



Daily Current Affairs



To The Point by Dhananjay Gautam

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1 Australia is set to introduce a legislative ban on social media for children under 16

Context: Australia is set to introduce a legislative ban on social media for children under 16, targeting the reduction of risks associated with social media. This measure aims to address rising concerns over mental health, sleep disruption, social skills, academic impact, privacy, and body image issues linked to online platforms.

Harmful Effects of Social Media on Children:

- 1. Mental Health Issues:** Social media exposure has been linked to anxiety, depression, and cyberbullying.
- 2. Sleep Disturbance:** Excessive screen time impacts sleep quality, contributing to digital addiction.
- 3. Academic Impact:** Reduced focus and increased procrastination, often lowering academic performance.
- 4. Decline in Social Skills:** Online interaction limits in-person communication skills.
- 5. Body Image Concerns:** Unrealistic portrayals cause body dissatisfaction and self-esteem challenges.
- 6. Privacy Risks:** Children are vulnerable to inappropriate content and data privacy threats.
- 7. Materialism:** Influencer culture often promotes unrealistic standards, fostering self-doubt.

**Social Media Regulation in India:**

In India, the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021** and **Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDPA) 2023** govern social media use:

- **IT Rules 2021:** Introduce a grievance redressal system, mandate disclosure of message originators, require a Chief Compliance Officer, and enable voluntary user verification.
- **DPDPA 2023:** Enforces regulations on children's data processing, requiring parental consent, child well-being prioritization, and prohibiting targeted ads for minors.

Global Social Media Regulations for Children:

- **China:** Limits daily internet use based on age and restricts internet access for minors from 10 PM to 6 AM.
- **European Union:** Proposes parental consent for children under 16, with strong data privacy protections.

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- **South Korea:** Formerly had the “Cinderella Law” banning online gaming for under-16s at night (repealed in 2021).
- **France:** Requires parental consent for children under 15 to access social media; protects influencer earnings for those under 16.

Issues with Banning Social Media for Children:

- **Enforcement Challenges:** Digital restrictions can be bypassed, making strict enforcement difficult.
- **Parental Burden:** Requires parents to closely monitor online activities, which can be challenging.
- **Freedom of Expression:** Social media restrictions limit children’s right to self-expression and information access.
- **Benefits of Social Media:** Social platforms can provide community support, educational resources, and awareness of global issues.

Way Ahead:

1. **Enhanced Age Verification:** Implement reliable age-verification technologies to regulate access effectively.
2. **Digital Literacy for Parents:** Digital literacy initiatives for parents can strengthen awareness and control over children’s online activities.
3. **Data Privacy and Content Moderation:** Update policies to enhance minors’ data privacy.
4. **Digital Literacy in Schools:** Introduce digital literacy as a core component of the curriculum to help children understand safe and responsible social media use.
5. **Mental Health Support:** Develop community-based mental health programs to address the impacts of social media on children’s well-being.

Through these measures, countries aim to balance protection with empowerment, promoting safe and positive digital experiences for children.



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Centres of Excellence (CoEs) for Research and Development on Green Hydrogen

Context: The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) recently initiated plans to establish **Centres of Excellence (CoEs) for Research and Development on Green Hydrogen** under the **National Green Hydrogen Mission**. This move aims to accelerate India's transition to a low-carbon economy, support clean energy independence, and position India as a leader in the global green hydrogen market.

**About the Centres of Excellence (CoEs):**

These CoEs will serve as cutting-edge research hubs for green hydrogen technology, focusing on:

- **Research:** Developing and refining technologies for the production, storage, and utilization of green hydrogen.
- **Skill Development:** Providing training and expertise in green hydrogen to build a skilled workforce.
- **Knowledge Dissemination:** Promoting the widespread sharing of research insights and technological advancements.

Green Hydrogen Overview:

Green hydrogen is produced through **electrolysis of water** using renewable energy sources like wind, solar, or hydropower, which ensures zero carbon emissions:

- **Green Hydrogen:** Clean hydrogen produced with renewable energy, unlike **grey hydrogen** (from natural gas without carbon capture) or **blue hydrogen** (from natural gas with carbon capture and storage).

Key Features of the Initiative:

1. **Integrated Research:** CoEs will address various aspects of the green hydrogen value chain, including:
 - Innovations in production, such as more efficient electrolyzers.
 - Advanced storage solutions.
 - Utilization technologies for applications across industries.

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2. **Collaboration and Partnerships:** The initiative promotes partnerships among:

- Industry, academia, and government bodies.
- Public and private entities, research institutions, and universities.
- These stakeholders will collaborate on research proposals and knowledge sharing.

3. **Funding and Support:**

- **Rs 100 crores** have been allocated to establish and operationalize the CoEs.
- Funding is part of the **National Green Hydrogen Mission's** broader financial outlay of **Rs 19,744 crores**, aimed at decarbonizing the economy and promoting energy independence until FY 2029-30.

4. **Long-term Goals:** The mission seeks to:

- Reduce fossil fuel imports.
- Position India as a leader in green hydrogen technology.
- Enable India's progress toward Aatma Nirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) in clean energy.

Expected Outcomes

- **Innovation:** Collaboration in the CoEs will lead to technological advancements that improve process efficiency and foster new product development.
- **Sustainability:** Enhanced green hydrogen technologies will significantly reduce carbon emissions, supporting global climate change mitigation efforts.
- **Economic Growth:** The mission will create opportunities in research, job creation, and stimulate economic growth in the clean energy sector.

Conclusion: India's push to establish CoEs for Green Hydrogen R&D is a landmark step toward a sustainable, energy-independent future. By combining expertise from diverse stakeholders, these CoEs will be instrumental in advancing green hydrogen technologies, contributing to global climate goals, and cementing India's position in the clean energy sector.

3 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Context: The recent report on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India highlights significant contributions across sectors, including agriculture. Since the **2013 mandate under Section 135 of the Companies Act**, Indian companies have actively invested in social welfare and sustainable development. With **₹1.84 lakh crore disbursed** from 2014 to 2023, CSR efforts have primarily focused on education, health, employment, skill development, sports, livelihood, and environmental sustainability. However, with agriculture being a vital part of India's economy and employing nearly 47% of the workforce, there is a growing need for targeted CSR contributions in this sector.



CSR in Agriculture: Current Efforts and Focus Areas

Many companies are channeling CSR funds toward **sustainable agriculture practices** as part of their climate action and environmental responsibility agendas. According to an outlook report, **23% of surveyed companies prioritize "environment and sustainability"** for CSR initiatives, often benefiting agriculture indirectly. Key contributions in this area include:

- **Grain Banks:** Supporting food security by creating local storage solutions for essential grains.
- **Farmer Schools:** Offering education on sustainable and profitable farming techniques.
- **Livelihood Projects:** Providing income-generating activities and resources for small-scale farmers.
- **Water Conservation:** Implementing rainwater harvesting, watershed management, and improved irrigation systems.
- **Energy-efficient Irrigation:** Promoting low-energy irrigation methods to reduce resource consumption.

Challenges in Tracking CSR for Agriculture:

The broad categorization of CSR activities under the **11 sectors in Schedule VII of the Companies Act** makes it difficult to track funds explicitly allocated to agriculture. These general categories, such as environmental sustainability, rural development, and poverty alleviation, often encompass agriculture-related initiatives but lack specific identification. As a result:

- There is limited visibility and tracking of funds solely dedicated to agricultural projects.
- The current CSR reporting mechanism does not offer clarity on agriculture-specific impacts, reducing transparency and assessment accuracy.

Recommendations for the Future:

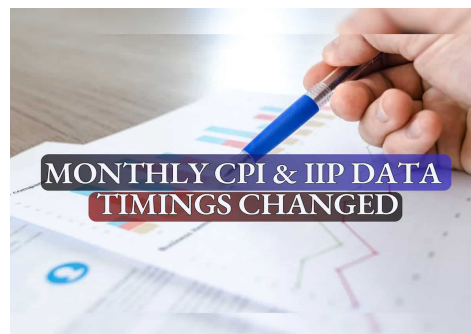
1. **Sector-specific CSR Reporting Framework:** Developing a unique category for agriculture in CSR reporting would allow companies to allocate funds more effectively and increase transparency.
2. **Agriculture as a Distinct Sector in CSR Reporting:** This would facilitate tracking of funds and assessment of CSR contributions to agriculture-specific outcomes, aligning with India's sustainable growth goals.
3. **Focused CSR Initiatives for Sustainable Agriculture:** Encouraging initiatives directly addressing challenges like resource degradation, climate resilience, and income stagnation in agriculture will support India's goal of a just transition to a sustainable economy.

By prioritizing and clearly categorizing CSR investments in agriculture, India can better leverage private sector contributions to support its agricultural sustainability and climate resilience goals.

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4 Consumer Price Index (CPI) and Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

Context: The recent decision by the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** to release **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** and **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** data at **4 pm** aligns with the close of major financial markets in India. This shift aims to provide timely data access, allowing market participants and analysts more time to assess and respond to this critical economic information.

**Key Points on CPI and IIP Data:**1. **Consumer Price Index (CPI):**

- Measures **retail inflation** by tracking the prices of goods and services consumed by households.
- Released by the **National Statistical Office (NSO)** under MoSPI.
- Calculated using **2012 as the base year** and covers various categories like **food, housing, fuel, and recreation**.
- An important indicator for **inflation targeting** and **policy decisions**.

2. **Index of Industrial Production (IIP):**

- Gauges **industrial production** across Mining, Manufacturing, and Electricity, with Manufacturing holding the largest weight.
- Also includes use-based categories like **basic goods, capital goods, and consumer durables**.
- Uses **2011-12 as the base year** and is released with a six-week lag after the reference month.
- Acts as a short-term indicator of **industrial growth** and economic activity.

Rationale for the Change:

- Enhanced Transparency:** Releasing data at 4 pm provides transparency and aligns with the closing of India's stock market, though government bond and forex markets close at 5 pm.
- Extended Analysis Time:** Analysts and investors gain more time on the release day for data assessment, aiding in market response and economic planning.
- Historical Context:** The data release timing had previously been moved to **5:30 pm in 2013** to prevent intra-day trading disruptions after reports of data leaks when it was released around 11 am.

Concerns with the New Timing:

- Market Sensitivity:** While stock markets close at 3:30 pm, bond and forex markets remain open until 5 pm, meaning CPI and IIP data can influence these active trading sectors.
- Potential for Immediate Impact:** Sensitive data released during trading hours can lead to rapid market reactions, impacting investor behavior and potentially causing market volatility.

Implications and Significance:

- CPI:** As a primary indicator of inflation, CPI data is crucial for the Reserve Bank of India's monetary policy decisions and influences household spending and cost of living.
- IIP:** Reflects industrial performance and economic health, guiding fiscal policy and investment decisions.
- Enhanced Market Accessibility:** The new timing is in line with MoSPI's goal of **improving accessibility** to economic data and fostering a more informed market environment.

The move to shift the CPI and IIP data release time to 4 pm marks a proactive step towards synchronizing with market hours while balancing transparency and the potential impact on active trading.

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5 Supreme Court to Decide on Aligarh Muslim University's Minority Status

Context: The **Supreme Court of India** is set to decide on whether **Aligarh Muslim University (AMU)** qualifies as a minority institution under **Article 30** of the Indian Constitution, which grants religious and linguistic minorities the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. This case has long been debated, with important implications for AMU's governance, admissions policies, and the interpretation of minority rights.

**Background of the Controversy:**

The dispute began in **1967** with the Supreme Court's **S. Azeez Basha vs. Union of India** ruling, which determined that AMU was not established by the Muslim community but by the **Aligarh Muslim University Act of 1920**, a parliamentary act. Key changes since the 1950s, including adding non-Muslims to the governing University Court and expanding the Executive Council's powers, fueled arguments about whether the Muslim community retained the right to manage AMU. The **1981 amendment** to the AMU Act, which sought to affirm AMU's minority status, was later struck down by the **Allahabad High Court in 2006**, citing the Azeez Basha decision.

The pending verdict will address whether to uphold or overturn this precedent, potentially reclassifying AMU as a minority institution.

Implications of Minority Status for AMU:

If the Supreme Court grants AMU minority status:

- **Exemption from Quotas:** Under **Article 15(5)**, minority institutions are not required to reserve seats for **Scheduled Castes (SCs)**, **Scheduled Tribes (STs)**, **Other Backward Classes (OBC)**, or **Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)**. Instead, AMU would be permitted to reserve seats for **Muslims**, potentially up to 50% or more.
- **Autonomy in Governance:** AMU would gain greater autonomy over its governance structure, with a streamlined process for admissions favoring the Muslim community. This would shift the university's existing governance system, which currently includes diverse representation in the Executive Council.



Arguments from the Centre and AMU:

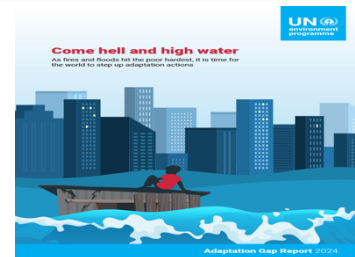
- **Government's Position:** The Centre argues that AMU differs from institutions like **St. Stephen's College**, which the Supreme Court recognized as a minority institution in **1992** due to its private foundation and management. The Centre contends that because AMU was created by a parliamentary act and receives continuous government funding, it should remain a national institution that upholds secular values rather than privileging any single community.
- **AMU's Position:** AMU's counsel argue that **Article 30** grants minorities special rights that ensure equality in a pluralistic society. Senior advocates such as **Kapil Sibal** and **Rajeev Dhavan** assert that exempting AMU from certain quotas does not infringe on public interest and is instead a reflection of minority rights contributing to social harmony. They cite examples like **Aliah University** in Kolkata, which retains minority status despite government support, to underscore AMU's right to similar treatment.

Significance of the Verdict:

The Supreme Court's decision will set a precedent for how **minority rights** are balanced with **state policies on social justice** and **equality**. Granting AMU minority status would not only impact its administrative structure but could also influence the framework within which other minority institutions operate, shaping the future of **education policy** and **minority rights** in India. The judgment is eagerly anticipated as a defining moment in India's approach to **secularism, autonomy in education, and constitutional rights of minorities**.

6 Adaptation Gap Report 2024

Context: The **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** recently released the **Adaptation Gap Report 2024**, assessing global progress in **climate adaptation** planning, implementation, and finance. This annual report highlights the **adaptation gap**, or the shortfall between the adaptation actions taken and the level needed to meet societal goals, constrained by limited resources and competing priorities.

**Key Findings:**

1. **Adaptation Gap:** The financial shortfall for adaptation measures is estimated between **\$187-\$359 billion annually**.
2. **Progress in Adaptation Finance:** International adaptation finance flows to developing countries increased to **\$27.5 billion in 2022**, aligning with the **Glasgow Climate Pact's** aim to double adaptation finance to developing countries by 2025 from a 2019 baseline of \$19 billion.
3. **Significance of Adaptation:** Effective adaptation could significantly reduce global climate risks. For instance, investing **\$16 billion in agriculture annually** could prevent **78 million people** from facing climate-related hunger or starvation.

Recommendations for Closing the Adaptation Gap:

The report outlines critical steps to bridge the adaptation gap:

- **New Climate Finance Goals:** Set an ambitious **New Collective Quantified Goal** for climate finance at COP29.
- **Strengthen Enabling Factors:** Increase focus on new financial tools, capacity building, and **technology transfer** to foster adaptation.
- **Transformational Financing:** Shift from **reactive, incremental** financing to **anticipatory, strategic, and transformational adaptation** that addresses root vulnerabilities rather than isolated projects.

Key Global and Indian Initiatives for Adaptation**Global Initiatives:**

- **Paris Agreement:** Sets a global goal to enhance adaptive capacity and resilience.
- **UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience:** Establishes **11 global adaptation targets**.
- **Adaptation Fund:** Provides finance for adaptation projects in developing nations party to the **Kyoto Protocol**.

India's Initiatives:

- **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC):** Encompasses **eight national missions** aimed at climate resilience.
- **National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC):** Finances adaptation actions in vulnerable states.
- **Sectoral Schemes:** Includes programs like **MISHTI** for mangrove restoration and **Amrit Dharohar** for wetland conservation, which strengthen local adaptation efforts.

Significance of the Report:

The UNEP Adaptation Gap Report 2024 underscores the critical need for scaled-up, strategic adaptation efforts to mitigate climate-related risks. Its recommendations provide a roadmap for sustainable and resilient adaptation financing, essential for addressing the climate vulnerabilities faced by developing nations.

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7 Agrivoltaic Farming

Context: Agrivoltaic Farming combines agriculture and solar energy production by installing solar panels over croplands, enabling both crop cultivation and electricity generation on the same land. This practice was recently highlighted at the **Seventh Session of the International Solar Alliance (ISA)** in New Delhi, where global delegates saw agrivoltaic systems in action.



Key Features of Agrivoltaic Farming:

- **Dual Land Use:** Solar panels, elevated 2-3 meters above the ground at a 30-degree angle, allow crops to grow beneath while generating solar energy. This setup is also known as **agrisolar, dual-use solar, or low-impact solar**.
- **Versatile Panel Installation:** Panels may be mounted on poles, suspended, or installed on greenhouse rooftops. In some systems, solar panels can rotate or adjust as a canopy to control sunlight and shade for the crops.
- **Weather Protection:** Positioned at an angle, solar panels provide **shade**, reducing heat stress on plants and preventing excessive water loss.

Advantages of Agrivoltaic Farming

1. **Improved Land-Use Efficiency:** Agrivoltaic systems allow for simultaneous farming and energy production, optimizing land use by **eliminating the need to choose between agriculture and solar farms**.
2. **Enhanced Crop Performance:** Studies indicate that certain crops thrive under partial shading from solar panels, as the shade **reduces heat stress** and **minimizes water requirements**, benefiting both crop health and yields.
3. **Climate Resilience:** Agrivoltaic systems shield crops from extreme weather, supporting more stable agricultural productivity in regions facing climate stress.

Agrivoltaic farming holds promise for **sustainable land management**, especially in regions where land resources are limited or under pressure from competing needs for food production and renewable energy expansion. This approach helps balance agricultural demands with renewable energy goals, making it an effective strategy for integrated land use and climate resilience.

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8 Detrimental Effect of Rubber Plantations

Context: A recent study has revealed significant environmental consequences of converting rainforests into rubber plantations, particularly in terms of **Soil-Dissolved Organic Carbon (DOC)** and **carbon cycling**. This conversion not only disrupts the soil's carbon storage capacity but also contributes to climate change through greenhouse gas emissions.



Key Findings of the Study:

- Carbon Loss:** Rubber plantations cause a **50% reduction in soil-sequestered carbon**, releasing it into the atmosphere as greenhouse gases. This loss is particularly concerning given that soil stores approximately 1,500 Petagrams (Pg) of organic carbon, a stock greater than that in the atmosphere and vegetation combined.
- Increase in Soil DOC:** Conversion to rubber plantations significantly raises soil DOC levels by 150–200%. As a highly mobile form of organic matter, DOC plays a critical role in soil formation and global carbon cycling, making its increase due to monoculture plantations ecologically disruptive.

Other Environmental Impacts of Rubber Plantations:

- Biodiversity Loss:** Rubber monocultures lead to biodiversity reduction and weaken land resilience. In Thailand, rubber plantations have resulted in a **60% decline in biodiversity**.
- Deforestation:** Over the past three decades, **more than 4 million hectares** of tropical forests in Southeast Asia have been cleared for rubber plantations.
- Water Scarcity:** Rubber plantations require extensive water, increasing **evapotranspiration** and reducing both surface water runoff and available water resources.
- Pollution:** Rubber processing releases waste that pollutes both soil and water.

About Natural Rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*):

- Origin:** Originally from the Amazon River basin, natural rubber was introduced to Asia and Africa by the British during the colonial period.
- Growth Requirements:** It grows well in various climates with **annual rainfall around 200 cm**.
- Production Distribution:** Southeast Asia produces 90% of the world's rubber, with Thailand as the top producer. India ranks as the third-largest producer, with **Kerala** as its primary production state.

This study underscores the urgent need for sustainable land-use practices to protect biodiversity, soil carbon storage, and the integrity of tropical ecosystems.

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9 What is CARICOM?

Context: The **Caribbean Community (CARICOM)** is a regional organization aimed at fostering economic integration, cooperation, and coordinated foreign policy among Caribbean countries. Established in 1973 by the **Treaty of Chaguaramas**, it is the longest-standing integration movement among developing countries.



Key Objectives:

- Economic Integration and Cooperation:** CARICOM works to create a unified economic space, encouraging trade and investment among its members.
- Equitable Sharing of Benefits:** It ensures the benefits of integration reach all member nations fairly.
- Coordinated Foreign Policy:** Members collaborate on foreign policy to strengthen their collective influence internationally.

Membership:

CARICOM consists of **15 full members**:

- Full Members:** Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.
- Associate Members:** Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, and Turks and Caicos Islands.
- Observers:** Aruba, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela.

Structure:

- Chairmanship:** The chair rotates every six months among heads of member states, providing shared leadership.
- Secretariat:** The **CARICOM Secretariat** is headquartered in **Georgetown, Guyana**, and led by a Secretary General who serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the Community.

Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ):

Established in 2007, the **Caribbean Court of Justice** acts as the final appellate court for member states and adjudicates regional trade disputes.

India-CARICOM Relations:

The recent **India-CARICOM Joint Commission meeting** marked an important milestone in deepening ties, reviewing current engagements, and exploring avenues for future collaboration across various fields.

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10 Global Education Monitoring Report 2024

Context: The **Global Education Monitoring Report 2024** by UNESCO, released at the Global Education Meeting in Fortaleza, Brazil, highlights the importance of leadership, funding, and access in addressing global educational challenges. The report, developed in collaboration with UNESCO and hosted by Brazil as the current G20 President, evaluates progress and offers guidance for achieving inclusive, equitable, and quality education worldwide.

**Key Observations:**

- 1. Role of Leadership in Education:** Effective leadership in education involves social influence to unite efforts toward shared goals. Education leaders must:
 - Define their purpose and strategize for impactful change.
 - Balance learning outcomes with broader goals of equity, quality, and inclusivity.
- 2. Funding Deficits:** A significant gap in education funding exists, with **40% of countries spending less than 4% of their GDP on education.**
- 3. Out-of-School Children:** Globally, **251 million children and youth remain out of school**, with only a 1% reduction in this number since 2015.
- 4. Access to Education:** Central and Southern Asia has seen substantial progress in educational access, but countries like **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan** continue to have some of the highest out-of-school populations.

Key Recommendations:

- **Leadership Development:** Principals should have the autonomy to manage schools effectively, and education officials should be empowered to lead system-wide improvements.
- **Climate Change Education:** Introduce climate education earlier in curricula and integrate it across subjects beyond science to build environmental awareness.

India's Initiatives to Enhance School Leadership:

- 1. National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** NEP 2020 emphasizes the need for principals to engage in professional development to improve their leadership and management skills.
- 2. National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement (NISHTHA):** NISHTHA provides training in learning outcomes, school-based assessments, and learner-centered teaching practices to foster school leadership and effective education.

The report underscores that strong leadership, increased funding, and enhanced educational access are vital to achieving global education goals and supporting lifelong learning.