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Classroom Study Material

SOCIAL ISSUES

July 2017 – September 20th 2017

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1. ISSUES RELATED TO VULNERABLE SECTIONS

1.1. ISSUES RELATED TO WOMEN

1.1.1. SC RULING ON TRIPLE TALAQ

Why in news?

- On August 22, Constitution Bench set aside the practice of instant triple talaq (talaq-e-bid'a) by a 3:2 majority in Shayara Bano case.

Why need of this judgement after Shamim Ara case 2002?

- In 2002 case, a two-judge bench of the Apex Court had delegitimised this instant talaq. However, it was invalid only when it was not properly pronounced and preceded by attempts at reconciliation.
- In 2008, Justice Badar Durrez Ahmed of the Delhi High Court ruled in Masood Ahmed that three divorces at one go counted as just a single talaq.
- This latest ruling completely and unconditionally invalidates talaq-e-bid'a
- The Koranic procedure of talaq is the only way by which Muslim husband will be able to divorce his wife from now on.

Positive outcomes of judgement

- **Ensure equality** by upholding fundamental rights provided under Article 14 and 21 of the Indian Constitution. It held that right to equality includes right against arbitrariness, thus, instant irrevocable triple talaq not preceded by the efforts at reconciliation is unconstitutional
- **Ensures Gender justice** - for muslim women as triple talaq impacted their social status & dignity
- **Eradicate discrimination** on the ground of sex as provided under Articles 15 and 16
- **Uphold core constitutional provisions** by pronouncing personal laws could not override constitutionally guaranteed rights of individuals.
- **Encourage establishment of mediation centres** by legally and theologically informed Muslim intellectuals to help Muslim couples amicably resolve their marital disputes

Article 26 of the Constitution guarantees freedom "in matters of religion" to not only "every religious denomination" but also to "to any sect thereof". Thus, the Hanafi school enjoys constitutional protection.

Arguments against judgement

- **Goes against constitutional protection** – given under Article 26 as according to All India Muslim Personal Law Board, triple talaq is a 1,400-year-old practice.
- **Unstable external reforms** - There would always be problems in resumption of the matrimonial relationship between the divorced couple as it is considered to be both sinful and illegal by society. Thus, people needs to be educated
- **Internal reforms were promised by AIMPLB** - The board has decided to issue a code of conduct and warn those who give talaq without Sharia (Islamic law) reasons will face social boycott.
- **Outside judicial domain** – It is not the court's role "to determine the true intricacies of faith". Also there is contention that Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Act of 1937 has not codified talaq-e-bidat into statutory law, thus, it does not come under definition of Article 13.
- **Existence of several schools of Islamic law** – Since case before apex court is about Hanafi law as Shayara Bano is Hanafi, the court should ideally examine authoritative Hanafi books and this school deems this practice as valid.

Conclusion

- It is hoped that the judgement would open up Islam to modern interpretations within the framework of its original sources and usher in the process of reforms in the Muslim personal law.
- The biggest challenge, however, would be to inform the Muslim masses that the abolition of talaq-e-bid'a is not against the Shariah but has, on the contrary, brought it closer to the original principles of Islam.
- In general, the decision should generate debate on following issues
  - religion-based personal laws in the country, which generally places women in inferior position as compared to men
  - broader issues of constitutional rules versus social norms
  - addressing the tension between freedom of religion and other fundamental rights.

1.1.2. MISUSE OF ANTI-DOWRY LEGISLATION

Why in News?

Supreme Court has ordered a number of safeguards to prohibit the misuse of the anti-dowry provisions under section **498a of IPC.**

> **Section 498A-** Whoever, being the husband or the relative of the husband of a woman, subjects such woman to cruelty shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine.
>
> It is *separate from the Anti Dowry Act.*
>
> **Section 304B** relates to Dowry Deaths.

Background

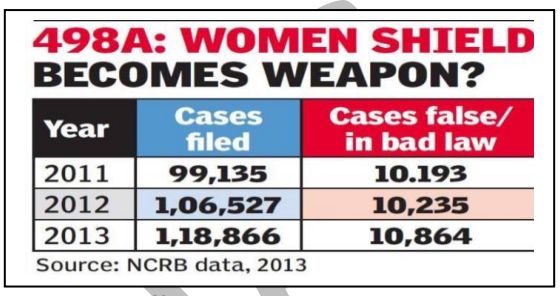
- While charge-sheets were filed in 96% of the cases regarding dowry only 14.4% resulted in convictions.
- After various judgements witnessing misuse of the anti-dowry provisions by people, in 2015, the government sought to introduce the bill to amend Section 498a of IPC based on the suggestions of **Law commission and Justice Malimath Committee** on Reforms of criminal Justice.

Changes by Supreme Court

- The Supreme Court acknowledged the need to **ensure a "rigorous" mechanism to file complaints** so that "frivolous complaints" can be weeded out.
- It also called for **involvement of civil society and sensitisation of investigation officers**.
- The court ordered setting up **of Family Welfare Committees** in every district to look into complaints of dowry harassment set up by **District Legal Services Authorities.** The committee may comprise of three members.
- The **committee may be reviewed** from time to time and at least once in a year by the District and Sessions Judge of the district who is also the Chairman of the District Legal Services Authority.
- The Committees may be constituted out of para legal volunteers/social workers/retired persons/wives of working officers/other citizens who may be found suitable and willing.

> **Anti Dowry Act 1961**
>
> - It is an Act to prohibit the giving and taking of dowry.
> - It had **consolidated the anti dowry** laws which had been passed in certain states.
> - This legislation provides for a penalty in **section 3** if any person gives, takes or abets giving or receiving of dowry.
> - I**t defined dowry as any property or valuable security given or agreed to be given in connection with the marriage**.
> - It does not apply for the presents given at the time of wedding.

- Complaints police or magistrates receive under 498A must be referred to the panel, which will consider them and submit reports. Until the report of the committee is received, no arrest should normally be effected.
- There must be a **designated officer to investigate** such complaints who should be cautious in matters of bail.
- **Personal appearance of all the family** members should not be a norm unless required. Appearance by a video can be permitted by a trail court.
- After observing the case for six months the National Legal Service Authority may give a report on change if deemed necessary.
- The court also made it clear that these directions will not apply in offenses where there is tangible physical injury or death.



Positives

- There has been a surge in the number of false cases regarding dowry harassment. The changes introduced by the Supreme Court were long awaited.
- The dowry harassment cases are prone to misuse by many people starting from the corrupt police officials.
- The very act of arresting is seen as a source of punishment. One cannot punish a person unless the investigation is completed. These guidelines will be effective in avoiding such situations.

Negatives

- The judgment sounds good on paper but not so much in terms of ground realities because already there is a delay and harassment involved in delivering justice even in genuine cases.
- The constitution of the Family Welfare Committee is vaguely described. Dowry harassment cases are sensitive and thus may be given over only to trained legal personnel or a judicial officer.
- By the way of these guidelines, a law much needed to fight a big evil of Indian society is being diluted.

1.1.3. WOMEN RESERVATION BILL

Why in news

Government is considering to introduce Women's Reservation Bill in the Parliament, which seeks to reserve one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women.

Background

- There has been a historical social exclusion of women due to various social and cultural reasons and patriarchal traditions, due to which even after 70 years of independence there is no adequate representation of women in political and decision making realm of the country.
- The percentage of women in the Lok Sabha has gone up by only a small margin from **4.4% in 1951 to 11% in 2014** and at this pace, it will take another 180 years to reach the gender balance.
- **Reservation in Panchayat was more effective** than expected in energising women and has **underscored the need for reservation** in higher bodies such as State Legislatures and Parliament.

- The **Constitution (One Hundred and Eighth Amendment) Bill, 2008** was introduced in Rajya Sabha with an aim to reserve 33% seats in Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies for women. However, bill lapsed with the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha.

Women representation at state level

- The situation is **worse at the state level,** where the average representation ratio of women is around 7%.
- Nagaland or Mizoram for example, have no women MLAs. Other worse performers are Jammu and Kashmir (2.27%) Goa (2.5%) and Karnataka (2.65%).
- India's best performing state is Haryana (14.44%), followed by West Bengal (13.95%), Rajasthan (13.48%) and Bihar (11%).

Highlights of the Bill

- It seeks to reserve one-third of all seats for women in the Lok Sabha and the state legislative assemblies.
- The allocation of reserved seats shall be determined by such authority as prescribed by Parliament.
- One third of the total number of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes shall be reserved for women of those groups in the Lok Sabha and the legislative assemblies.
- Reserved seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the state or union territory.
- Reservation of seats for women shall cease to exist 15 years after the commencement of this Amendment Act.

Joint Parliamentary Committee (1996) chaired by Geeta Mukherjee recommendations.

- Reservation for a period of 15 years
- Including sub-reservation for Anglo Indians
- Including reservation in cases where the state has less than three seats in Lok Sabha (or less than three seats for SCs/STs
- Including reservation for the Delhi assembly
- Reserving seats in Rajya Sabha and Legislative Councils
- Sub-reservation for OBC women after the Constitution extends reservation to OBCs.

In the Women's bill, first four recommendation were incorporated leaving last two

Parliamentary Standing Committee (2008) recommendation:

- Every political party must distribute 20% of its tickets to women
- Even in the current form, reservation should not exceed 20% of seats
- There should be a quota for women belonging to OBCs and minorities
- To require political parties to nominate women for a minimum percentage of seats.
- To create dual member constituencies, with women filling one of the two seats from those constituencies.

Challenges

- **One-size-fits-all policies designed** in New Delhi without accounting for local and varied granularities have indeed been problematic as can be seen from Nagaland agitation over reservation in local bodies and constitutional protection provided to their unique culture under Article 371(A)
- **Incompetency of candidate**: it would perpetuate the unequal status of women since they would not be perceived to be competing on merit.
- **Diversion from critical issues**: Policy diverts attention from the larger issues of electoral reform such as criminalisation of politics and inner party democracy.
- **Right to choice**: Reservation of seats in Parliament restricts choice of voters to women candidates.

- **Promote Nepotism**: Reservation might promote wives and daughters of politicians whose constituencies fell under the reserved category defeating the purpose of the bill.
- **Panchayat Pati Syndrome**: Male exercising undue influence on the work of their wives elected to power.

Significance

- **Political empowerment**: Reservation for seats for women is a valid and necessary strategy to enhance women's participation in the decision/policy making process. It would ensure considerable political empowerment of women and pave the way to the achievement of political justice to women as promised in Preamble and Article 38 of the Constitution of India.
- **Social empowerment**: Reservation is certainly needed to enable women to cross the socio-gender hurdles and to give them a level playing ground/ equal opportunities as their male counterparts because inadequate representation of women in Parliament and State legislature is a primary factor behind the general backwardness of women at all levels.
- **To attain Equality:** Reservation is needed for women belonging to the SC/ST communities to enable them to have fair competition with women belonging to the forward classes.
- **True Democratization:** Reservation is a sociological concept evolved to bring about **social reengineering** and reservation for women is needed to make the **democratic process inclusive.** Representation of women in policy making machineries is critical to the nation building process
- **Positive of reservation in Panchayat**:
  - ✓ Through 1/3rd reservation of seats for women in Panchayats and Nagarpalikas, they have been able to make meaningful contributions and that the actual representation of women in Panchayati Raj institutions has gone upto 42.3% i.e., beyond the reservation percentage. This has led the Government to make 50 percent reservation for women in local bodies.
  - ✓ Representation & Performance of women in Panchayats is largely due to statutory reservation of seats for them.

Reservation in Panchayat Polls

- Reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj institutions through the Constitution (73rd and 74th Amendment) was a pioneering step in political empowerment of women.
- According to the 73rd and 74th Amendment Act of the Constitution, passed in 1993, one-third of the seats in all rural and urban local bodies are reserved for women.
- However, 16 states have laws in place that **reserved half their seats** in rural local bodies for women.

Way forward

- **Providing reservation in Upper House**: reservation for women in Rajya Sabha and the Legislative Councils needs to be examined thoroughly as the upper Houses of the Parliament and State Legislatures play equally important role under the Constitution and by applying the principle of equality women should also get their due share in the second or upper chamber of Parliament and State Legislatures.
- **Inclusive development of society**: There is evidence that political reservation has increased **redistribution of resources in favour** of the groups which benefit from reservation. Women elected thus invest more in the public goods closely linked to women's concerns
- **To uphold the principle of our constitution:** Reserving seats for women in Assemblies and Lok Sabha should not be left to the discretion of Political Parties, rather it should be guaranteed in the Constitution itself and enforced by all means.

- **Bill as a Stepping Point:** Bill in itself is not an entirety, rather it is a formula to achieve Political Empowerment of women. Bill only lays down the principle/ basic framework for reservation of women in State Assemblies and Lok Sabha.

1.2. OTHER ISSUES

1.2.1. CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Why in News?

- Recently, a study was conducted about lifestyle diseases, physical activity, and eating patterns of adolescents.

Other facts

- China, with 15.3 million obese children, tops the list
- India has the second highest number with 14.4 million children with excess weight.
- The incidence of obesity has doubled since 1980 in over 70 countries of the world
- Childhood obesity has grown at a faster rate than adult obesity in many countries.

Key findings

- Indian kids have reasonable knowledge about lifestyle diseases yet it does not translate into preventive action, thus, there is a knowledge-practice gap among teenagers.
- About 82% of the adolescents did not perceive themselves to be at risk for future cardio vascular diseases (CVDs) and even those who perceived the risk showed poor dietary practices.
- The trend of poor eating habits was visible more in older students and those belonging to affluent families as compared to low or middle-class.
- About 20% of the participants reported a family history of CVDs while a majority had little information about heart disorders.
- Boys tended more to be involved in physical activity (adequate physical activity as one hour every day) along with those who had better knowledge about risk factors.

How to tackle childhood obesity?

- **Awareness** - Promotion of school-based cardiovascular health programs to dispel myths that CVDs are problem of the aged only.
- **Changes in lifestyle –** through inculcating changes in eating habits and physical activity.
- **Regulation of marketing** and promotion of unhealthy foods, particularly those targeted at children, that are high in salt, sugar and fat
- **Labelling -** the role of positive front of pack and standardised global nutrient labelling on packaged foods may help in promotion of healthy foods and lifestyle
- **High tax** - the imposition of high taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages

Challenges in India to tackle obesity

- **Low standards** - standard of 5% (by weight) for trans-fats in fat spreads, hydrogenated vegetable oils etc. is high as compared to global best practices as countries are moving towards near zero.
- **No regulation on advertisements** - Currently there is no regulation for broadcast advertising and celebrity endorsements in India unlike international best practices such as in Norway and Brazil.
- **No basic labelling regulations** - The current nutrition labelling does not declare salt/sodium, added sugar and saturated fats on a mandatory basis. There is no mandatory provision for nutrient declaration per serve. Rather, it is optional with per 100 gm of product.

- **No policy guidelines** to reduce obesogenic environments in schools and promoting healthy foods and lifestyle even after 2015 Delhi High Court order to FSSAI to issue guidelines for the same.

Ending childhood obesity would also contribute to achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, WHO's global action plan for the prevention and control of NCDs (2013-2020), WHO's comprehensive implementation plan for maternal, infant and young child nutrition etc.

1.2.2. SOCIAL BOYCOTT ACT

Why in news?

The Maharashtra government's Prohibition of Social Boycott Bill got the assent of President Pranab Mukherjee.

What is Social Boycott?

If any individual or group tries to prevent or obstruct another member or group from observing any social or religions custom or from taking part in a social or community function, the act amounts to social boycott.

Provisions of the Act

- It provides for prohibition of social boycott of a person or group of persons, by an individual or a group like caste panchayat.
- The provisions of the law define social boycott as a cognisable, but bailable offence, and provide for an imprisonment of up to seven years or Rs. 5 lakh fine or both.
- The case has to be fast tracked within six months from the date of filing the charge sheet.

Why it must be treated as criminal offence?

- It would help the aggrieved people to avail legal remedies against boycott more freely.
- It will arrest the abuse of power by the elite section and curb social evils such as honour killing etc. in the garb of caste panchayat diktats or rituals.
- It may help in promoting inter-caste marriages.
- It is the duty of the state to protect and promote individual dignity & avoid instances like naked parading, ostracizing etc.
- It would curb violence based on social divisions and help in providing rehabilitation and protection to victims and witnesses.

Significance of the Act

- Maharashtra is the first state in the country to formulate such a law which is against the parallel justice system of the gaviks or jati panchayats. This Act can lead to other states following this step.
- The Act is step in direction to protect various fundamental rights of the citizens given under Article 14, 15 and 21.

Issues

- Social boycott is done based on oral diktat, thereby difficult to prove in court of law.
- Social boycott is a socio-cultural issue which can't be resolved merely by legal mechanism.

1.2.3. DOMESTIC HELP AND NEED OF PROTECTION

Issue Involved

- India became a signatory to the **International Labour Organisation's (ILO)** Convention 189, which mandates decent working conditions for domestic workers, but it has still not ratified it.
- **93% of the workforce** is in the unorganised sector and therefore beyond the purview of most labour laws.
- Moreover, 2011 NSSO data put the number of domestic workers at 3.9 million.

- Paid domestic work **continues to be excluded** from Payment of Wages Act (1936) or the Workmen's Compensation Act (1923) or the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act (1970) or the Maternity Benefit Act (1961)
- The Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008, (UWSSA) and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 **are only two** initiatives of government which construe domestic help.

Draft Domestic Worker Welfare Bill 2016

- It guarantees certain rights to the domestic workers in accordance with **international conventions on labour**,
- Compulsory registration of the employer and the employee with the **District Board** for regulation of domestic workers.
- Workers' Facilitation Centres for purposes of facilitating the filling and verification of employment agreements
- Provided that a **minor domestic worker** may be employed if he has completed compulsory elementary education.
- It mandates the **collection of cess** from the employer for the maintenance of a social security fund.
- Inclusion of domestic workers under the **Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY).**
- It seeks to regulate multiple work arrangements such as work type, hourly basis, part time work, full time work, and live-in work.

Social, cultural and economic factors

- **Distress migration**: Domestic workers come from most backward regions and often tribal community. In the absence of any regulation, the young girls are vulnerable to exploitation in urban space.
- **Cultural and economic devaluation of domestic work:** wages are often higher for the workplace outside the household.
- **Sectorial sexual division of labour:** house work is still seen as the domain of the woman. In our culture, it is taken as a matter of common sense that a female domestic worker are more suited to domestic help.

Challenges

- High supply of domestic workers due to decline in employment opportunities in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors, which took a hit post-2008.
- Their work (cooking, cleaning, dish-washing, baby-sitting) is not recognised as work by the state legislature.
- The lack of definition and delineation blurs the line between worker and employer, thereby making it a feudal rather than professional relationship.
- The task-based fixing of wage rates calculation is complex as opposed to the usual classification into skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled.
- Government's reluctance to regulate domestic work on the grounds that the workplace is a private household which should not be encroached upon by the state.

1.2.4. OBC RESERVATION

Why in news?

- The union cabinet has approved setting up of a commission under Article 340 to examine whether sub-quotas need to be created within central list of OBC reservation.
- The creamy layer ceiling for the OBC category has been increased from existing Rs 6 lakh to Rs 8 lakh per annum for central government jobs by cabinet.
- A proposal to extend the creamy layer decision to the PSUs was under "active consideration" of the government.

- A government bill was passed in Lok Sabha which seeks to accord constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes.

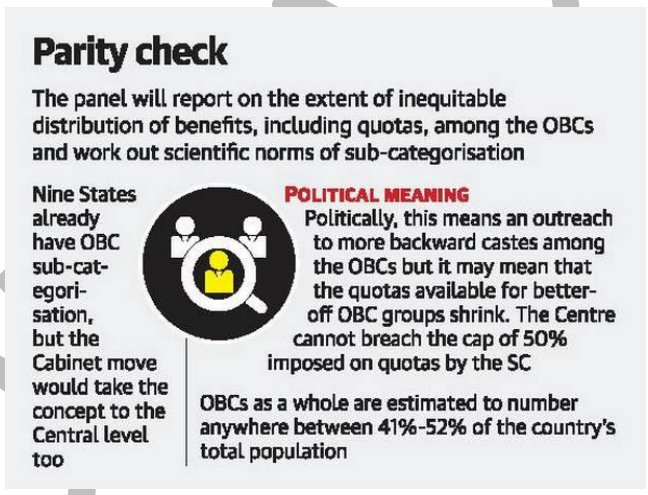
Article 340
The President may by order appoint a Commission
- to investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes within the territory of India and the difficulties under which they labour
- to make recommendations as to the steps that should be taken by the Union or any State to remove such difficulties and to improve their condition
- to recommend the grants that should be made for the purpose by the Union or any State

Terms of reference of commission

- To examine the extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation among the castes/ communities included in the broad category of OBCs in the Central list.
- To work out the mechanism, criteria, norms and parameters, in a scientific approach, for sub-categorization within such OBCs.
- To identify the castes/communities in the Central List of OBCs and classifying them into their respective sub-categories.

Arguments in favor of sub-quotas

- The National Commission for Backward Classes had given a similar proposal in 2011.
- The Supreme Court in its order in Indra Sawhney case observed that there is no Constitutional or legal bar to a State categorizing backward classes.



Possible impacts if sub-quota is implemented

- It will ensure that dominant OBC castes do not get all the benefits as the most backward OBC groups will compete among themselves for government jobs, educational seats etc. rather than with the better-off OBC castes.
- It may trigger political churning that could bring together a coalition of non-dominant castes, seen by some as Mandal 2.0 moment for Indian politics
- It may adversely impact the more advanced castes among the OBCs as sub-category quota can come only from within 27% quota pie because of 50% cap to total reservation by Supreme Court.

1.2.5. ISSUES RELATED TO YOUTH IN INDIA

Presently, India has the largest share of youth population in the world. In 2011, youth in total population stood at 34.8%. India is expected to have 34.33% share of youth in total population by 2020. The potential of the youth needs to be tapped and harnessed intelligently for the development of society. Thus, there is a need to understand their aspirations and problems and take steps towards increasing the human resource potential.

Other vital statistics
- **Declining sex ratio** from 1991 onwards – It has come down to 939 in 2011 and is projected to decline further to 904 in 2021 by World Bank
- **Married female** in the age group 15-19 has come down drastically from 69.57 in 1961 to 19.47 in 2011.

Major issues concerning youth

- **Education -** our youth are grasping for good education and meaningful professional opportunities but their

educational pursuits are not properly aligned with the needs of industry. A recent study pointed out that as much as 80% engineers are unemployable as they lack key skills.

- **Unemployment -** The unemployment rate among the youth (15-29 years) was much higher as compared to that in the overall population. The rate was higher for urban youth than that for the rural youth. Therefore, youths are frustrated as they have invested years of their lives to be trained for jobs they cannot find. In fact, 30% of youth aged 15-29 in India are not in employment, education or training.
- **Crime** – If their energy is not harnessed properly, their involvement in crimes and social abuse such as drug addiction etc. increases. Although a majority of crimes are committed by youth by virtue of their large physical energy, there is no separate statistics for age wise segregation of criminals involved in serious crimes like murder, dacoity, theft etc.
- **Suicides** - Youth (18 and above- below 30 years) is most vulnerable with 33% of total police recorded suicide cases. 'Family problems' and 'illness' were the major causes of suicides in 2015.
- **Militancy** – Due to issues like poverty, hunger, unemployment etc. more youths are taking up militancy in violence or insurgency affected areas.
- **Other issues** – include multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, violence, and limited opportunities for growth and employment prospects. Youth are often excluded from decision-making processes and generally looks at untraditional avenues for civic engagement.

Steps taken by government

- **National Youth Policy(NYP) 2014 –** It has defined 'youth' as persons in the age-group of 15-29 years. It proposes a holistic 'vision' for the youth of India and has identified various priority areas under 5 objectives (as shown in figure)

Objectives	Priority Areas
1. Create a productive workforce that can make a sustainable contribution to India's economic development	1. Education
	2. Employment and skill development
	3. Entrepreneurship
2. Develop a strong and healthy generation equipped to take on future challenges	4. Health and healthy lifestyle
	5. Sports
3. Instil social values and promote community service to build national ownership	6. Promotion of social values
	7. Community engagement
4. Facilitate participation and civic engagement at all levels of governance	8. Participation in politics & governance
	9. Youth engagement
5. Support youth at risk and create equitable opportunity for all dis-advantaged and marginalised youth	10. Inclusion
	11. Social justice

- **National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in 2015** to provide an umbrella framework to all skilling activities being carried out within the country, and to align these to common standards and link skilling with demand centres.
- **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojna (DDU-GKY) –** It is a placement linked Skill Development Scheme for rural youth
- **National Rural Livelihood Mission –** to create productive workforce, strengthen and diversify livelihoods, empower women in agriculture, promote self-employment among rural youth, promote start-ups under Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme.
- **Tribal Youth Exchange Programme (TYEP) -** In this Programme, tribal youth are taken to other parts of the country to sensitize them to rich cultural heritage of the Country, to expose them to development activities and to enable them to develop emotional linkage with the people in other parts of the country.
- **National Programme for Youth and Adolescent Development (NPYAD) -** It is an "Umbrella Scheme" under which financial assistance is provided to Government/ non-Government organisations for taking up activities for youth and adolescent development.

- **Adolescent Health and Development Project (AHDP) -** to empower out-of-school adolescents with life skills, education and skills for better employability and improved access to youth friendly and gender-sensitive services in public and private sectors.
- **Various youth development programmes** such as National Cadet Corps (NCC), National Service Scheme (NSS), Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), National Young Leaders Program (NYLP), Projects on Awareness and Education for Prevention of Drug Abuse and Alcoholism in Punjab, PM Employment Generation Programme and the schemes for financial assistance to NGOs engaged in youth development.

There is need to economically empower youth. The problem of unemployed youth will not be solved only by developing skills, or only by attracting investments. At the policy level, skill development, enterprise formation and job creation must co-evolve, especially when the types of skills required will keep changing with new technologies and new forms of enterprises. The skills ministry, the labour ministry and several other ministries must break out of their silos and work together as Team India.

1.3. LAWS ON BEGGARY IN INDIA

Why in news?

- Recently, union minister of women and child development, emphasized on need to enact a new comprehensive law on beggary.

Current situation

- Currently, there is no central law on begging & destitution and most states have adopted the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959.
- The act of begging is a crime in 21 states (including Uttarakhand which recently banned begging) and two union territories of India. It is treated as cognisable and non-bailable offense.
- The draft Bill, called the Persons in Destitution (Training, Support and Other Services) Bill, was formulated in 2013 and submitted to the Maharashtra government. It recognised destitution as a situation of extreme vulnerability and placed a constitutional obligation to protect them and address the vulnerabilities that arise from it.
- In 2016, the ministry of social justice and empowerment came up with a new draft model bill for destitute people, namely, The Persons in Destitution (Protection, Care and Rehabilitation) Model Bill of 2016.
- However, recently centre in its response to Delhi High Court made a U-turn from its stance a year ago and dropped the proposal to decriminalizing beggary through legislation.

Who is a 'Beggar'?

Based on the 2011 census, more than 400,000 destitute people across the country are classified as "beggars, vagrants, etc.

This number fell 41% since the last Census of 2001, which recorded the number of beggars at 6.3 lakh.

(But this figure is contested, and the government admits there are no authentic data available. Activists say government statistics underreport the number of beggars).

Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959

- It considers begging as a crime rather than a social issue.
- Anyone perceived as having "no visible means of subsistence" and "wandering about" in public place can be branded a beggar and detained for a period of not less than one year and up to 10 years for second time offenders.
- If convicted court can also order detention of all those who it thinks are dependent on the beggar.

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Student Notes:

Issues with current legislations

- **Police powers** - It gives huge discretionary powers to the police to arrest someone on just a hunch. It infringes individual liberties and provides powers to State authorities to round up beggars and imprison them without trial.
- **No distinction between beggars and homeless** – It results in detention of not only poor beggars but also of disabled persons and persons trying to make out a living by offering small articles for sale, rag pickers, people earning paltry sums by singing, dancing etc.
- **Contradicts the Juvenile Justice Act 2015** – as it identifies child beggars as "children in need of care and protection" and provides for their rehabilitation and re-integration in the society through Child Welfare Committees rather than seeing them as criminal
- **Constitutional right** - Under Article 21 of the Constitution, every beggar or juvenile or dependant has a fundamental right to live. Begging is one of the methods of survival of people which should be taken away only when alternative routes are being open for them
- **Different definitions** – For example - Karnataka and Assam keep religious mendicants out of the the definition of beggars while Tamil Nadu does it for street artists, bards, jugglers and street magicians.

Changes done in The Persons in Destitution (Protection, Care & Rehabilitation) Model Bill of 2016

- **Right based approach** – It gives right to the destitute to demand help from the state
- **Decriminalise begging** - It decriminalized beggary except for repeat offences. Rather than criminalizing destitute, it cracks down on those who run organised beggary syndicates.
- **Identifying destitute** – by setting up of outreach or mobilisation units in each district which will identify and provide assistance to those who fit into the category of a destitute.
- **Rehabilitate beggars** – through rehabilitation centres with qualified resident doctors, recreation and other facilities in each district. Some states like Bihar have undertaken such programmes.
- **Setting up referral committees** – to identify the needs of persons in destitution and refer them to the respective institutions according to their requirement, be it medical services, shelter, employment opportunities etc.
- **Setting up counselling committees –** to interact with them & assist them in opting for specific vocational training as per their preferences. It will enhance their skills and make them self-reliant.
- **Constituting monitoring and advisory board** - to coordinate implementation of the schemes and advise the government on matters related to care, protection, welfare and rehabilitation of destitutes.

Way forward

State needs to take a more humane approach towards the destitute. A law is needed which respects the dignity of the destitute rather than penalizes them for being poor. Thus existing anti-beggary laws should be repealed and replaced with welfare and social security laws – on the lines of the MGNREGA to provide employment to beggars. Apart from this following measure should be undertaken:

- **Creating awareness about their rights** such as right of free legal aid to poor
- **Issuing smart cards and Aadhaar numbers to beggars** – to enable easy census, easy tracking, ease in opening bank accounts and low cost insurance policies and policy plans for their welfare

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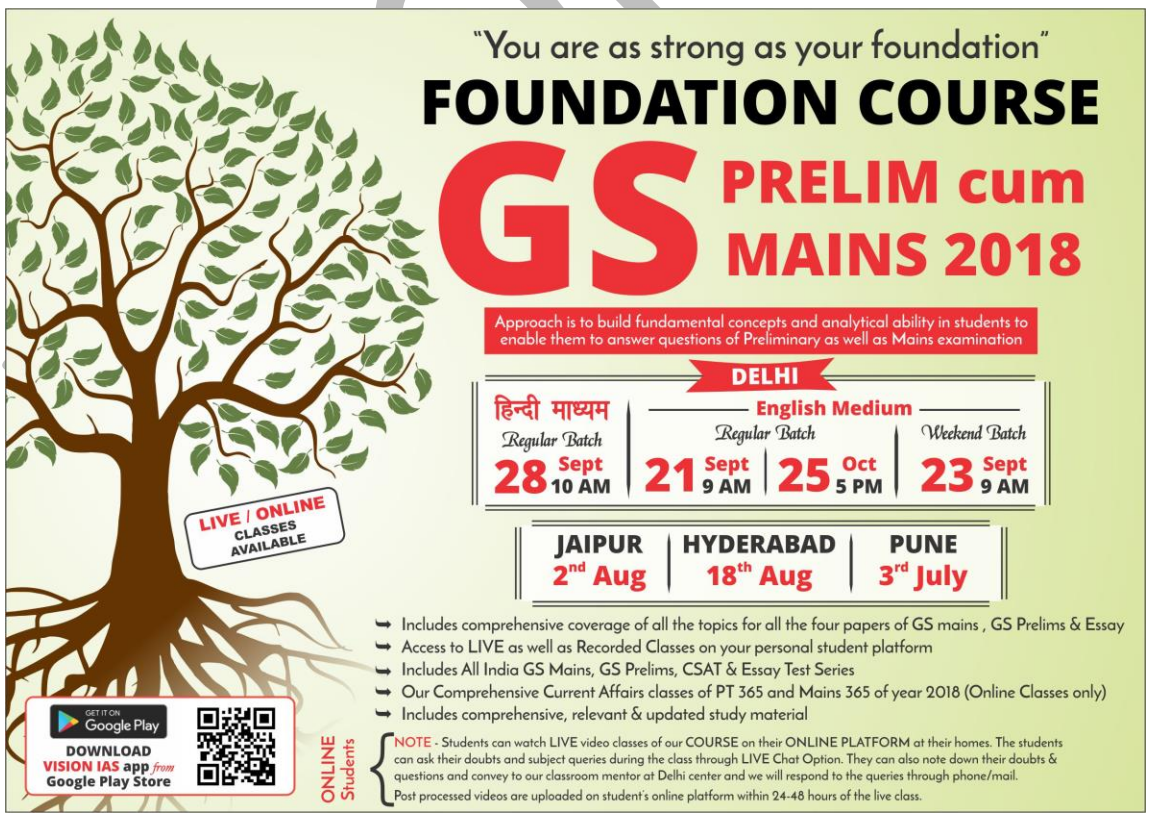
- **Constituting databank –** to make available status of rehabilitation, counselling institutions etc. through visiting committees which periodically visits these institutions
- **Follow-up** after coming out of beggar's home or after skill training to assist in any challenges faced by them in integrating with the mainstream society
- **Sensitizing people and authorities** - Popular perception about begging that it is the preferred way of making easy money, needs to be changed & people need to be sensitive about their circumstances.
- **Access to food** – A mechanism needs to be developed to bring them under the ambit of the Right to **Food Act**
- Instead of people giving food and clothes on street in an undignified manner, state should provide a helpline for the hungry where the system would reach any hungry person anywhere.
- The government should engage different stakeholders such as NGOs working with street children, traffic policemen etc. to eradicate beggary especially child beggary.



2. HEALTH AND DISEASES

2.1. NATIONAL NUTRITION STRATEGY

Why in News?

A high-level panel under Niti Aayog has drawn up a 10-point nutrition action plan that includes governance reforms in line with the vision for "**Kuposhan Mukta Bharat- Vision 2020**"

Background

- **Article 47 of the Constitution** mentions the "duty of the state to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health.
- The National Nutrition Mission, recommended by the **Prime Minister's National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges in 2010**, was launched in 2014, to address the problems of maternal and child under-nutrition in the country.
- The "**Global Nutrition Report 2016**" shows that India ranks 114 out of 132 countries in terms of overall progress in addressing chronic malnutrition.
- The government recently laid down the **National Health Policy, 2017**, that also talks about Child & Adolescent health and interventions to address malnutrition and micronutrients deficiencies, among other issues.

Important Definitions

- **Malnutrition** refers to deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in a person's intake of energy and/or nutrients. The term malnutrition covers 2 broad groups of conditions.
- One is '**undernutrition'**—which includes stunting (low height for age), wasting (low weight for height), underweight (low weight for age) and **micronutrient deficiencies or insufficiencies** (a lack of important vitamins and minerals).
- The other is **overweight**, obesity and diet-related noncommunicable diseases (such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer).

Important Facts

The trends reported in the Strategy Report show improvement as well as need for improvement in different areas.

- It is estimated that with one-third of its children undernourished, India pays an income penalty of 9% to 10% due to a workforce that was stunted during their childhood.
- The Global Nutrition Report 2015 estimates that for investment in nutrition, there is a benefit cost ratio of 16:1 for 40 low and middle-income countries.
- The **dual burden of malnutrition** (undernutrition and over-nutrition) has been addressed in a longer-term perspective, recognizing that over-nutrition constitutes an emerging issue, with an associated non-communicable disease burden.
- The NFHS-4 data indicates that around 58.4% children are anaemic.
- For children below five years of age while stunting and underweight prevalence has gone down, trends in wasting show an overall increase in the last decade.
- There has been a decrease from 35.5% (NFHS-3) to 22.9% (NFHS-4) in the prevalence of women with low BMI.
- It is seen that overall, the levels of anaemia among women and girls has stagnated over the last decade from 55.3% in NFHS-3 to 53% in NFHS-4.
- Deficiencies of key vitamins and minerals such as Vitamin A, Iron, Iodine and Zinc continue to coexist and interact with protein and energy deficits.

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- According to LANCET (2013), the Maternal and Child Undernutrition is the attributable cause of nearly half (45%) of the mortality of children under 5 years, many of which are preventable through effective nutrition interventions.
- The number of children aged 12-23 months who were fully immunized (BCG, measles and 3 doses each of Polio and DPT) has gone up from 43.5% in NFHS-3 to 62% in NFHS-4.
- The prevalence of symptoms of Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) has also gone down from 5.8% in NFHS-3 to 2.7% in NFHS-4.
- World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that 50% of malnutrition is associated with repeated diarrhoea or intestinal worm infections as a result of unsafe water, inadequate sanitation or insufficient hygiene.

MISSING NUTRITION TARGETS

Indicator	Rate (in %)	Global Rank (lower is better)	Asia Rank	Position of nutrition indicatiors compared to World Health Assembly targets
Under 5 stunting	38.7	114th out of 132	34th out of 39	Off track
Under 5 wasting	15.1	120th out of 130	35th out of 38	Off track
Under 5 overweight	1.9	11th out of 126	6th out of 37	On track
Anemia in Women	48.1	170th out of 185	45th out of 47	Off track
Exclusive breastfeeding	46.4	48th out of 141	12th out of 40	Insufficient data
Adult overweight/obesity	22	21st out of 190	10th out of 47	Off track
Adult diabetes	9.5	104th out of 190	16th out of 47	Off track

Source: Global Nutrition Report 2016

SDGs- At least 12 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals contain indicators that are relevant for nutrition, demonstrating that nutrition is the foundation for ensuring sustainable development. For ex-

Goal 2- End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

Goal 3- Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Goal 5- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Goal 6- Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Goal 1- End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Goal 4- Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

National Nutrition Policy Provisions

- **Reducing all forms of malnutrition by the end of 2030,** while focusing on the most vulnerable and critical age groups including infants, children, girls, pregnant women, etc.
- The nutrition strategy envisages **a framework wherein the four proximate determinants** of nutrition – uptake of health services, food, drinking water & sanitation and income & livelihoods – work together to accelerate decline of under nutrition in India.
- **Reduction in undernutrition by 2030**- In a longer-term perspective, the strategy will also aim to progressively reduce all forms of undernutrition by 2030.
- **National Nutrition Mission**- The Strategy aims to launch a National Nutrition Mission, similar to the National Health Mission. This is to enable integration of nutrition-related interventions cutting across sectors like women and child development, health, food and public distribution, sanitation, drinking water, and rural development.
- **Decentralised Approach** with greater flexibility and decision making at the state, district and local levels. With this the Strategy aims to strengthen the ownership of PRIs and urban local bodies over nutrition initiatives as subjects allocated to PRIs include those addressing the immediate and underlying determinants of undernutrition like sanitation and water.
- **Governance reforms** envisaged in the Strategy include: (i) convergence of state and district implementation plans for ICDS, NHM and Swachh Bharat, (ii) focus on the most vulnerable communities in districts with the highest levels of child malnutrition, and (iii) service delivery models based on evidence of impact.

- **Nutrition Social Audits** are to be undertaken to track the children and their health progress. At national and state levels, a website and necessary apps will be created for this.
- **National Nutrition Surveillance System-** Undernourished endemic zones of the country will be mapped for identifying 'high risk and vulnerable districts' & the cases of severe under nutrition in children should be included in the routine disease reporting system.
- **External Team Assessment-** The process for assessing achievement would include external team assessment as well as half yearly/quarterly community based processes for validating child nutrition status and key indicators.
- **Convergence of Multisectoral Intervention-**for better planning and implementation of the National Nutrition mission calling for both direct (nutrition specific) and indirect (nutrition sensitive) interventions (as envisaged in National Nutrition Policy 1993).

Way Forward

- Nutrition is acknowledged as one of **the most effective entry points for human development**, poverty reduction and economic development, with high economic returns.
- Thus, for India to achieve all the envisioned goals in numerous fields, a healthy citizenry forms the bed rock.
- The strategy can also contribute to achieving global nutrition targets endorsed in 2012, through the World Health Assembly Resolution, committing to a comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition.

2.2. FAILURE IN PROCUREMENT MANAGEMENT

Procurement is one of the crucial parts of public healthcare system that about 26% of the healthcare budget is spent on procurement of drugs, vaccines and medical supplies. Inefficiency in procurement may lead to shortage and wastage which may result in disastrous consequences such as death of children in UP due to cut in the supply of oxygen cylinders by the vendor. Various issues in public procurement system are:

- **Low Budget & delays** - Low budgets, delay in settlement of tenders, non-payment or delay in payment of dues leads to delayed supplies. At times, delivery of essential items and services has taken 6-12 months
- **Dearth of expertise** - Inaccurate quantification & delays in tender decisions because doctors have been given the role of procurement officers. A doctor's sole job should be to concentrate on patients and research
- **Embedded corruption** – Procurement agency charges commission when departments procures through it and because of the opacity of process, the cut varies
- **Inadequate monitoring** - There is manual collection of data and absence of any credible Information System for proper stocking and inventory management. It leads to delays in estimation of quantities.

Steps that should be taken

- Introduce e-tendering and direct transfer of payment into the bank account of the vendor or service provider to maintain transparency and avoid delays in service delivery

Tamil Nadu

- A centralized offline procurement system to procure essential drugs, special drugs, surgical items, sutures, veterinary drugs and equipment.
- Equipment is purchased by the equipment division of the Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corp. Ltd (TNMSC). The respective directorates provide a list of required equipment with clear specifications to the corporation after approval from the government.
- The decision on prices of drugs is based on the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority and Drug (Prices Control) Order standard rates.
- TNMSC acts as a mediator in negotiating prices, and all the payments are made online.

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- Introduction of a functional and online MIS (management information systems) to keep track of drugs and their timely storage across various warehouses
- Robust data management systems to track inquiries regarding smart cards, payment approval, patients' records and utilization rate
- Learning from the best such as setting up a central procurement agency along the lines of the Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corp. Ltd (TNMSC), which has performed well in the last 15 years. Some other states, such as West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh etc. also have good procurement models
- Strategic purchasing according to population needs, national health priorities and cost-effectiveness to effectively allocate funds as advocated by WHO

There are also issues of degrading quality of public healthcare due to which people are preferring private hospitals. Every year, around 60 million people become impoverished through paying health-care bills in India. Also more than 20% do not even seek health care, despite being unwell due to this reason. Thus government should take following steps apart from addressing the above issues:

- **Fixing accountability for negligence** – As of now public hospital seems to be of little consequence to authorities as the privileged rely mainly on private medical facilities. This should be changed and concerned authorities should be penalized
- **Public engagement** in priority setting, implementation of health programmes and monitoring of outcomes. It will hold elected representatives accountable for the availability, cost and quality of health services in their region.
- **Capacity building** – There is a need to train more doctors as there is shortage of about 5 lakh doctors as per WHO prescription. Thus, faculty dedicated to training doctors need to be appointed unlike current faculties who also continue their private practice alongside, diverting their attention
- **Increased investment in infrastructure** – As of now the component of salaries has increased while combined share of medicine supplies, equipment, infrastructure & maintenance fell.

2.3. PRIVATISATION OF SELECT SERVICES IN DISTRICT HOSPITALS

Why in News?

Niti Aayog and the Union Ministry for Health and Family Welfare have proposed a model contract to increase the role of private hospitals in treating non-communicable diseases in urban India (especially in tier 2 & 3 cities).

Background

- The **National Health Policy document (2017)** emphasizes the need to encourage private investment in the field of health because responsibility of health lies jointly with the public and private sector.
- The private sector in India has started to play a significant role in the health care delivery system.
- Studies on utilisation pattern reveal that people prefer private health care facilities. The growth of private sector has raised several concerns about quality, cost, equity and efficiency of the health care.

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Features Proposed under the Plan

- It allows private hospitals to bid for **30-year leases** over parts of district hospital buildings and land to set up 50- or 100-bed hospitals in towns other than India's eight largest metropolises.
- The scheme also provides for an **escrow account** that would offset the risk to private providers posed by possible delays in reimbursement by the government.
- Under this **Public Private Partnership** (PPP) model, care for only three non-communicable diseases — cardiac disease, pulmonary disease, and cancer care — will be provided.
- Private partner will invest in upgrading building and equipping the facility and will be responsible for operational management and service delivery. Government may provide **Viability Gap Funding**.
- Under the principles of financial structure, there will be no reserved beds or **no quota of beds for free services** in these facilities.

Positives

- Shortage of infrastructure and human resources for health has led to 72 percent of the population in rural areas and 79 percent in urban areas to seek healthcare in the private sector. Introduction of PPP model and bringing in the private players in this field can **improve infrastructure.**
- The expansion of care by 50-100 beds will increase the services in a situation where there is already a lack of capacity in most of the hospitals in the country. It will help in improving access at the district level and also decongesting tertiary facilities at the state level.
- It is also helpful in reducing out-of-pocket expenditures on diagnosis, treatment and care for common man.
- The district health administration will ensure referrals for treatment from primary health centres, community health centres, disease screening centres and other government health programmes and ventures are made to these private hospitals.

Problems

- Private providers will be able to **cherry-pick the most lucrative districts** where patients have a higher paying capacity. Thus, it will concentrate on better-off districts, leaving the poor and remote districts for the public sector to manage. This proposal will further **worsen inequity** in access to healthcare services
- The scheme will expose thousands of patients to **unethical practices by private providers**, compromises in quality and rationality of services and additional 'top-up services'.
- The outsourcing of hospital care to private providers inevitably becomes increasingly **unsustainable** over time as they ratchet up demands on reimbursements and fees.
- The proposal implies that most patients would have to pay for care even in public facilities.
- The policy document has also come under criticism due to government's failure to consult the stakeholders from civil society and academia.
- It involves the handing over of public assets to for-profit companies, and may be seen as an act of **abdication of duty by the government**.

Way forward

- The proposal to hive off hospital care to the private sector is justified by the argument that public services are not financed adequately and face an acute shortage of trained human resources.

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- The simple remedy could be to significantly enhance investment in public healthcare services, including the training of health workers.
- The decision is based on the skepticism that the public institutions are inherently inefficient. This skepticism needs to be addressed with.

2.4. NEW FAMILY PLANNING INITIATIVES: MISSION PARIVAR VIKAS

Why in News?

- On the **World Population Day** (July 11, 2017), Minister of Health and Family Welfare launched Mission Parivar Vikas.

Background

- According to National Family Health Survey (NFHS) IV data, the unmet need of contraceptives is 12.9% and this contributes to undesired fertility.
- Reducing TFR is important because the TFR, is directly proportional to maternal mortality rate (MMR) and infant mortality rate (IMR).

National Population Policy 2002

- long term objective of achieving a stable population by 2045
- To address the unmet needs for contraception, health care infrastructure, and health personnel
- To provide integrated service delivery for basic reproductive and child health care.
- Maternal Mortality Rate: below 100 per lakh birth.
- Infant Mortality Rate: 30 per 1000 live birth.
- **TFR: 2.1 (Replacement Level of 2010).**
- Achieve 80% institutionalized deliveries, to reduce MMR
- Achieve universal immunization of children.
- Promote delayed marriage for girls, not earlier than age 18 and preferably after 20 years of age.
- Compulsory school education, reduce dropout rate.
- Promote small family norm to achieve replacement levels of TFR.
- Convergence in implementation of related social sector programs.

Mission Parivar Vikas

- It aims to control Total Fertility Rate of 146 districts in seven states, constitute the 28 per cent of total country population.
- Mission will utilise the **RMNCH+A strategy**, Family Planning Logistics Management Information System (FP-LMIS) and consumer friendly website on family planning.

Total Fertility Rate (Replacement Level)
It is the total fertility rate the average number of children born per woman at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next, without migration.

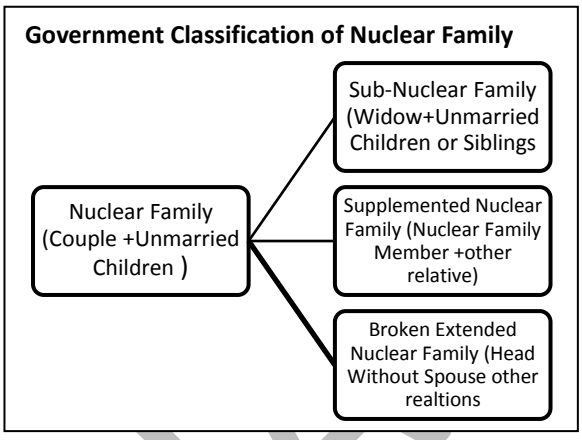
- Strategic focus on improving access through-
  - **Provision of services**: distribute a kit **(Nayi Pahal)** containing products of family planning and personal hygiene among newly-wed couples.
  - **Commodity security**: it will increase sterilization services, roll out injectable contraceptive at sub-centre level and generate awareness about condoms and pills.
  - **Promotional schemes**: Special buses called **'SAARTHI-**Awareness on Wheels' to generate awareness, sensitize the community and disseminate family planning messages.
  - **Capacity building**: '**SAAS BAHU SAMMELANS'** will be held to bridge the gap in their attitudes and beliefs about reproductive and sexual health.

What is RMNCH+A?

- Launched in 2013 Strategic approach to Reproductive Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent health.
- It will provide continuum of care to ensure equal focus on various life stages.
- Address the issue of anaemia through **National Iron + initiative**.

- **Enabling environment: ASHA workers** to encourage inter-spousal communication and consensual decision-making on reproductive and sexual health, delaying the birth of the first child and spacing the second.
- **Intensive monitoring:** to find out the causes of high **Fertility rate** and half yearly review of the programme and correlate the achievements with time.

New Trend in Structure of Family



- According to the 2001 census, out of 19.31 crore households, 9.98 crore or 51.7% were nuclear households. In the 2011 census, the share grew to 52.1% i.e. 12.97 crore nuclear out of 24.88 crore households.
- The new trend is contrary to various sociologists' affirmation that the rise of nuclear families is consistent with rapid urbanisation.
- Proportional share of nuclear households has dipped in urban areas, with people choosing to live in extended families.
  - **Reason:** Expensive urban facilities, lack of housing
- In rural areas, there are greater signs of fragmentation of families with nuclear families rising and families declining at a faster pace than in urban areas.
  - **Reason:** Fragmentation of land, migration and economic opportunities in semi-urban areas.

Conclusion

- Population dynamics have a significant influence on sustainable development. The changes in population growth rates and age structures are closely linked to national and global developmental challenges and their solutions.
- Moreover, Family planning through Mission Parivar Vikas is an effort to control population and one of the UN's health goals as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-3).

2.5. FAMILY PARTICIPATORY CARE

Why in news?

- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare had released the Operational Guidelines for Planning and Implementation of Family Participatory Care (FPC) for improving new-born health.
- The FPC initiative is under **Norway India Partnership Initiative (NIPI)** which aims to reduce neonatal and infant mortality by strengthening capacities and improving access and utilization of public health services.

Why is FPC needed?

- The increasing institutional delivery and neonatal care is stressing the need for Family Participatory health care services.
- Various data showed that 10 percent of total neonatal discharge from the new born care unit survives for only one year.
- Of the 27 million babies born in India annually, approximately 13% (3.5 million) are born preterm and 28% (7.6 million) with low birth weight, increasing their risk of dying in the neonatal period.

- Hospitalization of sick neonatal separates the baby from his/her mother which generates high-stress level, helplessness and limits the decision making regarding their own baby.

Operationalization of FPC

- Parents-attendants are involved with Special New-born Care Units (SNCU) for maintaining hygiene, alerting the staff if they notice anything unusual with baby.
- SNCU will sensitize the parents about Kangaroo Mother Care (**Skin-to-skin contact** between the baby's front and the mother's chest).
- FPC envisions to build the capacities of parents-attendants in new-born care through a structured training programme.
- The guidelines stressed the need for building infrastructure, attitudinal change and extended care giving through ASHA workers.
- FPC action initiative will be an apparatus for **India New-born Action Plan (INAP) 2014.**

What is Family Participatory Care (FPC)?

FPC means involving the family of sick and preterm new-born as partners in caregiving and decision making in the new born care facilities.

Benefits of FPC

Family	Newborn	Staff
• Greater parent and family satisfaction • More informed parents • Better coping with stress and anxiety • Enhanced parent-infant attachment and bonding • Improved breastfeeding rates • Better confidence and mental health among mothers • Better communication between parents and health staff	• Better weight gains • Shorter length of hospital stay • Higher breast feeding rates before discharge • Improved long term outcomes • Reduced need for rehospitalization	• Work sharing • Better quality of care • Better allocation of resources

India New Born Action Plan

- Aimed at achieving single digit Neonatal Mortality and Stillbirth Rate by 2030.
- Implemented within the existing Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, Child and Adolescent health (RMNCH+A) framework of the National Health Mission (NHM).
- Build and strengthen surveillance capacity and expand the availability of standardized and accurate data on congenital anomalies.

3. EDUCATION

3.1. THE RIGHT OF CHILDREN TO FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2017

Why in news?

Lok Sabha has passed **the Rights of Children to Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill**, **2017**.

Background

- After the passage of **Right to Education Act,** new schools were established to foster the aim of universal education. The Act also lays down **the Pupil Teacher Ratio**
  - Primary Level – 30:1
  - Upper Primary Level – 35:1
  - Secondary Level – 30:1 (According to Rashtriya Madhyamik Shisksha Abhiyan)
- To meet these targets new teachers were recruited, but due to paucity of well qualified teachers, unqualified teachers were hired.
- At present close to **8.5 lakh unqualified teachers** hold jobs which would now be given a chance to attain the degrees according to the amendment to Compulsory education Act.

Provisions of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, 2017

- The Bill seeks to amend the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 by **extending the deadline for teachers to acquire the prescribed minimum qualifications for appointment**.
- Under the Act the states which did not have adequate teacher training institutes or qualified teachers could **relax the minimum qualification extending till five years** i.e. till **March 2015**.
- The Amendment bill further adds that the teachers, who have not attained the minimum qualification till March 2015, will now be required to attain the qualifications by **March 2019**.

Teacher Training In India

- To improve the quality of education in India the government aims to
  - Prepare teachers for the school system (**pre-service training**)
  - Improve the capacity of existing school teachers **(in-service training)**
- The pre-service training is carried through **National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE)** and in-service teacher training is carried on through government owned **Teacher Training Institutes** (TTIs).
- NCTE has prepared **the National Curriculum Framework of Teacher Education** for teacher education.
- However, it has been observed that the NCTE has been inefficient to address the quality of teacher training and given rise to completely **dysfunctional and corrupt system**.
- **Subramanium Committee on New Education Policy** also suggested fixing minimum eligibility of **50% marks at graduation level** for entry into B.Ed courses and making **Teacher Entrance Tests compulsory**.
- The Committee also recommended **certification for government and private school teachers** to be renewed after every 10 years.

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Way forward

- The regulatory powers and functions of NCTE should be strengthened.
- Recommendations of **Justice Verma Committee** should be implemented.
  - **Increasing investment** to establish teacher education institutions
  - Increase **institutional capacity** of teacher preparation in **deficit states**.
  - Develop a **framework on school audit and teacher performance**.
  - **Teacher educators** should be closely engaged and they should be considered as **visiting faculty**.
  - **Pre-entry testing** of the candidates should be strengthened.
- Along with qualified teachers, steps should be taken to **ensure better teacher attendance**.

3.2. LOCATION-SPECIFIC MERGERS OF SCHOOLS

Why in News?

- The Centre is looking to execute location-specific mergers of nearly 260,000 small government schools as part of a rationalization process to ensure maximum use of resources, following the Rajasthan model of "merging" government schools with low enrolment.
- Human Resource Development Ministry has released guidelines for public comments regarding the same.

Background

- **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA**) has been operational since 2000-2001 to provide for a variety of interventions for universal access and retention, bridging of gender and social category gaps in elementary education and improving the quality of learning.
- SSA interventions include, opening of new schools, construction of schools and additional classrooms, toilets and drinking water, provisioning for teachers, free textbooks & uniforms and support for improving learning achievement levels, etc.
- Further after the enactment of **Right to Education Act, in 2009**, Right to Education became the fundamental right.
- The title of the RTE Act incorporates the words **'free and compulsory'** which casts an **obligation on the government** and the local authorities to provide and ensure admission, attendance and completion of elementary education by all children in the 6-14 age group.
- Therefore, the focus of the government was excessively on building new schools to make education accessible for all children in the country.
- As part of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the government created some 367,000 schools. At present, it has more than 1.5 million schools across all levels.

Why consolidation is needed?

- According to the government it is time for a "re-look at the expansion of schooling facilities made in previous years and call for a nationwide consolidation of schools".
- As per the draft guidelines, as of 2015-16, at least 187,006 primary schools (Class I-V) and 62,988 upper primary (Class VI-VIII) schools were running with fewer than 30 students. Besides, 7,166 schools had zero enrolment. Further, some 87,000 schools have a single teacher.
- It has been noted that the surplus small schools adversely affect the:
  - provisioning of resources
  - learning process, and
  - monitoring and supervision

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Solution suggested by the Guidelines

- To reallocate the resources in the "best interest of the children" and minimize under-utilization and wastage the ministry will reallocate staff and other resources from schools where they are in excess to the schools where they are needed.
- The children and resources, within a habitation, spread over two or more small schools are suggested to be combined together. It will not only provide a better teaching-learning environment but will also make schools RTE compliant.
- The merged schools post the rationalisation process must necessarily adhere to the neighbourhood norms defined in each state's RTE Rules.

Challenges

- Activists fear that as the distance between home and school increases for the students of the closed schools, the poorer among them would not be able to bear the cost of commuting and drop out.
- This can go against the intentions behind Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the move of making Right to Education universal.

Way Forward

- The Indian school sector needs a big shake up—both in terms of quality and infrastructure requirements. Any attempt to reform the sector is a positive step but it must happen in a time-bound manner
- The focus now must shift to outcome at schools than just input based model prevalent for years

3.3. ALLOWING FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES IN INDIA

Why in news?

- **NITI Aayog** in a letter to the **Department of Economic Affairs** and the HRD Ministry has called for changes in prevalent laws that are restrictive in nature for private investment in higher education.

What is it?

- The amendments NITI Aayog has called for are in-
  - **Section 10(n) of AICTE Act** gives AICTE the powers to take all steps to prevent commercialisation of technical education.
  - **Paragraph 5.1 of UGC's deemed university regulations** states that all deemed-to-be universities shall be registered as a not-for-profit society under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860** or as a not-for-profit trust under the **Public Trust Act,** or as a not-for-profit company under Section 8 of the **Companies Act, 2013.**
  - **Paragraph 2.1 of UGC** (Establishment of and Maintenance of Standards in Private Universities) **Regulations** define a private university as one established through a **state/central Act** by a sponsoring body which is either a not-for-profit society or company.

Current Status

- With 762 universities, India has the **world's largest higher education sector** and ranks second in terms of student enrolment.
- Despite the magnanimity of India's higher education system, Indian institutions fail to feature in the world's topmost as it is plagued with rot learning, lack of employability and skill development.

- The higher education system in India is regulated by various bodies making it difficult for universities and institution to operate autonomously especially foreign universities.
- India opened 100 percent FDI in the education sector (automatic route) in 2002.
- The **University Grants Commission Act** says that only universities set up by Parliament or a state legislature, and those declared deemed universities by the government, can award degrees.

Why Foreign Universities Have Such a Low Representation in India?

- India as of now lacks the legal framework for foreign universities to open campuses in India.
- The problem is that foreign universities might not like to be registered as a society or trust or companies to award degrees.
- Also, even if they are given the status of deemed universities, they would still be under the UGC and would not have the authority to function autonomously.

What has been done till now?

- The NITI Aayog proposed two legislative and one executive route to solve this issue in early 2017.
- The Centre can have the UGC Act amended to allow foreign campuses that will operate as full-fledged universities in India, or introduce a new bill allowing them to function as deemed universities.
- The executive route involves getting the UGC to notify a regulation recognising campuses opened by foreign universities as deemed universities.
- The government introduced two bills namely **Foreign Institutions Bill (Regulations of Entry and Operations), 2010 and Higher Educational Institutions Bill for Higher Education, 2010** which are still pending.
- The T. S. Subramanian Committee has also recommended allowing the top 200 universities of the world to operate in India and given the authority to award the same degree which is acceptable in the home country of the said university.

Government Initiatives for the Higher Education Sector

- The government has put it plans on hold to ease the entry of foreign institutions to the higher education sector and instead is focusing on developing world class institutions.
- An inter-ministerial committee has been formed to re-work the world class institutions plan also to be called **institutes of eminence**.
- The world-class university plan aims to provide academic and financial autonomy and end the influence of the University Grants Commission (UGC). Such public institutions will get financial support of Rs10,000 crore from the HRD ministry.
- The government has also formed a new committee under Dr. K Kastruriranjan in order to draft the National Education Policy.

Other Recommendations by the NITI Aayog for the Higher Education Sector

- **Designation of World Class Universities:** 20 universities (10 private and 10 public) are to be identified for autonomous governance. Also, tiered system of funding is to be adopted for public funding.
- **Autonomy for Top Colleges:** Colleges with an excellent track record must be given the opportunity to function autonomously and also convert into unitary universities.

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- **Reform of the regulatory system**: It recommends overhaul of the UGC as a regulatory body and adopt a system that focuses on information disclosure and governance rather than micromanagement of universities.
- Universities are to be segregated in terms of research hub and employment-focused while other are to be designated with the primary function of higher education
- Establish a system of project and scholar specific research grants.
- Increased focus on vocational and profession led education

3.4. MADHYAMIK AND UCHCHTAR SHIKSHA KOSH

Why in News?

The Union Cabinet has accorded its approval for creation of a non-lapsable pool in the Public Account for secondary and higher education known as **"Madhyamik and Uchchtar Shiksha Kosh" (MUSK)**.

Education Cess Rate:

- A cess is a tax that is levied by the government to raise funds for a specific purpose.

The rate at which education cess is calculated is **a combination of the two types of cess** applied on the taxable income.

- **The education cess** the rate is 2% of the tax payable and
- **The Secondary and Higher Education Cess (SHEC)** the rate is 1% of the tax payable. Together they form the education cess rate of 3% of the tax payable.

Background

- During the 10th Plan, an education cess of 2% on all central taxes was imposed to make available additional resources for basic education/elementary education to augment the existing budgetary resources.
- A need was felt to give a similar fillip to the effort of the Central Government in universalizing access to secondary education and expanding the reach of the higher education sector.
- The Gross Enrolment Ratio at secondary level (Classes IX-X) is 78.5% and senior secondary (Classes XI-XII) level is 54.2% in 2014-15.
- The proposal for the creation of such a fund was **first proposed by the ministry of Human Resource Development in July 2010.** But it was not accepted.
- The issue was raised again in February 2016, which was later accepted by the **Department of Economic Affairs.**
- As per the provisions of **Section 136, of the Finance Act 2007**, a 1% cess on the central taxes called the "Secondary and Higher Education cess" is to be imposed to provide finance and promote the secondary and higher education.
- Recently the Union Cabinet has approved the creation of MUSK.

Utilization of the Fund

The fund would be utilised for:

- **For Secondary Education-**
  - ✓ ongoing Rashtriya Madhyamik Shlksha Abhiyan Scheme
  - ✓ National Means-Cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme and
  - ✓ National Scheme for Incentives to Girls for Secondary Education.
- **For Higher Education-**
  - ✓ Ongoing Schemes of Interest Subsidy and contribution for guarantee funds, Scholarship for College & University Students
  - ✓ Rashtriya Uchchtar Shiksha Abhiyaan
  - ✓ Scholarship (from Block Grant to the institutions) and National Mission on Teachers and Training.

About the Fund

- Administration and maintenance of the MUSK pool would be done by the **Ministry of Human Resource Development.**
- The Ministry of Human Resources Development can allocate funds for any future programme/scheme of secondary and higher education, based on the requirement, as per prescribed procedures.

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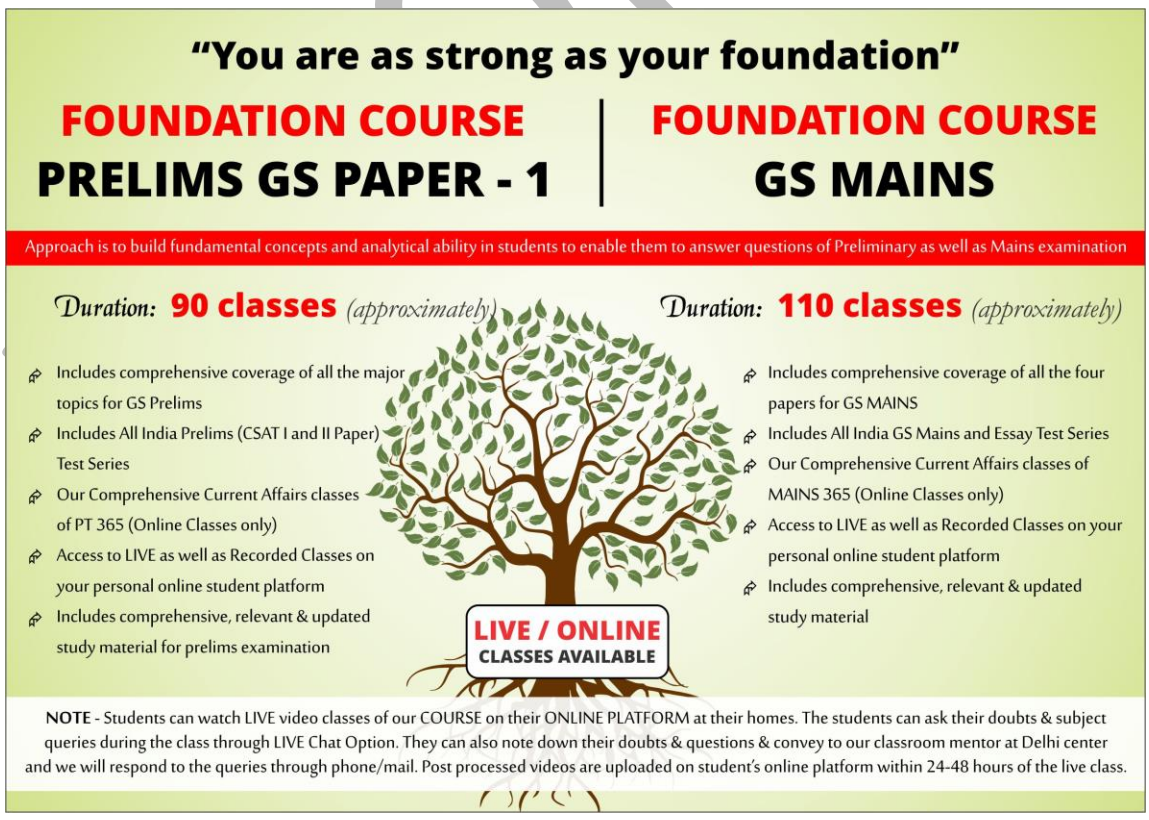
- The expenditure on schemes of the **Department of School Education & Literacy and Department of Higher Education** would be initially incurred from the **gross budgetary support** (GBS) and the expenditure would be financed from the MUSK only after the GBS is exhausted.
- The fund would be operationalised as per the present arrangements under **Prarambhik Shiksha Kosh (PSK)** wherein the proceeds of cess are used for **Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** and **Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Schemes** of the Department of School Education & Literacy.
- The MUSK would be maintained as a Reserve Fund in the **non-interest bearing** section of the Public Accounts of India.



4. MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES

4.1. SWACHH BHARAT ABHIYAN

Why in News?

- Various Civil Societies and assessment groups had come up with data about the sanitation on third year 2017 of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA)

- The campaign aims to achieve the vision of a 'Clean India' by 2nd October 2019 on the mark of 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.
- Launched, under two sub-missions namely; SBA Gramin and SBA Urban, implemented by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation and the Ministries of Urban Development respectively.

Performance of the SBA

- Rural sanitation coverage has gone up from 39 per cent to 67 per cent in three years and over 230 million people in rural India have stopped defecating in the open.
- Five states, 186 districts and over 2, 31,000 villages have been declared as ODF.
- The number of schools with separate toilet facilities for girls has increased from 0.3 million (30%) to almost one million (91%) in last three years.
- **Quality Council of India** found that national usage of toilets from May-July 2017 was 91 per cent.
- **An Independent assessment unit** found out that more than 15 percent of 1000 respondents in a survey accepted that open defecation leads to violation of dignity especially that of women and girls, and adds to the disease burden, especially of children below the age of five.

Earlier Initiatives on Sanitation

In 1986, government launched the first nationwide sanitation program under **Central Rural Sanitation Program (CRSP).**

In 1999, CRSP had been restructured under **Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC),** augmented with incentives scheme in the form of an award for total sanitation coverage, maintenance of a clean environment and open defecation-free panchayat villages, blocks and districts, called Nirmal Gram Puraskar.

Urban Sanitation Policy (NUSP) in 2008, instated a framework for cities to prepare City Sanitation Plans under the scheme of a State Sanitation Strategy. Urban Sanitation awards and ratings were also introduced, based on the benchmarking of sanitation services.

Centrally sponsored schemes such as JNNURM, Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns (UIDSSMT), Rajiv Awas Yojna, etc. provide funds for creation of sanitation assets like individual toilets, community toilet blocks and wastewater disposal and treatment facilities at the city level.

In 2012, the TSC was renamed to **Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan** (NBA). On October 2, 2014 the campaign was relaunched as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

How different from earlier Initiatives?

- SBM had moved from outputs (number of toilets built) to outcomes (ODF villages).
- It emphasizes on sustainability by giving **verification mechanism** (90-day) on Post ODF-declaration, because it is possible that the village may witness some 'slip back' into open defecation due to old habits.
- **Behaviour change campaigns** through effective information, education and communication (IEC) such as ;

- "Darwaza Bandh" (on open defecation) campaign.
- Incentive based trained grass roots level motivators, or swachhagrahis, to stimulate community-level demand for toilets.
- Involving locally elected representatives, grass root-level organisations, NGOs and school students and at least one trained grassroots-level swachhagrahi in each village in India.

Way Ahead

- Safe Disposal of waste and water by **BUMT** (Build, Use, Maintain and Treat) mechanism is need of the hour.
- **Sanitation is community problem, the focus on individual behaviour change would not yield intended results until Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS**) programme is adopted.
- There is no one size fits all policy for behaviour change, for this states and local bodies must be empowered to utilize the devolution following the recommendations of the **14th Finance Commission.**

4.2. MANUAL SCAVENGING

Why in news?

Recently Madras High Court passed an order asking Centre and Tamil Nadu Government to take stringent measure to enforce **the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013**, after 30 people died employed in manual scavenging.

Background

- Manual Scavenging refers to **unsafe and manual removal of raw and untreated human excreta**. It is a socio-economic problem which has continued for decades despite of technological advancement and increasing sensitivity to human rights.
- According to the data from the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** the number of manual scavengers stands at 77,0338 with highest in Maharashtra.
- In the **Safai Karamchari Andolan vs. Union of India Case**, the Supreme Court ordered the abolishment of manual scavenging and asked for the implementation of rehabilitation of such workers.
- However, it is being observed that the nationwide campaign, **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan**, to eradicate open defecation is aggravating the rampant existence of manual scavenging at dry latrines, septic tanks and sewers and **nullifying the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013.**
- **The National Career Services** also has listed the **manual scavengers under 'unorganised sector'** thus recognising their work. **Indian Railways remain the single largest employer of manual scavengers.**
- The problem also lies in the entrenched belief in caste system which assumes Dalits will readily perform the task of cleaning the latrines.

Provisions of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013

- The bill provides for prohibition of a person as manual scavenger, the manual cleaning of sewers and septic tanks **without safety equipment and construction of insanitary latrine**.
- It also provides for **rehabilitation of manual scavengers** and alternate employment for them.

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- Each **local body** is responsible for conducting surveys of insanitary latrines and also building sanitary community latrines.
- Occupiers of insanitary latrine are responsible for **converting** them. In case they are unable to do so, the **local authority must convert the latrine** and **recover the cost** from him.
- The **District magistrate and local authorities** will be the implementing authorities.
- Offences under the bill will be **cognizable and non-bailable.**

National Career Services

- It is an ICT based portal launched by the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- The portal facilitates registration of job seekers, job providers, skill providers, career counsellors etc.

Limitations of the Bill

- The Bill has not provided for **the financial assistance** either by the centre or the state, thus making the implementation of the bill difficult.
- The **identification** of the insanitary latrines and their conversion has **not been made time bound**.
- Manual Scavengers being **illiterate are less confident** about adopting alternate employments or self-employment.

Way Ahead

- State governments should **demolish and rebuild old facilities** lacking sanitation and also **conduct census** of both latrines and people engaged in cleaning them.
- There should be **clear differentiation** made between **building of new toilets** as mandated in Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and **conversion of insanitary Latrines** as mandated in above bill.
- **Increased fund allocation** should be made towards **rehabilitation of manual scavengers**.
- **Skill training and awareness** should be provided to the manual scavengers so that they can adopt alternate employments.
- **Technological advancement and innovation** should be applied to adopt clean toilets such as **bio-toilets.**

4.3. VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW REPORT: SDGS

Why in News?

- Government recently presented Voluntary National Review Report at UN-High Level Political Forum.

High level Political Forum (HLPF)

Established in 2013, under United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) by replacing the Commission on Sustainable Development.

The Forum meets annually under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council for eight days.

It has a central role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

What is Voluntary National Review?

- It is an effort towards **SDG-Goal 17** as a part of follow-up and review mechanism.
- It aims to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- The current report encapsulates the progress made with respect to Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14 and 17 and shows the linkages of one effort towards other Goals.

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SDGs	Efforts	Results
Goal 1: End Poverty in All its Forms Everywhere	**Rapid growth (SDG 8)** Supplement with increasing purchasing power and fiscal health of the government is the key weapon for combating poverty. • Fiscal consolidation, inflation targeting, improved governance all around, accelerated infrastructure development **(SDG 9**), curbing of corruption **(SDG 16),** Aadhaar Act, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Act, Goods and Services Tax (GST), further liberalization of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and strategic disinvestment. • MGNREGA **(SDG 8),** Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Livelihoods Mission provides skilled employment to marginalized communities **(SGD-10).** • Housing for all by 2022 **(Goal 11),** National Rural Drinking Water Programme, **(Goal 6)** Under the Open Defecation Free India by 2019 **Goal 3 and 6).**	Sharp reduction of poverty from 45.3% in 1993-94 to 22% in 2011-12 to the economic growth after liberalisation.
Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	• Programmes under the **National Food Security Act** and the **Public Distribution System** are one of the largest food security initiatives in the world. • **Mid-Day Meal Programme**. The latter provides nutritious cooked meals to 100 million children in primary schools. • **National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture**, Soil **Health Cards**, • **Doubling farmers' income by 2022.** • **National Agricultural Marketing platform** the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, has also been launched	Significant progress has been made in improving food and nutrition security. Stunting among children less than 5 years has declined from 48% to 38.4% between 2005-06 & 2015-16. During the same period, the percentage of underweight children has declined from 42.5% to 35.7%.
Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	• **The National Health Policy, 2017**, • **Mission Indradhanush** for partially vaccinated and unvaccinated child.	India has made significant strides in improving various health indicators. IMR has declined from 57 in 2005-06 to 41 in 2015-16. Institutional deliveries have increased from 38.7% in 2005-06 to 78.9% in 2015-16.

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Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	• A flagship initiative is **Beti Bachao Beti Padao** (Save the Girl Child Educate the Girl Child), under which State Governments are implementing a range of measures suited to their local contexts to elevate the status of the girl child. • Maternity Benefit Act 2016, Shop and Establishment act 2016, strive to achieve gender justice.	While much more progress remains to be made, a number of indicators pertaining to the status of women in India have moved in the right direction over the years. 68.4% of women were literate in 2015-16, as compared to 55.1% in 2005-06. 53% of women were independently using a bank or savings account in 2015-16 from 15.1% in 2005-06.
Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation	• The objective of the **Digital India** initiative is to build a digitally empowered society by focusing on broadband highways, mobile connectivity and Internet as well as e-Governance • **The new Manufacturing Policy** raises the output target from 16% of GDP to 25% by 2025. India is developing into a high-tech and global manufacturing hub because of the emphasis on **'Make in India'** and a substantial increase in FDI inflows. • **Start-up and Stand-up India,** Atal Innovation Mission**, National Capital Good Policy 2016.**	The Bharat Broadband Network Ltd has provided high-speed connectivity to 18,434 local village councils, thus far. Till December 2016, there were 432 million internet users in the country.
Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources	• **National Fisheries Action Plan** The development of an eco-friendly marine industrial and technology base as well as implementing • Implementing the revised **National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan**. • Further, the **Sagarmala programme** is focused on improving port connectivity, port-linked industrialization and coastal community.	There has been a net increase of 112 square km in the mangrove cover of the country.
Goal 17: Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development	• **Swachh Bharat Cess (Clean India Cess**) has also been levied for mobilizing resources for the Clean India Campaign. • Enhanced international cooperation is also being fostered through the leadership of the **International Solar Alliance.** • **Intended Nationally Determined contribution** towards global partnership for sustainability. • The **14th Finance Commission**	

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	award is being implemented to substantially enhance fiscal devolution to States (from 32% to 42% of the central pool of tax proceeds) and Local Governments. • Enhancing development cooperation with neighbouring and other countries of the global South brings India's innovation and expertise to the service of these countries	

Conclusion

- For effective transformation of country growth paradigm, in-sync with Sustainable Development Goals, government and associated stakeholders has been engaged in **"Collective efforts and inclusive development".**

4.4. FOOD WASTAGE IN INDIA

Why in news?

Prime Minister in his Mann ki Baat program brought out the issue of food wastage and linked it to the people's behaviour.

Background

- According to Food and Agriculture Organisation, around **1.3 billion tons** food is wasted in a year globally.
- It also stated that the food is wasted **throughout the supply chain** and leads to wastage of resources used in production as well. E.g. **25% fresh water and nearly 300 million barrels of oil is used to produce food.**
- **SDG 12.3** has recognised food wastage and goal has been set to **halve per capita global food waste** at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses.
- For India which stands at **97th position out of 118 countries in Global Hunger Index** for 2016, food wastage is a major problem.
- Increasing food wastage also leads to **land degradation** by 45% due to **deforestation, unsustainable agricultural practices and excessive groundwater extraction**.
- Decay of food also leads to emission of greenhouse gases. E.g. **3.3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide** emitted in a year.

Reasons behind Food wastage

- Maximum food wastage occurs at the **early stages of the food value chain** which can be associated with the **lack of support to farmers**, **poor or unscientific harvesting techniques**, **weak infrastructure, storage, cooling and transport facility.**
- According to IIM Calcutta, in India **only 10% of food is covered under cold storage facility** which ultimately results in pre and post-harvest losses to farmer.
- According to a study conducted by Indian Council of Agricultural Research the causes of post-harvest losses lies in **lack of infrastructure for short term storage at farm level.**
- Food wastage in India is also related to the **behavioural aspect** of the people.

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Way ahead

- Government should bring in legislations intended to **encourage food donation and grocery products**. E.g. Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act in USA, France banned supermarkets to destroy unsold food products.
- **Procurement policy** should also be liberalised, in order to ensure minimal wastage of food crops thus procured.
- Initiatives such as **Indian Food Banking Network(IFBN)** should be promoted to highlight the concepts such as **collaborative consumption** involving private sector and civil society.
- Infrastructure development should be taken up in mission mode i.e **cold storage facility, short term storage at farm level, road connectivity, electricity, e-NAM etc.**
- FAO is also developing **Global Food Index** to access food wastage losses so as to create awareness and provide impetus for policy steps and actions.

4.5. ROAD SAFETY: ROAD ACCIDENT IN INDIA 2016

The Report on Road Accidents in India 2016, released by Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, highlighted the grim reality of road safety in India.

Background

- **UN Decade of Action of Road Safety** and the **Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 3.6),** had urged nations to take necessary actions to reduce road crash deaths by **50% by 2020.**

Highlights of the report

- As many as 17 people died in 55 road accidents per hour on average last year across the country. It means a death every 3.5 minutes on Indian roads
- There is 3% increase in fatalities over the previous year, even as the number of accidents declined by 4.1%, thereby indicating a rise in the severity of accidents.
- The number of persons injured in road accidents declined by 1.1% and totalled 4.95 lakh in 2016.
- **Accident severity** (defined in terms of the number of persons killed by 100 accidents) stood at an all-time high of 31.4 in 2016, compared with 29.1 in 2015, and 28.5 in 2014.

Burden of Road Accidents

- **Economic Cost:** Planning Commission of India stated that over 3% of India's GDP is lost to road accidents annually, and this amounted to 3.8 lakh crore rupees in 2016.
- **Social Cost:** Loss of family member, especially earning member leads to poverty and social distress. Moreover, disabilities occurred in accident lead to loss of human productivity and stigma.
- **Administrative cost:** includes traffic management, enforcement of law, resource costs (clearance of damage property) and insurance administration.

Safe System Approach

It is an approach to road safety management, based on the principle that our life and health should not be compromised by our need to travel.

Suggestions for road safety

Road safety involves various stakeholders ranging from infrastructure to enforcement agencies such as:

Road

- Policy shift towards **applied scientific study for roads** instead of widening and expending the length and coverage of road is need of hour.
- **S. Sunder committee 2007** on road safety highlighted the need for scientific study of road infrastructure which includes effective road engineering solutions at the design stage, rectification of accident **hot spots** etc.
- **Road Safety Action Plan** mooted by Asian Development Bank stressed the need of optimal mobility of traffic, promotion of traffic circulation, building the rush-hour lanes and **self-explained roads.**

People

- **Safe system approach** of World Health Organisation recognised that people' role in road safety cannot be eliminated completely by penalisation methods, rather the policy approach should be shifted towards **education and awareness** for all the strata of society.
- **Pedestrians** constitute 19 percent of total deaths in road accidents in India. This can be attributed to lack of **walking environment and encroached footpaths**.

Vehicles

- Launch **of Bharat New Vehicle Safety Assessment Programme,** on line of star labelling, can effectively minimise the accidents.
- Modernise the vehicle technology such as collision-avoidance systems, (semi-)autonomous vehicles, stability control, improved road-vehicle interaction, automatic braking systems and air cushion technology and speed limiters on fleet vehicles.

Draft road transport and safety bill 2014.

- It proposes the creation of three lead agencies: national authority for road safety, national transport and multimodal coordination authority and state transport authority.
- Provisions for Non-Motorised Transport and pedestrian bicycle infrastructure.
- Improving the system of catching an offender, streamlining issuance of driving licences, penalty and registration of vehicles and introduction of digital systems.
- Unified vehicle registration system and registration to be linked with insurance, vehicle offences and vehicle fitness.

Government Initiatives for Road Safety

- Adopted the National action plan aimed at halving number of road accident deaths by 2020.
- Pradhan **Mantri Surakshit Sadak Yojana** to eliminate dangerous spots on highways.
- **Motor Vehicles Amendment Bill 2016,** passed in **Lok Sabha,** measures include:
- Amending the existing categories of driver licensing, (ii) recall of vehicles in case of defects, (iii) protection of good Samaritans from any civil or criminal action and (iv) increase of penalties for several offences under the 1988 Act.

Government

- **KS Radhakrishnan** panel on road safety advocates the **Zero tolerance policy** towards drunk driving, accidents caused by speeding and more robust methods of issuing driving licences.
- **Good transport and National Freight Policy** should be implemented to ease-out the traffic burden on passenger vehicles.
- **S. Sundar** committee advocated the establishment of Directorate of Road Safety and Traffic Management for advocacy in changing road safety scenario.
- **Rakesh Mohan** committee on **National Transport Development Policy** advocates setting up of safety departments within operating agencies at different levels for ensuring day-to-day compliance with safety standards and study effectiveness of existing policies and standard.

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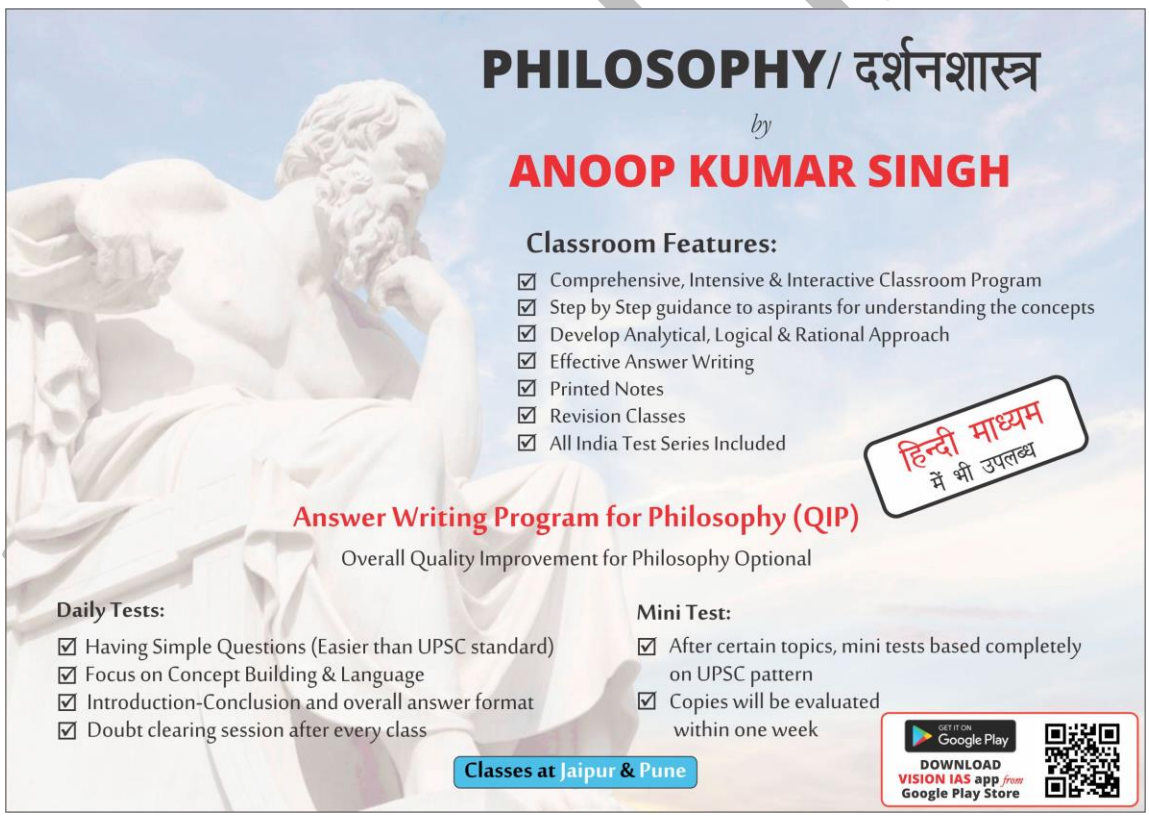
Conclusion

The World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Status Report on road safety, 2015, termed the road accidents as global health hazard for the age group of 15-29 years. For effective road safety in the country, new policies and actions should be based on **Brasilia Declaration of 2015** which call for rethinking the transport policies in order to favour more sustainable methods and modes of transport.



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