

MATERNITY LEAVE: GOVERNMENT FOR INCENTIVE SCHEME

➤ GS Paper - 2

➤ Issues Related to Women

➤ Women's Issues

➤ Government Policies & Interventions

➤ Gender

The Ministry of Labour & Employment has come up with clarification with respect to Maternity Leave Incentive Scheme.

- There were some media reports that this Scheme has been approved/notified. However, it is clarified that Ministry of Labour & Employment is in the **process of obtaining necessary budgetary grant** and approvals of Competent Authorities.
- The reports that it will be funded from Labour Welfare Cess, is also incorrect, as **no such cess exists under this Ministry**.
- The **Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Cess (BOCW) Act, 1996** provides for collection of cess for construction workers **by states/union territories**.
- The **State and the Local governments** collect the Cess and then **transfer to the State Welfare Boards**.
- The states/UTs should ensure that the welfare schemes funded from cess fund should be **exclusively for building and other construction workers only**.
- Diversion of cess fund** for welfare of other category of workers is **not permissible** under the BOCW Act.

Background

- The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 applies to **establishments employing 10 or more persons** in Factories, Mines, Plantation, Shops & Establishments and other entities.
- The main purpose of this Act is to regulate the employment of women in certain establishments for certain period before and after childbirth and to provide maternity benefit and certain other benefits.
- The Act was amended through the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 which, inter alia, has **increased** the paid maternity leave to women employees **from 12 weeks to 26 weeks**.
- While the implementation of the provision is good in Public Sector, there are reports that it is **poor in Private Sector** and in **contract jobs**.
- There is also a wide perception that private entities are not encouraging the hiring of women employees because if they are employed, they may have to provide maternity benefit to them, **particularly 26 weeks of paid holiday**.
- Therefore, the extended maternity leave has become a deterrent for female employees who are asked to quit or retrenched on flimsy grounds before they go on maternity leave.

Proposed Solution

- The Ministry of Labour & Employment is working on an **incentive scheme wherein 7 weeks' wages would be reimbursed to employers** who employ women workers with **wage ceiling upto Rs. 15000/-** and provide the maternity benefit of 26 weeks paid leave, subject to certain conditions.

Impact

- The proposed Scheme, if approved and implemented shall ensure the women in this **country an equal access to employment** and other approved benefits along with **adequate safety and secure environment**.
- The workplaces will be **more and more responsive to the family needs** of the working women.

Maternity Benefits and Workplace Equality in India

Let's analyse the issue of maternity benefits to working women in Indian scenario and its conflict with corporate interests, and measures that can protect the rights of both women and organizations.

In the post-industrial revolution era, the discourse revolving around the gendered construct of organizations is replete with the issue of maternity benefits, corporate interests and workforce efficiency, shifts in the social roles of both sexes and government's commitment towards creating a gender egalitarian society. While maternity benefits have gained a recognizance as women's rights in most of the developed countries, India is still lagging behind in formulating a policy structure that aims to encourage women participation in the workforce and reconstruct the sexual division of labour.

The Indian Scenario

- **Gap in workforce participation:** In the India Development Report by the World Bank, India has been ranked 120th among 131 countries in the female labour force participation rate. In India, the participation of women was just 27% compared to China and Brazil where it was between 65-70%. Only 6.5% of Indian women are in the formal sector.
- **Gender Inequality:** In the “Global Gender Gap Report” (2017) released recently by the World Economic Forum (WEF), India has been ranked a low 108 out of 144 countries on the gender equality scale, slipping from 87 last year.
- **Inequality in pay:** According to a recent report based on the review of FY17 annual reports, India’s women directors are not as well paid as their male counterparts. In the 30 Sensex companies, women directors on an average were paid 46 per cent less than men.
- **Exclusion of domestic labour:** The household work done by women is not only unpaid but is also ‘invisible’ from national statistics and GDP. Also, the assistance extended by women to their male producers in agriculture or small business goes uncalculated.
- Apart from this, women in India face issues like **workplace harassment and subordination, undervaluation, additional baggage of household responsibilities and dismal working conditions.** The situation is even more precarious for women working in the informal sector.

The Legal Outlook

Though rife with inadequacies, the Indian legal system provides certain assurance of rights of working women, such as

1. **Maternity Benefit Amendment Act, 2017** which was a revision of the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, provides for maternity leaves, creche facility at the workplace.
2. **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013** has provisions regarding grievance redressal and providing a safe working environment.
3. **The Factories Act, 1948:** The Factories Act is a legislation to secure to the workers employed in a factory, health, safety, welfare, proper working hours, leave and other benefits. The Factories Act also has exclusive provisions for women workers.
4. **The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976:** According to Article 39 of our constitution which directs that States shall, in particular, have policies towards securing equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Under the Equal Remuneration Act, employers shall pay equal remuneration to its male and female employees who are carrying out the same or similar work and cannot discriminate between men and women while recruiting
5. **Shops and Establishments Acts:** The State Governments enact their respective shops and establishments act, regulates the working conditions of employees in a shop or commercial establishment. They provide for various provisions including provisions pertaining to termination, leave entitlement, and working conditions and has special provisions for women as well.

The Maternity Benefit Amendment Act, 2017 and Its Repercussions

- The Maternity Benefit Amendment Act increases women’s leave entitlements from 12 to 26 weeks. Of these, up to eight weeks can be taken pre-delivery.
 - Enterprises with 50 or more employees must also provide crèches and allow the mother four crèche visits, daily.
 - Women with two or more children get reduced entitlements.
 - The costs of these benefits are to be borne solely by employers.
- Despite being an attempt to foster women participation in the workforce, these provisions may backfire at the job prospects of women.
- **Job losses:** According to a report by TeamLease, it may lead to some 11 to 18 lakh job losses for women in 2018-19 alone for the 10 sectors studied, and up to 1.2 crore job losses across all sectors.
 - **Reluctance of employers in hiring:** Various studies indicate that employers prefer to hire a young man rather than a young woman due to the high costs of maternity leave and are wary of hiring women of childbearing age. After a similar law was passed in Spain, employers were less likely to hire women of childbearing age, to promote them, and more likely to let them go, relative to men.

- **Discrimination in promotions:** Young women are often not considered for higher positions or positions that require full-time commitments, as employers think that they may compromise with work for family duties.
What Needs to Be Done
- **Extending Paternity Leaves:** Child Care should not be treated solely as women's responsibility and the difference in maternity and paternity leaves should be minimized. This will not disincentivize the recruitment of women and will create a level playing field for men and women in both work and social areas.
- **Cost sharing by the government:** Companies are less likely to discriminate against women if the government pitches in. The 2018 ILO report on Care Work and Care Jobs emphasises the need for government support up to at least two-thirds of the costs of maternity benefits, under **ILO Convention 183**.
- **Focus on quality and coverage of creches:** Providing better facilities, nutrition and learning environment for children up to six years should be the prime concern of creches, which is lacking in our Integrated Child Development Services. The government should step in to share this responsibility with the private sector. Pooling of resources by SMEs is yet another viable option for creating a good creche. This will significantly increase women's work participation (for instance, in Japan).
- **Flexibility in work time for both sexes:** This will help in maintaining the work-life balance. In western countries, companies which allow such flexibility find it increases worker productivity, and these flexibilities are used by both sexes.
- **Regulations regarding informal sector:** The 2017 Act does not cover women working in the informal sector which is 93.5% of total women. It is important that the government pays attention to them and comes up with legislation that protects the rights of women working in the informal sector.
- **Making organizations conducive to women:** We need to include women from diverse backgrounds and take into account different occupational settings in the process of transforming organizational structures through feminist values of caring, nurturing, and advocacy on behalf of women.
It is high time that society and the government adopt a comprehensive approach towards encouraging women to balance their work and motherhood and consider childbearing as a collective responsibility rather than a burden to be borne by women at the cost of their career growth. In this regard, it is important to stop the practice of equating maternity leaves with benefits and using metaphors that compare pregnancy with disability.

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THE CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES (PART IX-B) - 97TH CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

The 97th Constitution Amendment Act, 2011 provided for amendment of following things:

1. It amended Article 19(I) c by inserting, after the words 'or unions' the words 'or Co-operative Societies'.
2. It also inserted Article 43B in Part IV of the Constitution as "The State Shall endeavor to promote Voluntary formation, autonomous functioning, democratic Control and professional management of the Co-operative societies" and
3. After Part IX-A of the Constitution, Part IX-B was inserted. Part IX-B extended from Article 243ZH to Article 243ZT.

Constitution (Ninety Seventh Amendment) Act 2011 relating to the Co-operatives was enacted to encourage economic activities of Cooperatives which in turn help progress of rural India. It is expected to not only ensure autonomous and democratic functioning of Cooperatives, but also the accountability of the management to the members and other Stakeholders.

The Major features of the Act are as follows:

1. Incorporation, regulation and winding up of cooperative Societies based on the principles of Voluntary formation, democratic member Control, member economic participation and autonomous functioning;
2. Specifying the maximum number of directors of a Co-operatives Society to be not exceeding twenty-one members;
3. A fixed term of five years from the date of election in respect of the elected members of the board and its office bearers; and an authority or body for the Conduct of elections to a Cooperative Society;
4. A maximum time limit of Six months during which board of directors of a Co-operative Society Could be kept under Supersession or suspension;
5. Independent professional audit;
6. right of information to the members of the Co-operative Societies;
7. Empowering the State Governments to obtain periodic reports of activities and accounts of Co-operatives Societies;
8. reservation of one seat for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes and two Seats for women on the board of every Cooperative Society, which have individuals as members from Such Categories ; and
9. Penalties in respect of offences relating to Co-Operatives Societies.

The Scheduled and tribal Areas

Article 244 in Part X of the Constitution envisages a special System of administration for Scheduled and tribal areas.

1. Article 244 (1) provides that the provisions of the fifth Schedule shall apply to the administration and Control of the Scheduled areas and Scheduled tribes in any State other than the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

2. Article 244(2) provides that the provisions of the Sixth Schedule Shall apply to the administration of the tribal areas in the State of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

Fifth Schedule – Administration of Scheduled Areas

The Various Provisions of administration of Scheduled Areas Contained in the Fifth Schedule are:

1. The executive power of a State extends to the Scheduled areas therein.
2. The Governor of each State having Scheduled areas therein has to submit a report to the President annually or whenever so required by the President. The executive power of the Union extends to giving directions to the State regarding the administration of such areas.
3. A Tribal Advisory Council Consisting of Not more than 20 members +should be established in each State having Scheduled areas therein. The tribal advisory council will advise on matters related to the Welfare and advancement of the Scheduled tribes.
4. The Governor is empowered to direct that any particular act of Parliament or the State Legislature does not apply to a Scheduled area or apply with Specific modifications and exceptions.
5. The Governor can also make regulations for the peace and good government of any Scheduled area in a State after Consulting with the tribal advisory Council.

The Constitution provides for the appointment of a Commission to report on the administration of the Scheduled areas and the Welfare of the Scheduled tribes in the States. He Can appoint such a Commission at any time but Compulsory after ten years from the Commencement of the Constitution

[Article 339(1)]. The first Commission was thus appointed in 1960 under the Chairmanship of U.N. Dhebar. The Second Commission was appointed in 2002 under the Chairmanship of Dilip Singh Bhuria.

Sixth Schedule – Administration of Tribal Areas

The Various Provisions of administration of Tribal Areas Contained in the Sixth Schedule are:

1. The tribal areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram have been Constituted as autonomous districts. But they do not fall outside the executive authority of the State Concerned.
2. The President may at any time by order direct that the Whole or any specified part of a Scheduled area shall Cease to be a Scheduled area or a part of Such an area; increase the area of any Scheduled area in a State after Consultation with the Governor of that State.
3. If there are different tribes in an autonomous district, the governor can divide the district in to several autonomous regions.
4. Each autonomous district has a District Council Consisting of 30 members. Each autonomous
5. The district and regional Councils are empowered to assess and Collect land revenue and to impose Certain Specified taxes.
6. The Governor Can appoint a Commission to examine and report on any matter relating to the administration of the autonomous districts or regions. He may dissolve a district or regional Council on the recommendation of the Commission.

Tribal Areas in the States

- **Assam** – North Cachar Hills District; Karbi Anglong District; Bodoland Territorial Areas District
- **Meghalaya** – Khasi Hills District; Jaintia Hills District; Garo Hills District
- **Tripura** – Tripura Tribal Areas District
- **Mizoram** – Chakma District; Mara District; Lai District

Local Self – Government for Scheduled Areas

Most of the tribes in India are Collectively identified under Article 342 (1) and (2) of the Constitution as Scheduled Tribes. Article 244 (Administration of Scheduled Areas and Tribal Areas) of Part X of the Constitution grants them overarching immunity to the extent of substantial right to Self-determination. While the Sixth Schedule, applicable in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram, gives tribal people freedom to exercise legislative and executive powers through an Autonomous Regional Council and an Autonomous District Council, the Fifth Schedule, applicable in all the other identified tribal regions, guarantees tribal autonomy and tribal rights over land through Tribal Advisory Council in each State. Because of the autonomy guaranteed by the Constitution, the laws passed by the parliament and the State legislatures do not apply to these Scheduled Areas, unless specifically provided for.

The Provisions of autonomy to Fifth Schedule areas have had little impact on development of tribals. The Tribals. The Tribal Advisory Councils are either non-existent in many States or are defunct and dysfunctional. In View of such a situation, When the government passed the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, 1992, the provisions of local self-government were not applicable to Scheduled Areas. Article 243M and the Tribal areas as mentioned under Article 244. So, While village level democracy became a real prospect in other areas, the Fifth Schedule areas. It Suggested the Village-level gram Sabha will exercise Command over natural resources, resolve disputes and manage institutions Such as Schools and Cooperatives under it. Above will be a gram panchayat, an elected body of representatives of

each gram Sabha, also to function as an appellate authority for unresolved disputes at the lower level. At the top of it will be a block-or taluka-level body.

Bhuria Committee

Before enactment of PESA, the Bhuria Committee in 1995 formulated a three-tier Structure to extend the Panchayati Raj functions in the Scheduled areas. It suggested that the Village-level gram Sabha will exercise Command over natural resources, resolve disputes and manage institutions Such as Schools and Cooperatives under it. Above it will be a gram Panchayat, an elected body of representatives of each gram Sabha, also to function as an appellate authority for unresolved disputes at the lower level. At the top of it will be a block-or taluka-level body.

The Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996

Since the laws do not automatically Cover the Scheduled Areas, the PESA Act was enacted on 24th December, 1996 to enable Tribal Self Rule in these areas. The Act extended the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution relating to Panchayat to the tribal areas in the Fifth Schedule areas as referred to in Clause (1) of Article 244 of the Constitution. The nine States with Fifth Schedule areas are : Andhra Pradesh Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh Orissa and Rajasthan. Most of the North eastern States under Sixth Schedule Areas are not Covered by PESA, as these States have their own Autonomous Councils governance.

Important features of PESA

1. The State legislation on the Panchayats that may be made shall be Consonance with the Customary law, social and religious practices and traditional management practices of Community resources;
2. Every Gram Sabha Shall be Competent to Safeguard and preserve the traditions and Customs of the people, their Cultural identity, Community resources and the Customary mode of dispute resolution;
3. Every Gram Sabha has been made responsible for planning and implementation of Social and economic development programmes as Panchayati Raj System envisages.
4. The Gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level shall be Consulted before making the acquisition of land in the Scheduled Areas for development projects and before re-setting or rehabilitating persons affected by Such projects in the Scheduled Areas; the actual planning and implementation of the projects in the Scheduled Areas Shall be Coordinated at the State level;
5. Prior recommendation of the Gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level shall be made mandatory for grant of prospecting license, mining lease or Concession for the exploitation of minor minerals by auction;
6. Planning and management of minor water bodies in the Scheduled areas shall be entrusted to Panchayats at the appropriate level;

While endowing Panchayats in the Scheduled areas with Such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of Self-government, a State Legislature Shall ensure that the Panchayats at the appropriate level and the Gram Sabha are endowed specifically with:-

- a. the power to enforce prohibition or to regulate or restrict the Sale and Consumption of any intoxicant;
- b. the ownership of minor forest produce;
- c. the power to manage village markets by Whatever name Called;

- d. the power to prevent alienation of land in the Scheduled Areas and to take appropriate action to restore any unlawfully alienated land of a Scheduled Tribe;
- e. the power to exercise Control over money lending to the Scheduled Tribes;
- f. the power to Control over local plans and resources for Such plans including Tribal Sub-Plans.
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Right to Education

Why in the news?

India's landmark Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 completes its decadal anniversary. Further, renewed focus on skilling and higher education, the RTE remains one of the most important catalysts for India to reap its much-anticipated **"DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND."**

What is Right to Education?

Right to Education Act (RTE) provided free and compulsory education to children in 2009 and enforced it as a fundamental right under **Article 21-A**.

Why Right to Education?

The Right to Education serves as a building block to ensure that every child has his or her right to get a quality elementary education.

Constitutional Background

- Originally Part IV of Indian Constitution, **Article 45 and Article 39 (f) of DPSP**, had a provision for state funded as well as equitable and accessible education.
- The first official document on the Right to Education was **Ramamurti Committee Report in 1990**.
- In 1993, the Supreme Court's landmark judgment in the **Unnikrishnan JP vs State of Andhra Pradesh & Others** held that **Education is a Fundamental right flowing from Article 21**.
- **Tapas Majumdar Committee (1999)** was set up, which encompassed insertion of **Article 21A**.
- **The 86th amendment to the constitution of India in 2002**, provided **Right to Education as a fundamental right in part-III** of the Constitution.
- The same amendment inserted **Article 21A** which made Right to Education a fundamental right for children between **6-14 years**.
- The 86th amendment provided for a **follow-up legislation** for Right to Education Bill 2008 and finally **Right to Education Act 2009**.

Feature of Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009

- The RTE Act aims to provide **primary education to all children aged 6 to 14 years**.
- It enforces Education as a **Fundamental Right (Article 21)**.
- The act mandates **25% reservation for disadvantaged sections** of the society where disadvantaged groups include:
 - SCs and STs
 - Socially Backward Class
 - Differently abled
 - It also makes provisions for a non-admitted child to be admitted to an **age appropriate class**.
 - It also states that sharing of financial and other responsibilities between the Central and State Governments.
 - It lays down the norms and standards related to:
 - Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTRs)
 - Buildings and infrastructure
 - School-working days
 - Teacher-working hours.
 - It had a clause for **"No Detention Policy"** which has been **removed under The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Act, 2019**.

- It also provides for prohibition of deployment of teachers for non-educational work, other than decennial census, elections to local authority, state legislatures and parliament, and disaster relief.
 - It provides for the appointment of teachers with the requisite entry and academic qualifications.
 - It prohibits
 - Physical punishment and mental harassment
 - Screening procedures for admission of children
 - Capitation fee
 - Private tuition by teachers
 - Running of schools without recognition
 - It focuses on making the child free of fear, trauma and anxiety through a system of child friendly and child centred learning.
- Achievements of Right to Education Act, 2009**
- The RTE Act has successfully managed to increase enrolment in the upper primary level (Class 6-8).
 - Stricter infrastructure norms resulted in improved school infrastructure, especially in rural areas.
 - More than 3.3 million students secured admission under 25% quota norm under RTE.
 - It made education inclusive and accessible nationwide.
 - Removal of “no detention policy” has brought accountability in the elementary education system.
 - The Government has also launched an integrated scheme, for school education named as **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan**, which subsumes the three schemes of school education:
 - Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
 - Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)
 - Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Teacher Education (CSSTE).

Limitation of Right to Education Act, 2009

- Age group for which Right to Education is available ranges from 6 – 14 years of age only, which can be made more inclusive and encompassing by expanding it to 0 – 18 years.
 - There is no focus on quality of learning, as shown by multiple **ASER reports**, thus RTE Act appears to be mostly input oriented.
 - Five States namely Goa, Manipur, Mizoram, Sikkim and Telangana have not even issued notification regarding 25% seats for underprivileged children of society under the RTE.
 - More focus is being given over statistics of RTE rather than quality of learning.
 - Lack of teachers affect pupil-teacher ratio mandated by RTE which in turn affects the quality of teaching
- Steps to Be Taken**
- Minority Religious Schools need to be brought under the RTE.
 - More focus on teacher training programs.
 - Quality of education needs to be emphasized over quantity of education.
 - Steps should be taken to make the teaching profession attractive.
 - Society as a whole needs to be supportive of education for children without biases.

Way Forward

It has been ten years since the implementation of RTE Act, but it can be seen that it still has a long way to go to be called successful in its purpose. Creation of a conducive atmosphere and supply of resources would pave the way for a better future for individuals as well as the nation as a whole.

No detention Policy

The no-detention policy was introduced as a part of the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) under the Right to Education Act (RTE) in 2010.

- Under this policy, students up to Class 8 are automatically promoted to the next class without being held back even if they do not get a passing grade.
- The policy was to ensure that no child admitted in a school shall be held back in any class or expelled from school until the completion of elementary education.

But, recently it has been removed by RTE Amendment Act, 2019.

Rajya Sabha Passes the Bill to Abolish the No Detention Policy

The Rajya Sabha has passed **The Right of Children to Free & Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, 2018**.

- The Bill, which was passed by the **Lok Sabha in July 2018**, seeks to amend the Right to Education Act, 2009 to abolish the no-detention policy in schools.

Provisions of the Bill

- The Bill **amends the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009** and provides that:
- There shall be a **regular examination in the fifth class and in the eighth class** at the end of every academic year.
- If a child fails in the examination he shall be **given an opportunity for re-examination within a period of two months** from the date of declaration of the result.
- The **State Government may allow schools to hold back a child** in the fifth class or in the eighth class or in both classes if he fails in the re-examination.
- The **State Government may also decide not to hold back a child** in any class until the completion of elementary education.
- **No child shall be expelled from a school** till the completion of elementary Education.

Lok Sabha Clears Detention Policy

Lok Sabha has passed the **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, 2018** to abolish the 'no detention policy' in schools.

- As per the amendment, it would be **left to the states to decide** whether to continue the no-detention policy.
- Under the **current provisions of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009**, no student can be detained till class VIII and all students are promoted to the next grade.
- The legislation aims to bring **accountability into the elementary education system**.
- This Bill provides for **regular examination in classes V and VIII**, and if a child fails, there is a provision to give her or him **additional opportunity to take a re-examination within two months**.
- If the students still do not pass the exam, the state government may decide to detain them.
- The **states will decide** at what level and who will conduct the examination.

What is No Detention Policy?

- No Detention Policy states that **no child admitted in a school shall be held back in any class or expelled till s/he completes elementary education, which is upto Class VIII**.
- It is provided under Section 16 of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 or Right to Education Act (RTE).

Why was No Detention Policy introduced?

- The provision was made in the original Act because **examinations were often used to hold back children who obtained poor marks**.
- To **reduce the higher dropout** rate especially among economically marginalized communities - it was felt that compelling children to repeat a class was demotivating, often forcing them to abandon school.
- The No Detention Policy was supposed to be part of the larger continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) effort which replaced the annual examination system.
- CCE mandates the assessment and evaluation of students' academic, social and personality development on a continuous basis.

Challenges with No Detention Policy

- In 2016, Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) had advised Human Resource Development Ministry for the scrapping of 'No Detention policy' on the ground that it was leading to lower learning outcomes.
- Teachers were ill-equipped to facilitate the implementation of the new methods of evaluation and in most cases the policy was interpreted as one that required no assessment at all. Less than 10% of the

schools in the country are fully compliant with the RTE's requirements on infrastructure and teacher availability.

- The policy focused more on increasing the enrollment in elementary education and compromised on the quality of basic education.
- It led to lackadaisical attitude among students towards their studies, as they did not fear detention.
- According to the 2016 edition of "Annual Status of Education Report", less than 48% of children in class V can read a class II-level textbook; only 43.2% of class VIII students in rural India can do simple divisions; only one out of every four students in class V could read an English sentence. Several States and Union territories have raised the concern about adverse impact of Section 16 on elementary education.
- **TSR Subramanian Committee** on Education and the **Vasudev Devnani Committee** formed under CABE had recommended the revocation of No Detention Policy.

Way Forward

- Bringing back year-end examinations for Classes V and VIII and detaining students who fail will not improve learning outcomes on their own unless supported by other necessary changes in the educational ecosystem.
- The real solution to poor learning outcomes is socio-economic deprivation lies in improving quality of and access to education.
- Making teachers do their job better as well as fixing shortcomings in educational infrastructure and administration is the need of the hour.
- Raising the quality of classroom teaching, continuous monitoring of teacher attendance and introduction of free vocational and industrial skills training for all those with such an aptitude after elementary schooling should be the priority.

ASER Report 2018

The **NGO Pratham** has released its **13th Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)- 2018**.

- ASER 2018 is a nation-wide household survey that provides a snapshot of children's schooling and learning for a representative sample of children across **rural India**.
- Children in the age group **3 to 16 are surveyed** to find out their enrollment status in school or pre-school. Children in the age group **5 to 16 are assessed one-on-one** to understand their basic reading and arithmetic abilities.
- ASER continues to be the only national source of information about children's foundational skills across the country.

Findings

- **Schooling Levels: Enrollment and Attendance**
 - **Overall enrollment (age 6-14):** The enrollment of children for the age group 6 to 14 has been above 95%, since 2017. Children **not enrolled in school has fallen below 3%** at 2.8% in 2018.
 - **Girls out of school:** In 2018, the overall proportion of girls in the 11 to 14 age group out of school has fallen to 4.1% from 10.3% in 2006. Further, in 2008, more than 20% of girls in the 15 to 16 age group were not enrolled in school. In 2018, this figure has decreased to 13.5%.
 - **Private school enrollment:** In 2016, proportion of children (age 6-14) enrolled in private school stood at 30.6% and is almost unchanged at 30.9% in 2018.
- **Learning levels: Foundational skills in reading and arithmetic**
 - **Reading**
 - **Std III-** The percentage of all children in Std III who can read at Std II level has increased from 21.6% in 2013 to 27.2% in 2018.
 - **Std V-** In 2018, 50.3% of Children enrolled in Std V can read at least a Std II level text. This figure has inched up from 47.9% in 2016
 - **Std VIII-** ASER 2018 data indicates that of all children enrolled in Std VIII in India, about 73% can read at least a Std II level text. This number is unchanged from 2016.
 - **Arithmetic**

- **Std III-** The all India figure for children in Std III who are able to do **at least subtraction has not changed** much, from 27.6% in 2016 to 28.1% in 2018. For government school children, this figure was 20.3% in 2016 and 20.9% in 2018.
- **Std V-** The proportion of children in Std V across India who are able to do division **has increased slightly**, from 26% in 2016 to 27.8% in 2018.
- **Std VIII-** The overall performance of Std VIII in basic arithmetic **has not changed** much over time. Currently about 44% of all children in Std VIII can solve a 3-digit by 1-digit numerical division problem correctly.
- **Learning levels: 'Beyond Basics'**- In ASER 2018, children in the **age group 14 to 16** were given a few tasks which required calculations to be **done in everyday contexts**. Children were asked to **calculate time**, compute how many tablets would be required to purify water (**application of unitary method**), figure out where to **buy books given two different price lists** (financial decision making), and **compute a discount**.
 - Of the 14-16 year olds who could solve a numerical division problem, a little under half could compute the time question correctly, 52% could apply the unitary method to calculate how many tablets were needed to purify a given volume of water, about 37% were able to take the correct decision regarding the purchase of books, and less than 30% could compute the discount correctly.
 - In all cases, **fewer girls could solve questions** correctly as compared to boys.
- **Teacher and Student Attendance-** At the all India level, **no major change** is seen in students' and teachers' attendance. Average teacher attendance has hovered at around 85% and average student attendance at around 72% for the past several years in both primary and upper primary schools.
 - Nationally, substantial improvements are visible in 2018 in the **availability of many school facilities** mandated by **Right To Education (RTE)**.
 - The fraction of schools with **usable girls' toilets doubled from 2010**, reaching 66.4% in 2018.
 - The proportion of schools **with books other than textbooks** available increased from 62.6% to 74.2% over the same period (i.e. from 2010 to 2018)

The Right To Education (RTE) Act

- The Constitution (**Eighty-sixth Amendment**) Act, 2002 inserted **Article 21-A** in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of **6 to 14 years as a Fundamental Right**.
- Subsequently, the **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009** was enacted as envisaged under Article 21-A It came into **effect on 1 April 2010**.
- There is no separate budget for RTE, rather it is subsumed in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) through which it is effected.
- Section 3(1) of the RTE Act provides that every child of the age group of 6-14 years shall have a right to free and compulsory education in a neighborhood school till completion of Elementary Education.
- The RTE Act provides for constitutionally created independent bodies like the National and State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights.
- Recently, the **Rajya Sabha has passed the Right of Children to Free & Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, 2018** which seeks to amend the Right to Education Act, 2009 to **abolish the no-detention policy in schools**.
- **Physical Education and Sports Facilities-** This year, ASER introduced a series of questions on the availability of **sports infrastructure in schools**.
 - In 2018, **about 8 out of 10 schools** had a playground available for students, either within the school premises or close by.
 - Physical education teachers are scarce in schools across rural India. Only 5.8% of all primary schools and 30.8% of upper primary schools had a physical education teacher available. In majority of schools, another teacher was tasked with supervising physical education activities as well.
 - **Sports equipment** of some kind was observed in 55.8% of primary schools and 71.5% of upper primary schools.

Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)

- ASER 2018 included **almost all rural districts** in India and generated district, state, and national estimates of foundational reading and arithmetic abilities of children in the age group 5 to 16 years. It surveyed children in the age group of 3 to 16 years.
- ASER surveys use **Census 2011** as the sampling frame.
- ASER 2016 followed the ‘basic’ model, sampling children age 3 to 16 for survey and testing reading, arithmetic, and English for children age 5 to 16.**
- In **2017, ASER** conducted the first alternate-year design known as **ASER ‘Beyond Basics’**, focusing on **youth in the 14 to 18 age group** in 28 districts across India.
- ASER 2017 inquired about what youth are currently doing and aspiring to, in addition to assessing their foundational skills and their ability to apply these to everyday tasks.

INDIA’S DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND

Context

- India has 62.5% of its population in the **age group of 15-59 years** which is ever increasing and will be at the peak around 2036 when it will reach approximately 65%.
- These population parameters indicate an availability of demographic dividend in India, which started in 2005-06 and will last till 2055-56.
- According to **Economic Survey 2018-19**, India’s Demographic Dividend will peak around 2041, when the share of working-age, i.e. **20-59 years**, population is expected to hit 59%.

Demographic Dividend: Definition

- According to **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**, demographic dividend means, "**the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population’s age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population (15 to 64) is larger than the non-working-age share of the population (14 and younger, and 65 and older)**".
- With fewer births each year, a country’s working-age population grows larger relative to the young dependent population. With more people in the labor force and fewer children to support, a country has a window of opportunity for economic growth if the right social and economic investments and policies are made in health, education, governance, and the economy.

Demographic Dividend in India

- India has one of the **youngest populations** in an aging world. By 2020, the median age in India will be just 28, compared to 37 in China and the US, 45 in Western Europe, and 49 in Japan.
- Since 2018, India’s working-age population (people between 15 and 64 years of age) has grown larger than the dependant population — children aged 14 or below as well as people above 65 years of age. This **bulge in the working-age population** is going to last till 2055, or 37 years from its beginning.
- This transition happens largely because of a **decrease in the total fertility rate** (TFR, which is the number of births per woman) after the increase in life expectancy gets stabilised.
- A study on demographic dividend in India by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) throws up two interesting facts.
 - The **window of demographic dividend opportunity** in India is available for five decades from 2005-06 to 2055-56, longer than any other country in the world.
 - This demographic dividend **window is available at different times in different states** because of differential behaviour of the population parameters.

Advantages Associated with Demographic Dividend

- Better economic growth** brought about by increased economic activities due to higher working age population and lower dependent population. It will be channelised in following ways:

- **Increased Labour Force** that enhances the productivity of the economy.
- **Increased fiscal space** created by the demographic dividend to divert resources from spending on children to investing in physical and human infrastructure.
- **Rise in women's workforce** that naturally accompanies a decline in fertility, and which can be a new source of growth.
- **Increase in savings rate**, as the working age also happens to be the prime period for saving.
- A massive shift towards a middle-class society, that is, the **rise of aspirational class**.
- Demographic dividend has **historically contributed up to 15 % of the overall growth in advanced economies**.
 - Japan was among the first major economies to experience rapid growth because of changing population structure.
 - The country's demographic-dividend phase lasted from 1964 to 2004.
- **Rapid industrialisation and urbanisation** because of higher number of employment seeking population that would force higher economic activities.
- **Rise in workforce**: With more than 65% of working age population, India will rise as an economic superpower, supplying more than half of Asia's potential workforce over the coming decades.
- **Effective policy making**: Fine-tuning the planning and implementation of schemes and programmes by factoring in population dynamics is likely to yield greater socio-economic impact and larger benefits for people.

Challenges Associated with Demographic Dividend

- **Asymmetric demography**: The growth in the working-age ratio is likely to be concentrated in some of India's poorest states and the demographic dividend will be fully realized **only if India is able to create gainful employment opportunities** for this working-age population.
- **Lack of skills**: Most of the new jobs that will be created in the future will be highly skilled and lack of skill in Indian workforce is a major challenge. India may not be able to take advantage of the opportunities, due to a **low human capital base and lack of skills**.
- **Low human development parameters**: India ranks 130 out of 189 countries in UNDP's Human Development Index, which is alarming. Therefore, **health and education parameters need to be improved substantially** to make the Indian workforce efficient and skilled.
- **Informal nature of economy in India** is another hurdle in reaping the benefits of demographic transition in India.
- **Jobless growth**- There is mounting concern that future growth could turn out to be jobless due to de-industrialization, de-globalization, the fourth industrial revolution and technological progress. As per the **NSSO Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-18, India's labour force participation rate for the age-group 15-59 years is around 53%, that is, around half of the working age population is jobless.**

What needs to be done?

- **Building human capital**: Investing in people through **healthcare, quality education, jobs and skills** helps build human capital, which is key to supporting economic growth, ending extreme poverty, and creating a more inclusive society.
 - **Skill development** to increase employability of young population. India's labour force needs to be empowered with the right skills for the modern economy. Government has established the **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)** with the overall target of skilling/ up skilling 500 million people in India by 2022..
 - **Education**: Enhancing educational levels by properly investing in primary, secondary and higher education. India, which has almost 41% of population below the age of 20 years, can reap the demographic dividend only if with a better education system. Also, **academic-industry collaboration** is necessary to synchronise modern industry demands and learning levels in academics.
 - Establishment of **Higher Education Finance Agency (HEFA)** is a welcome step in this direction.

- **Health:** Improvement in healthcare infrastructure would ensure higher number of productive days for young labourforce, thus increasing the productivity of the economy.
 - Success of schemes like **Ayushman Bharat** and National Health Protection scheme (**NHPS**) is necessary. Also nutrition level in women and children needs special care with effective implementation of **Integrated Child Development (ICDS)** programme.
- **Job Creation:** The nation needs to **create ten million jobs per year** to absorb the addition of young people into the workforce. Promoting businesses' interests and entrepreneurship would help in job creation to provide employment to the large labourforce.
 - India's improved ranking in the **World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index** is a good sign.
 - Schemes like **Start-up India** and **Make in India**, if implemented properly, would bring the desired result in the near future.
- **Urbanisation:** The large young and working population in the years to come will migrate to urban areas within their own and other States, leading to rapid and large-scale increase in urban population. How these migrating people can have access to basic amenities, health and social services in urban areas need to be the focus of urban policy planning.
 - Schemes such as **Smart City Mission** and **AMRUT** needs to be effectively and carefully implemented.

Way Forward

- India is on the right side of demographic transition that provides golden opportunity for its rapid socio-economic development, if policymakers align the developmental policies with this demographic shift.
- To reap the demographic dividend, proper investment in human capital is needed by focussing on education, skill development and healthcare facilities.
- This demographic transition also brings complex challenges with it. If the increased workforce is not sufficiently skilled, educated and provided gainful employment, we would be facing demographic disaster instead.
- By learning from global approaches from countries such as Japan and Korea and designing solutions considering the domestic complexities, we would be able to reap the benefits of demographic dividend.

ISSUE OF CATTLE SLAUGHTER IN INDIA

The dispute of Cattle Slaughter has a history, which dates back to the founding of the Republic of India.

Over the last few months, the issue of cattle slaughter has engulfed the whole of the country.

Cattle slaughter has become a controversial topic in India, with one group of Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists treating cattle as an endeared and respected living being, while the other religions of Islam and Christianity considering it as a source of meat.

In such intense scenario, Union Government's new Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Market) Rules have steamed up the winds. These Rules prohibit the sale of cows and buffaloes for slaughter at animal markets.

Recently in July 2017, the Supreme Court has tried to normalise the situation by putting a stay on the ban on cattle slaughter.

And with this, the political, legal and constitutional fault lines have opened up, causing uncertainty about what the outcome will be.

Cattle Slaughter: A Dispute since the founding of Republic of India

- This dispute of Cattle Slaughter has a history, which dates back to the founding of the Republic of India.
- During the framing of the Constitution, the subject of cow slaughter was one of the most contentious topics of debate.
- Seth Govind Das, a member of the Constituent Assembly, called for the prohibition of cow slaughter to be

made part of the Constitution's chapter on Fundamental Rights.

- This advanced a mix of cultural and economic arguments, invoking the sentiments of thirty crores of population.
- In its final form, this Directive Principle (Article 48 of the Constitution) under the heading "Organisation of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry", says the state shall organise agriculture and animal husbandry and take steps for preserving and improving the breeds, and prohibiting the slaughter of cattle.



What backed Cattle Slaughter issue?

- In May 2015, Abdul Ghaffar Qureshi was killed in Rajasthan's Nagaur district following rumours that he killed 200 cows for a feast.
- In August 2015, few people from Chilla Village near New Delhi's Mayur Vihar area clashed with four truck drivers who were reportedly transferring buffaloes to a slaughter house in Ghazipur.
- In September 2015, Mohammed Akhlaq in Dadri was lynched by a mob, who accused him of killing a cow and consuming its meat on Eid. This incident entangled the whole country in the threads of religious aspects of cattle.
- In March 2016, in the Latehar district of Jharkhand, two Muslim men were first brutally assaulted and then hung from a tree for transporting cows they purchased from a cattle fair.
- In May 2016, Bombay High Court allowed the consumption of imported beef, but supported the government's ban on cow and bull slaughter.
- In July 2016, Around 35 gau rakshaks banged seven members of a Dalit family for allegedly skinning a dead cow in the Gir Somnath district of Gujarat.
- In January 2017, the Supreme Court rejected a petition seeking a nationwide ban on cow slaughter.
- In May 2017, the Union Environment Ministry issued a notification effectively banning sale or purchase of cattle for slaughter across the country which led to a lot controversy.
- These rules were perceived as imposing an indirect beef ban and led to protests in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and have drawn strong condemnation from West Bengal as well.
- In July 2017, the Supreme Court stayed the ban on sale or purchase of cattle for slaughter.

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Market) Rules, 2017

- The definition of cattle includes bulls, bullocks, cows, buffaloes, steers, heifers, calves and camels.
- The cattle trade is permitted only among farm land owners across the nation.
- Cattle can only be sold to a person possessing documents that he/she is an agriculturist.
- Cattle bought cannot be resold within six months, in fact, young and unfit animals cannot be traded.
- Animal markets cannot be set up within 50 kilometres of an international border and 25 kilometres of a state border.
- Transporting cattle outside of India will require special approval of the state government nominee.
- All animal markets will have to seek the approval of district animal market committee to be headed by a magistrate.
- The owner of the animal has to bear the cost of its upkeep in a shelter.
- The rules state around 30 norms for animal welfare in markets, like water, fans, bedding, ramps, non-slippery flooring, veterinary facility and separate enclosure for sick animals among others.

NATIONAL NUTRITION MISSION

Malnutrition as characterized by under-nutrition, over-nutrition and micronutrient deficiencies has a negative impact on the socio-economic development of any nation. Malnutrition erodes social and economic gains made and put countries in a vicious cycle of poor nutritional status, high disease burden and increased poverty. Malnutrition has a significant inter-generational effect and must be addressed in its entirety for any meaningful development to take place. It causes low work productivity, absenteeism from work and school due to illnesses and poor intellectual performance among school children. Malnutrition contributes to about 60% of childhood mortality in the world.

Therefore, to achieve the nutrition-related Goals, it is imperative to put in place, mechanisms for sustained funding for nutrition programmes.

Thus government has launched National Nutrition Mission.

Objective:

The programme through the targets will strive to reduce the level of stunting, under-nutrition, anemia and low birth weight babies. It will create synergy, ensure better monitoring, issue alerts for timely action, and encourage States/UTs to perform, guide and supervise the line Ministries and States/UTs to achieve the targeted goals.

Salient features of the Mission are:

- The mission, commencing 2017-18, has a target to reduce under-nutrition and low birth-weight by 2 per cent each year.
 - It will strive to achieve reduction in stunting from 38.4 per cent as per the National Family Health Survey-4 to 25 per cent by 2022.
 - It also aims to bring down anaemia among young children, women and adolescent girls by three per cent per year.
 - Under NNM, the ministries of women and child development, health and family welfare, and water and sanitation will work together.
 - The mission will form an apex body that would fix targets and monitor, supervise and guide nutrition-related interventions across the ministries.
 - The mission would include several components like an ICT (information and communications technology)-based real-time monitoring system, incentivizing of states and Union territories to meet their targets, social audits, and setting up of nutrition resource centres.
 - Anganwadi workers will also be offered incentives for using IT-based tools such as smart phones.
 - Aadhaar card is a mandatory requirement to avail the benefits of the mission,
- Implementation strategy would be based on intense monitoring and Convergence Action Plan right upto the grass root level. NNM will be rolled out in three phases from 2017-18 to 2019-20. NNM targets to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively. Although the target to reduce Stunting is atleast 2% p.a., Mission would strive to achieve reduction in Stunting from 38.4% (NFHS-4) to 25% by 2022 (**Mission 25 by 2022**).

Practice question:

1) Which of the following services are sponsored under ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) to help achieve its objectives?

1. Immunization
2. Supplementary nutrition
3. Health check ups

- 4. Pre-school formal education upto 2 years
- 5. Nutrition and Health information

Codes:

- (a) 1, 2, 3 and 4 (b) 1, 2, 3 and 5 (c) 1,3 and 4 (d) All **Answer: b**

Exp: The following services are sponsored under ICDS to help achieve its objectives:[9]

1. Immunization
2. Supplementary nutrition
3. Health checkup
4. Referral services
5. Pre-school non formal education
6. Nutrition and Health information

INDIA'S NUTRITION CHALLENGES

Issue

Context

- Third meeting of National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges as part of Poshan Abhiyan held recently in New Delhi.
- Despite being one of the fastest growing economies in the world, India has been ranked at 103 out of 119 countries, with hunger levels categorised as "serious", in the Global Hunger Index 2018.

Background

Why nutritional balance is important for India: The rationale for investing in nutrition is globally well recognised both as a critical developmental imperative, as well as crucial for the fulfilment of human rights especially of the most vulnerable such as children, girls and women.

- It constitutes the foundation for human development, by reducing susceptibility to infections, related morbidity, disability and mortality burden.
- It is critical to prevent under- nutrition, as early as possible across the life cycle. Nearly every fifth young child in the world lives in India and nutritional intake is crucial for materialising this human resource pool in the future.
- It helps in enhancing cumulative lifelong learning capacities and adult productivity.
- It is the most effective means for poverty reduction and economic development with high economic return.
- It is central to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Analysis

Extent of under nutrition in India

India's performance on key nutrition indicators is poor according to national and international studies.

- India's child malnourishment level is not only the highest in the world but varies considerably across States. As per National Health Survey-4 2015-16:
 - The proportion of stunted (low height for age) children under five is significantly higher (38.4%) than global (22.9%) averages.

- The underweight (low weight for age) children rate (35.7%) is a lot higher than the global average (13.5%) too.
- India is home to over 53.3 million stunted, 49.6 million underweight and 29.2 million wasted (low weight for height) children under five.
- According to United Nations system in India (2015):
 - With nearly 195 million undernourished people, India shares a quarter of the global hunger burden.
 - Nearly 47 million or 4 out of 10 children in India are not meeting their full human potential because of chronic under-nutrition or stunting.

Causes of Malnutrition

High levels of maternal and child under-nutrition in India have persisted, despite strong constitutional, legislative policy, plan and programme commitments. The causes for malnutrition are various and multi-dimensional. These include:

- **Poverty and food insecurity:** According to Multi Dimension Poverty Index (MPI) 2018 of UNDP, 364 million Indians continue to experience acute deprivations in various social indicators. Over one in four multi-dimensionally poor in India are under ten years of age.
- **Poor access to health services:** According to a The Lancet study (2016) India ranks 145th among 195 countries in terms of quality and accessibility of healthcare, behind its neighbours like China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Bhutan.
- **Lack of education and information:** As per Annual State of Education Report 2017, India's 125 million children between 14 and 18 years of age are ill-equipped to read, write or even do basic arithmetic. It stated that the gender divide in cognition levels worsens with rise in age, as girls are often compelled to drop school for a variety of reasons.
- **Poor sanitation and lack of availability of fresh drinking water:** According to Niti Aayog's Composite Water Management Index 2018, 600 million people face high-to-extreme water stress; 75 per cent of the households do not have drinking water; and 84 per cent do not have piped water access; and 70 per cent of our water is contaminated. When water is available, it is likely to be contaminated, resulting in nearly 2, 00, 000 deaths each year.
- **Climate change and environmental degradation:** According to Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Assessment Report-5 2014, in India, the estimated countrywide agricultural loss in 2030 is over \$7 billion due to climate change. It will severely affect the income of 10 per cent of the population. Agriculture, the mainstay of the Indian economy, will see dramatic changes in yields, affecting people's right to food security.
- **Social ills like early child marriage and forced labour:** According to the latest figures of UNICEF India, 27% per cent marriages in India in 2016 were child marriages. Child marriage affects society as a whole since child marriage reinforces a cycle of poverty and perpetuates gender discrimination, illiteracy and malnutrition as well as high infant and maternal mortality rates.
- **Poor breastfeeding:** According to a report (2017) by UNICEF and WHO in collaboration with the Global Breastfeeding Collective, India is among the world's five largest emerging economies where

investment in breastfeeding is significantly low resulting in an annual loss of \$14 billion due to child deaths and cognitive losses from poor breastfeeding practices.

- **Economic and financial disability of women:** Despite economic and educational growth, female participation in the labour force of India has fallen to 24% in 2011, from 31% in 2004. India is 11th from the bottom in the world in women's labour-force participation rates
- **Increase in inequality:** India ranked 147 out of 157 countries in terms of its commitment to reducing inequality according to Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index developed by Oxfam and Development Finance International.

Government initiatives

- **Accessibility and Affordability of Food:** National Food Security Act 2013, Mid-Day Meals and supplementary nutrition under Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS).
- **Water and Sanitation:** National Rural Drinking Water Programme and Swachh Bharat Mission.
- **Maternity Benefits:** Compensate wage loss during pregnancy-Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana.
- **Full immunization:** Mission Indradhanush and roll out of Rotavirus and Pneumococcal vaccines.
- **Deworming initiative**
- **Initiation of Early Breastfeeding-** MAA National Breastfeeding Programme.
- Delaying the age of marriage and ensuring gap between pregnancies-Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and National Health Mission IEC.
- **Weekly Iron Folic Acid (IFA) Supplementation**

Therefore, it is widely recognized that a multi sectoral approach is necessary to tackle the problem of malnutrition.

Further steps

- **ICDS System Strengthening:** There should be a mechanism for growth monitoring which would include, early registration and weight monitoring, monthly weight monitoring, quarterly height/length monitoring.
- **Improved Service Delivery:** Will include convergence of services such as Immunisation, institutional delivery, drinking water and sanitation and efficient service deliver.
- **Use of information technology (ITC):** use of ICT interventions for addressing under nutrition includes
 - Real time monitoring-Population, target groups etc.
 - Nutrition Mapping
 - Data Analysis-Connecting Gaps.
- **Infant and young child feeding promotions (IYCF):** This will include
 - Behaviour change
 - Multi-media creatives– Exclusive breastfeeding, Early initiation of breastfeeding and complementary feeding
- Proper implementation of **National Nutrition Mission (POSHAN Abhiyan)**.

- **Diversified food:** Diversifying the diet which should include required amount of nutrients is a better way to contain under-nutrition at the base.
- **An inclusive and holistic approach:** including controlling/regulating food price, strengthening the public distribution system (PDS) and income support policies for making food cheaper are important steps.
- In order to improve their income and food situation, it is therefore crucial that **women obtain access to resources**, that is, to credit, land, and agricultural means of production.
- **Gender equality** is one of the means to improve the income thereby diverse food basket of the people. The **Food and Agriculture Organization** of the United Nations estimates that if women farmers had the same resources as men, it would have led to 150 million fewer hungry people.

Learning Aid

Practice Question:

High levels of maternal and child under-nutrition in India have persisted, despite strong constitutional, legislative policy, plan and programme commitments. Elaborate.

NATIONAL NUTRITION SURVEY

1. Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

What to study?

For Prelims: Key features and findings of the survey.

For Mains: Significance, concerns expressed and ways to address them.

Context: With the help of *UNICEF*, the *Ministry of Health and Family Welfare* recently conducted the first-ever comprehensive *National Nutrition Survey*.

The survey recorded *malnutrition* that included *micronutrient deficiencies and details of non-communicable diseases* such as diabetes, hypertension, cholesterol and kidney function in children and adolescents.

Nutrition woes

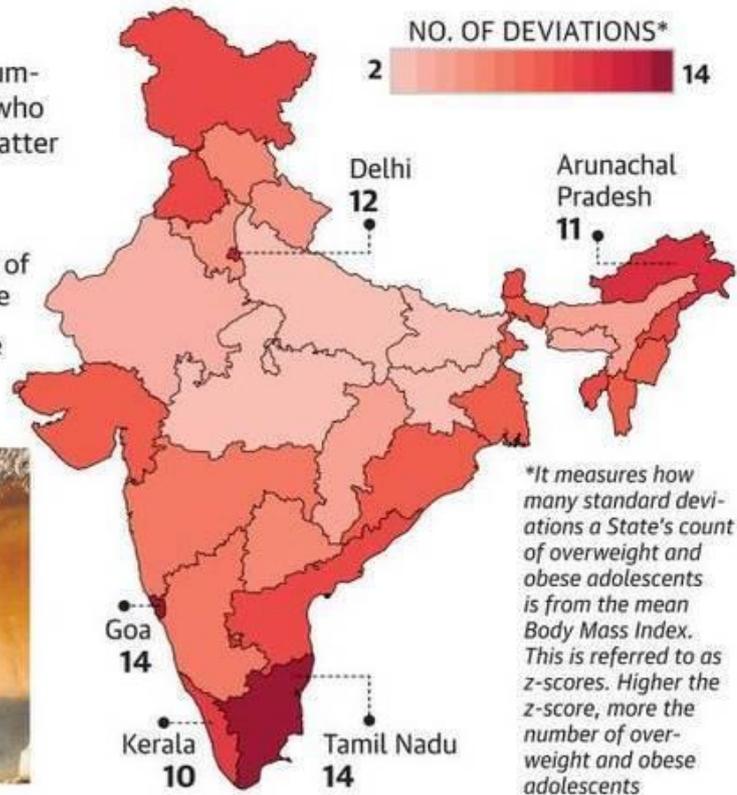
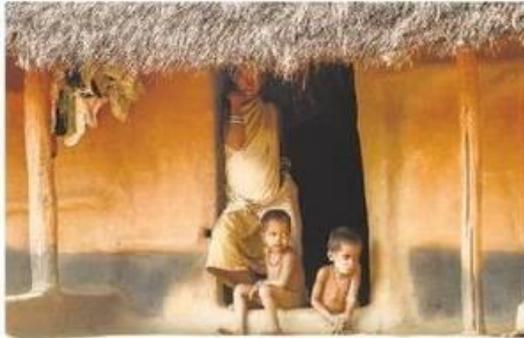
Delhi and Goa had the highest number of adolescents (aged 10-19 years) who were either overweight or obese. The latter had the most obese adolescents

10% children and adolescents are pre-diabetic

7% children and adolescents have risk of chronic kidney disease

4% adolescents have high cholesterol

5% adolescents were found to have high blood pressure

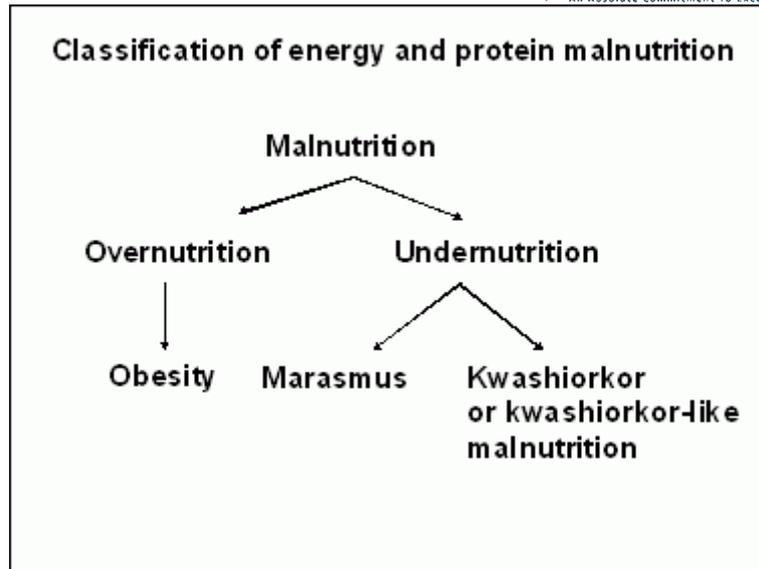


Key findings of the survey:

1. Around 10% of children in the age group of 5 to 9 years and adolescents in the age group 10 to 19 years are pre – diabetic. 5% of them were overweight and 5% suffered from blood pressure.
2. The survey for the first time proved the coexistence of obesity and under nutrition.
3. One in five children in the age group 5 to 9 years were stunted.
4. Tamil Nadu and Goa had the highest number of adolescents who were obese or overweight.

Steps Taken by Government of India to curb incidences of Malnutrition:

1. **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY): Rs.6,000 is transferred directly** to the bank accounts of pregnant women for availing better facilities for their delivery.
2. **POSHAN Abhiyaan:** aims to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anaemia and low birth weight babies through synergy and convergence among different programmes, better monitoring and improved community mobilisation.
3. **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013,** aims to ensure food and nutrition security for the most vulnerable through its associated schemes and programmes, making access to food a legal right.
4. **Mid-day Meal (MDM) scheme** aims to improve nutritional levels among school children which also has a direct and positive impact on enrolment, retention and attendance in schools.



The United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition:

On 1 April 2016, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly proclaimed **2016–2025 the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition.**

Led by WHO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition calls for policy action across 6 key areas:

1. creating sustainable, resilient food systems for healthy diets;
2. providing social protection and nutrition-related education for all;
3. aligning health systems to nutrition needs, and providing universal coverage of essential nutrition interventions;
4. ensuring that trade and investment policies improve nutrition;
5. building safe and supportive environments for nutrition at all ages; and
6. Strengthening and promoting nutrition governance and accountability, everywhere.

Sources: the Hindu.

Mains Question: With India's double whammy of under nutrition co-existing with equally high and increasing rates of over nutrition, there is a pressing need for reshaping India's nutrition policy with a focus on diet-related diseases. Discuss.