Covid-19 Impact on Learning: ASER 2021

Why in News

Recently, the **16th edition of the** Annual Status of Education Report **(ASER 2021) survey was released**. The survey **analysed the impact of Covid-19 on learning.**

- It shows an increase in dependence on private tuitions and an absence of ready access to smartphones.
- Specific attention is needed to help make up for learning losses, especially in the lowest classes.

Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Survey

- The ASER survey, which is facilitated by Pratham Education Foundation, is the oldest survey of its kind in the country.
- It is well regarded for the range of insights it provides on levels of foundational learning at the elementary level.
- It uses **Census** **2011** as the sampling frame and continues to be an important national source of information about children's foundational skills across the country.
- **ASER 2018** surveyed children in the age group of 3 to 16 years and included almost all rural districts in India and generated estimates of foundational reading and arithmetic abilities of children in the age group 5 to 16 years.
- **ASER 2019** reported on the pre-schooling or schooling status of children in the age group 4 to 8 years in 26 rural districts, focused on the "early years" and laid emphasis on "developing problem-solving faculties and building a memory of children, and not content knowledge".
- **ASER 2020** is the first ever phone-based ASER survey and it was conducted in September 2020, the sixth month of national school closures.

Key Points

- **Increasing Enrollment in Government School:**
  - There was an **unprecedented jump in government school students,** and **a 10-year low in private school enrolments.**
  - A clear shift from private to government schools — from 64.3% in 2018 to 65.8% in 2020, to 70.3% in 2021.
  - A fall in private school enrolment from 28.8% in 2020 to 24.4% in 2021.
- **Tuition-dependent:**
  - It has reported a **growing dependency on private tuition classes.**
  - Students, especially those from poor families, are dependent more than ever on private tuition.
- **Digital Divide:**
  - There exists a **stark digital divide**, which carries the risk of severely affecting the learning abilities of primary grade students.
  - Almost a third of all children in Classes I and II did not have a smartphone available at home.
- **Problems with New Entrants:**
  - From having no experience of pre-primary class or anganwadis to the lack of access to

digital devices, the pandemic has left the youngest entrants in India's formal education system **particularly vulnerable.**

- 1 in 3 children in Classes I and II have never attended an in-person class.
- Students who entered the school system after the pandemic will require time to settle down, get ready for the **formal education system.**
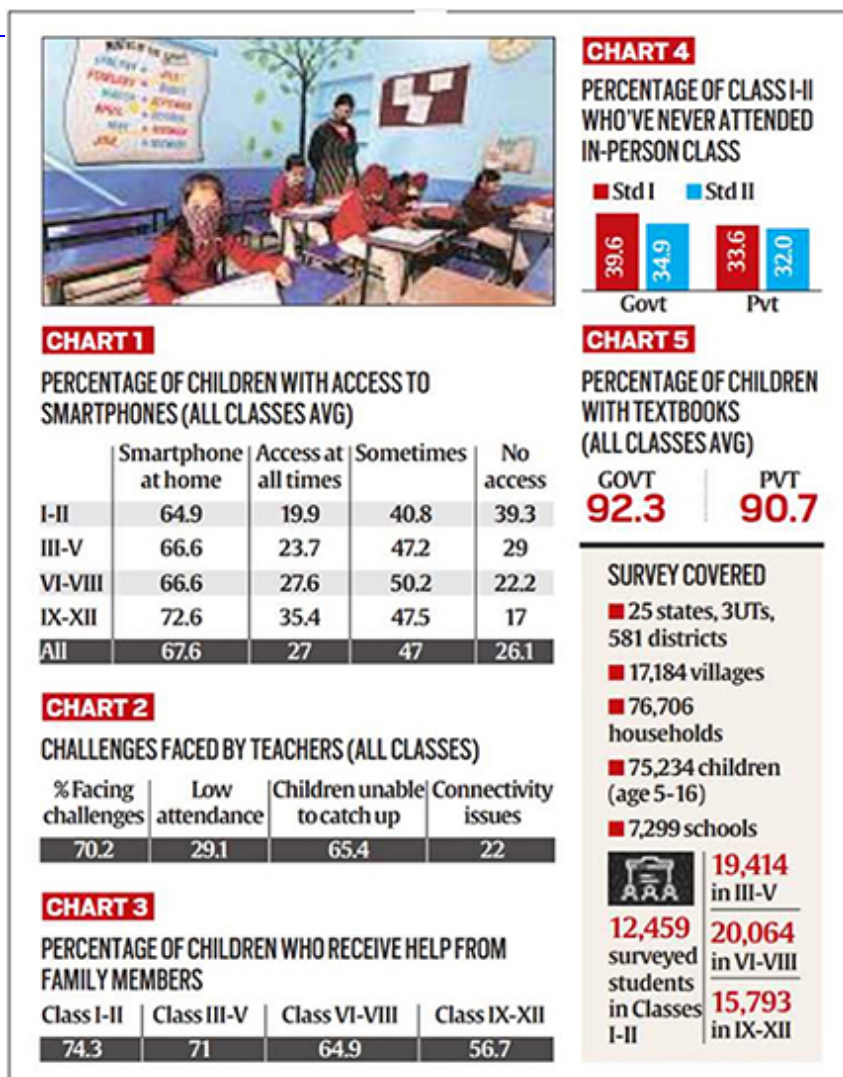
- **Learning Gap:**
  - 65.4% teachers flagged the problem of children being "unable to catch up" as one of their biggest challenges.
  - This is also a warning that their learning outcomes are set to be affected unless addressed with urgency.
  - During the recent **National Achievement Survey (NAS)** of the central government, teachers and field investigators across the country reported that **primary grade kids struggled to make sense of questions to test basic comprehension and numerical skills.**
- **Positive Trend:** The report captured **a decline in the proportion of children not currently enrolled in the 15-16 age group**. This is one of the sections which faces the highest risk of dropping out.
  - In 2010, the proportion of 15-16-year-olds who were out of school was 16.1%.
  - Driven by the government's push to universalise secondary education, this number has been steadily declining and stood at 12.1% in 2018. The decline continued in 2020 to 9.9% and to 6.6% in 2021.

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CHART 4
PERCENTAGE OF CLASS I-II WHO'VE NEVER ATTENDED IN-PERSON CLASS

■ Std I   ■ Std II

	Govt	Pvt
Std I	39.6	33.6
Std II	34.9	32.0

CHART 1
PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WITH ACCESS TO SMARTPHONES (ALL CLASSES AVG)

	Smartphone at home	Access at all times	Sometimes	No access
I-II	64.9	19.9	40.8	39.3
III-V	66.6	23.7	47.2	29
VI-VIII	66.6	27.6	50.2	22.2
IX-XII	72.6	35.4	47.5	17
All	67.6	27	47	26.1

CHART 5
PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WITH TEXTBOOKS (ALL CLASSES AVG)

GOVT	PVT
92.3	90.7

SURVEY COVERED
- ■ 25 states, 3UTs, 581 districts
- ■ 17,184 villages
- ■ 76,706 households
- ■ 75,234 children (age 5-16)
- ■ 7,299 schools

12,459 surveyed students in Classes I-II

| 19,414 in III-V |
| 20,064 in VI-VIII |
| 15,793 in IX-XII |

CHART 2
CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS (ALL CLASSES)

% Facing challenges	Low attendance	Children unable to catch up	Connectivity issues
70.2	29.1	65.4	22

CHART 3
PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WHO RECEIVE HELP FROM FAMILY MEMBERS

Class I-II	Class III-V	Class VI-VIII	Class IX-XII
74.3	71	64.9	56.7

- **Related Government Initiatives:**
  - **SWAYAM**

- NEAT
- **National Knowledge Network, (NKN)**
- **PRAGYATA Guidelines**
- **National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning**

Way Forward

- **A Multi-Pronged Approach:** Flexible rescheduling the academic timetable and exploring options in collaboration with schools, teachers, and parents for providing access to education to a larger section of students.
  - Giving priority to the less advantaged students who do not have access to e-learning.
- **Making Online Education More Effective:** Shorter but quality discussions rather than long hours of monotonous sitting and one-way communication, should be preferred.
  - The teacher's role has to go beyond just being in control of the class to being a facilitator for the transfer of knowledge.
- **Focussing more on Knowledge Aspect:** Education is not about competence but more about motivation. The students are meant to discover not just cover the syllabus.

Source: IE

Digital India Land Record Modernisation Programme

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Rural Development** inaugurated 'Bhumi Samvaad' - National **Workshop on Digital India Land Record Modernisation Programme (DILRMP).**

- The Ministry also **launched the National Generic Document Registration System (NGDRS) portal** and Dashboard.

Key Points

- **Launch:**

  - The DILRMP was **approved by the Cabinet on 21st August, 2008**.
  - For **modernization of land records system** in the country, a modified programme, viz., the **National Land Records Modernization Programme (NLRMP),** now **renamed as Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP),** has been formulated.
  - **Two** Centrally sponsored schemes of Computerization of Land Records (CLR) and Strengthening of Revenue Administration and updating of Land Records (SRA&ULR) **were merged.**

- **About:**

  - It is **a Central Sector scheme that has been extended to 2023-24**, to complete its original targets as well as expand its ambit with a slew of new schemes.
  - It attempts to build **upon the commonalities that exist in the arena of land records in various States** to develop an appropriate **Integrated Land Information Management System (ILIMS)** across the country, on which different States can also add State-specific needs as they may deem relevant and appropriate.

    - **ILIMS**: The system contains information on **parcel ownership, land use, taxation, location boundaries, land value, encumbrances** and many more.

- It is **being implemented by the Department of Land Resources (Ministry of Rural Development).**
- **Aim:**

    - To usher in a system of updated land records, automated and automatic mutation, integration between textual and spatial records, inter-connectivity between revenue and registration, to replace the present deeds registration and presumptive title system with that of conclusive titling with title guarantee.
- **Components:**

    - Computerization of land records.
    - Survey/re-survey.
    - Computerization of Registration.
    - Modern record rooms/land records management centres at tehsil/taluk/circle/block level.
    - Training & capacity building.
- **Benefits:**

    - **Real-time land ownership records** will be available to the citizen.
    - Free accessibility to the records will **reduce interface between the citizen and the Government functionaries,** thereby reducing rent seeking and harassment.

        - **Public-Private Partnership (PPP)** mode of service delivery **will further reduce citizen interface with Govt. machinery,** while adding to the convenience.
    - The single-window service or the **web-enabled "anytime-anywhere" access will save the citizen time** and effort in obtaining RoRs (Record of Rights), etc.
    - Automatic and automated mutations will significantly **reduce the scope of fraudulent property deals.**
    - **Conclusive titling** will also **significantly reduce litigation**.
    - **Certificates based on land data** (e.g., domicile, caste, income, etc.) will be available to the citizen through computers.
    - This method will **permit e-linkages to credit facilities.**
    - **Information on eligibility for Government programs** will be available, based on the data.
- **Other Related Initiatives:**

    - **National Generic Document Registration System:**

        - It is a major shift from the existing manual registration system to **online registration of all transactions in sale-purchase and transfer of land.**
        - It is a big step towards National Integration and a leap towards '**One Nation One Software'.**
    - **Unique Land Parcel Identification Number:**

        - Being described as "the Aadhaar for land", it is a number that would uniquely **identify every surveyed parcel of land and prevent land fraud,** especially in the hinterlands of rural India, where land records are outdated and often disputed.

Source: PIB

Indian Ocean Naval Symposium

Why in News

The **7th edition of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Conclave of Chiefs** is being **hosted by**

the French Navy at Paris from 15th-16th Nov 21.

- The **inaugural edition of IONS was held in Feb 2008 at New Delhi,** with the Indian Navy as the Chair for two years. The IONS Chair is presently held in France.

Key Points

- **About:**

  - The IONS is **a voluntary and inclusive initiative that brings together navies of** Indian Ocean Region **(IOR) littoral states** to increase maritime co-operation and enhance regional security.
  - It also serves to develop an effective response mechanism and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) against natural disasters**.**
  - The **chairmanship of IONS** has been held by India (2008-10), UAE (2010-12), South Africa (2012-14), Australia (2014-16), Bangladesh (2016-18) and Islamic Republic of Iran (2018-21).

    - France assumed the Chairmanship in June 2021 for a two-year tenure.

- **Members:**

  - IONS **includes 24 member nations that touch or lie within the IOR**, and 8 observer nations.
  - The members have been geographically grouped into the following **four sub-regions:**

    - **South Asian Littorals:** Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and United Kingdom (British Indian Ocean Territory)
    - **West Asian Littorals:** Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates
    - **East African Littorals:** France (Reunion), Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa, and Tanzania.
    - **South East Asian and Australian Littorals:** Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Timor-Leste.

- **Significance For India:**

  - IONS fits into **India's three-fold ambitions in the region:**

    - Strengthening and **deepening the relations** with the Indian Ocean littoral states,
    - Establishing its leadership potential and **aspirations of being a net-security provider,** and
    - Fulfilling India's vision of **a rules-based and stable maritime order** in the IOR.
  - It will help India **to consolidate its sphere of influence from the Straits of Malacca to** Hormuz**.**
  - IONS can be used **to counterbalance the increasing presence of China** in the region.

- **Other Important Groupings/Initiatives Associated with IOR:**

  - **Indian Ocean Rim Association**: The **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)** was established in 1997.

    - It is aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and sustainable development within the Indian Ocean region.
  - **Indian Ocean Commission:** Recently, India has been approved as an **observer of the Indian Ocean Commission,** the inter-governmental organization that coordinates maritime governance in the south-western Indian Ocean.
  - **Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR):** It was **launched in 2015**.

    - Through SAGAR, India seeks to deepen economic and security cooperation with its maritime neighbours and assist in building their maritime security capabilities.
  - **Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR):** It was set up by India in 2018, as an **information-sharing hub of maritime data.**

- **Asia Africa Growth Corridor:** The idea of **Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC)** emerged in the joint declaration issued by India and Japan in 2016.

    - The AAGC is raised on four pillars of Development and Cooperation Projects, Quality Infrastructure and Institutional Connectivity, Enhancing Capacities and Skills and People-to-People partnership.
- **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation:** It is a sub-regional organization that came into being **in 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration.**

    - It mainly aims to create an enabling environment for rapid economic development, accelerate social progress, and promote collaboration on matters of common interest in the IOR.

Source: PIB

Bribery Risk Matrix 2021

Why in News

Recently, Bribery Risk Matrix 2021 was **released by TRACE, an anti-bribery standard setting organisation.**

Key Points

- **About the Matrix:**

    - It **measures business bribery risk in 194 countries**, territories, and autonomous and semi-autonomous regions.
    - It was **originally published in 2014** to meet a need in the business community for more reliable and nuanced information about the risks of commercial bribery worldwide.
    - It **aggregates relevant data obtained** from leading public interest and international organisations, including the **United Nations**, **World Bank**, V-Dem Institute at the University of Gothenburg and **World Economic Forum**.
- **Calculation Methods:** Score is calculated on the basis of four factors:

    - Enforcement and anti-bribery deterrence.
    - Business interactions with the government.
    - Government and civil service transparency.
    - Capacity for civil society oversight which includes the media's role.
- **Performance of the Countries:**

    - **India:**

        - India has slipped to **82nd position in 2021**, five places down from 77th rank last year.

            - In 2020, **India ranked 77 with a score of 45** while this year, the country stood at **82nd position with a score of 44.**
        - **India fared better than its neighbours** – Pakistan, China, Nepal and Bangladesh. Bhutan, meanwhile, secured 62nd rank.
    - **World:**

- North Korea, Turkmenistan, Venezuela and Eritrea **pose the highest commercial bribery risk**, while Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden and New Zealand **present the lowest**.
- Over the past five years, the **business bribery risk environment in the United States worsened significantly** when compared with global trends.
- From 2020 to 2021, all of the **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** countries saw **an increase in commercial bribery risk**.
- **Related Steps Taken by India:** India, in pursuance of its commitment to **"Zero Tolerance Against Corruption"** has taken several measures to combat corruption which, inter alia, include:

  - Systemic improvements and reforms to provide **transparent citizen-friendly services** and reduce corruption. These, inter alia, include:

    - Disbursement of welfare benefits directly to the citizens under various schemes of the Government in a transparent manner through the **Direct Benefit Transfer initiative**.
    - Implementation of **E-tendering** in public procurements.
    - Introduction of **e-Governance** and simplification of procedure and systems.
    - Introduction of Government procurement through the **Government e-Marketplace (GeM).**
  - **The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988:**

    - It clearly **criminalizes the act of giving bribes** and will help check big ticket corruption by creating a vicarious liability in respect of senior management of commercial organizations.
  - **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)**, through various orders and circulars recommended adoption of **Integrity Pact to all the organizations** in major procurement activities and to ensure effective and expeditious investigation wherever any irregularity / misconduct is noticed.
  - The **institution of** Lokpal **has been operationalised** by appointment of Chairperson and Members.

    - **Lokpal is statutorily mandated** to directly receive and process complaints as regards alleged offences against public servants under the Prevention of Corruption Act,1988.

Source: IE

Puri Heritage Corridor Project

Why in News

The **Odisha Government** is expected to soon lay the foundation stone of the **Puri heritage corridor,** which is being developed at a cost of Rs 800 crore.

- The project is a part of the **Augmentation of Basic Amenities and Development of Heritage and Architecture (ABADHA) scheme** for developing Puri as a world-class heritage city.

Key Points

- **About:**

  - Conceived in 2016, the Puri Heritage Corridor Project was unveiled in December 2019 to

transform the holy town of Puri into an international place of heritage.
- The project **includes redeveloping major portions of the holy town** and in the vicinity of the **Jagannath temple** for visitors and tourists.
- The project **will include** Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) building redevelopment, a 600-capacity Srimandir reception centre, Jagannath cultural centre, Badadanda heritage streetscape, beachfront development, Puri lake, Musa river revival plan, etc..

- **Jagannath Temple:**

- **Construction:**
  - It is believed to have been constructed **in the 12th century by King Anatavarman Chodaganga Deva of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty.**
- **Mythology:**
  - Jagannath Puri temple is called **'Yamanika Tirtha'** where, according to the Hindu beliefs, the power of 'Yama', the god of death, has been nullified due to the presence of Lord Jagannath.
- **Architecture:**
  - This temple was called the "**White Pagoda"** and is a part of **Char Dham pilgrimages** (Badrinath, Dwaraka, Puri, Rameswaram).
  - There are four gates to the temple- Eastern 'Singhdwara' which is the main gate with two crouching lions, Southern 'Ashwadwara', Western 'Vyaghra Dwara' and Northern 'Hastidwara'. There is a carving of each form at each gate.
  - In front of the entrance stands the Aruna stambha or sun pillar, which was originally at the Sun Temple in Konark.
- **Festival**: The World famous **Rath Yatra (Car Festival)** & Bahuda Yatra.

- **Other Important Monuments in Odisha:**

  - **Konark Sun Temple (UNESCO World Heritage Site)**
  - **Tara Tarini Temple**
  - **Lingaraj Temple**
  - Udaygiri and Khandagiri Caves

Source: IE

Indus River Dolphin

Why in News

Recently, Punjab's wildlife preservation wing has batted for conservation of Indus river dolphins and also their natural habitat.

- The Indus river dolphin was declared the **State aquatic animal of Punjab in 2019.**

Key Points

- **About:**

    - **Scientific Name**: *Platanista gangetica minor*
    - According to a recent study of South Asian river dolphins, Indus and Ganges River dolphins are not one, but two separate species. Currently, they are classified as **two subspecies under Platanista gangetica.**
    - Like other **freshwater dolphins** (such as Ganges river dolphins) , the Indus river dolphin is an important indicator of the health of a river.
    - Other dolphins found in Indian waters include: **Ganges River Dolphins**, **Irrawaddy dolphins**.
- **Habitat:**

    - They can only be found in the lower parts of the **Indus River in Pakistan** and in **River Beas**, **a tributary of the Indus River** in Punjab, India.
- **Threats:**

    - **Biological Resource Use:** Fishing & harvesting aquatic resources.
    - **Natural System Modifications:** Dams & water management/use.
    - **Pollution:** Domestic & urban waste water, Industrial & military effluents, Agricultural & forestry effluents.
- **Conservation Status:**

    - **International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN):** Endangered.
    - **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species(CITES):** Appendix I
    - **Indian Wildlife (Protection), Act 1972:** Schedule I
- **Steps Taken:**

    - **Enumeration of freshwater dolphins** is being undertaken as a nationwide project of the Central Government.
    - **Project Dolphin:** Announced on the eve of Independence Day in the year 2020, it will be on the lines of **Project Tiger**, which has helped increase the tiger population.

Source: TH

India International Science Festival, 2021

Why in News

The **Union Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)** has recently launched the **7ᵗʰ edition of the India International Science Festival (IISF).**

Key Points

- **About:**

    - Launched in 2015, IISF is an **annual event** considered to be the **biggest platform in the country** which brings together students, the public, researchers, innovators and artists from around the globe to experience the joy of doing science for the wellbeing of people and humanity.
- **Organised by:**

    - IISF 2021 is being **organised jointly** by the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), Ministry of Science & Technology** (**Department of Science & Technology,** Department of Biotechnology, **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research**), in collaboration with **Vijnana Bharati.**
    - IISF 2021 will be held from **10ᵗʰ-13ᵗʰ December in Panaji, Goa.**
- **Nodal Agency:**

    - The **National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research**, an autonomous institute under the MoES.
- **Theme for 2021:**

    - Celebrating Creativity in Science, Technology and Innovation for Prosperous India.

        - It will also reflect the spirit and idea of **Aazadi ka Amrit Mahotsav** of India, which aims to mark **75 glorious years of Indian independence** in **2022**.

Vijnana Bharati

- **Swadeshi Science Movement** was **started in Indian Institute of Science- Bengaluru** by a few eminent scientists under the guidance of Prof. K I Vasu.

    - This movement gradually gained momentum and emerged as an organization with national presence.
- In **1991**, it was decided to launch the Swadeshi Science Movement at all India Level and **named it Vijnana Bharati.**
- One of the objectives is to motivate young scientists towards greater creativity and originality.
- It is **headquartered in New Delhi.**

Source: DTE

E-Governance for Civil Aviation

Why in News

Recently, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has launched the **e-Governance for Civil Aviation (e-GCA)** online platform through which the Civil Aviation will provide **298 services including pilot licensing and medical examination.**

- The launch of the e-GCA project **under DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation)** was part of the 100-day plan for the aviation sector. The portal was developed by Tata Consultancy Services.

Key Points

- **About:**

    - It is a portal for the **dissemination of information and providing online, speedy service delivery in a secure environment.**
    - It offers **an end-to-end solution** including several software applications, connectivity with all the regional offices.
    - It **will provide services to various DGCA stakeholders** such as Pilots, Aircraft Maintenance Engineers, Air Traffic Controllers, Air Operators, Airport Operators, Flying Training Organizations, Maintenance and Design organizations, among others.

- **Aim:**

    - It aims **at enhancing the efficiency of the various services of DGCA and increasing accountability and transparency** across all DGCA functions.

- **Benefits:**

    - Eliminating operational inefficiencies
    - Minimizing personal interaction
    - Improving regulatory reporting
    - Enhancing transparency
    - Increasing productivity

- **Significance:**

    - As a single-window platform it will induce **a monumental change through the automation of the process and functions of DGCA.**
    - It will offer a strong **base of IT infrastructure and service delivery framework**.
    - It is a step towards '**ease of doing business**'. It would add significant value to the safety regulatory framework of DGCA.

Directorate General of Civil Aviation

- It is **an attached office of the Ministry of Civil Aviation.**
- It is the regulatory body in the field of Civil Aviation primarily dealing with safety issues.
- It is responsible for regulation of air transport services to/from/within India and for enforcement of civil air regulations, air safety and airworthiness standards.
- It also co-ordinates all regulatory functions with the **International Civil Aviation Organisation.**

Source: PIB

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