of overall climate performance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > India's rank is attributed to factors like significantly low per capita contributions to emissions, Very limited share in legacy emissions relative to its population needs etc. Note: It is different from Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) published by Germanwatch, New Climate Institute and Climate Action Network.
 <p>Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre (JCBC), Pinjore</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JCBC has proposed to release Oriental white-backed Vultures in the wild in 2023-24. JCBC is a joint project of Haryana Forest Department and Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). It was established in 2001 with UK Government Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species' fund, to investigate the dramatic declines in the resident Gyps species of vultures. It houses three critically endangered species of Gyps Vultures, i.e. the Oriental white-backed, Long-billed and Slender-billed vultures.
 <p>Soluble adenylyl cyclase (sAC)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researchers are working on a new kind of male contraceptive via acute inhibition of sAC, which acts as on switch for sperm. About Soluble adenylyl cyclase (sAC): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > It is essential for sperm motility and maturation. > It is a regulatory cytosolic enzyme present in every cell. > sAC enzymes exist from archea to mammals and are related to transmembrane cyclases. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cyclase is an enzyme that acts as a catalyst in formation of a cyclic compound.