



SOCIAL ISSUES

CLASSROOM STUDY MATERIAL

(APRIL 2024 TO OCTOBER 2024)



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SOCIAL ISSUES

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1. ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO WOMEN

1.1. WOMEN-LED DEVELOPMENT: SELF-HELP GROUPS (SHGS)

Why in the News?

Recently, Prime Minister felicitated 11 lakh new 'Lakhpatti Didis' in a function organised at Jalgaon in Maharashtra.

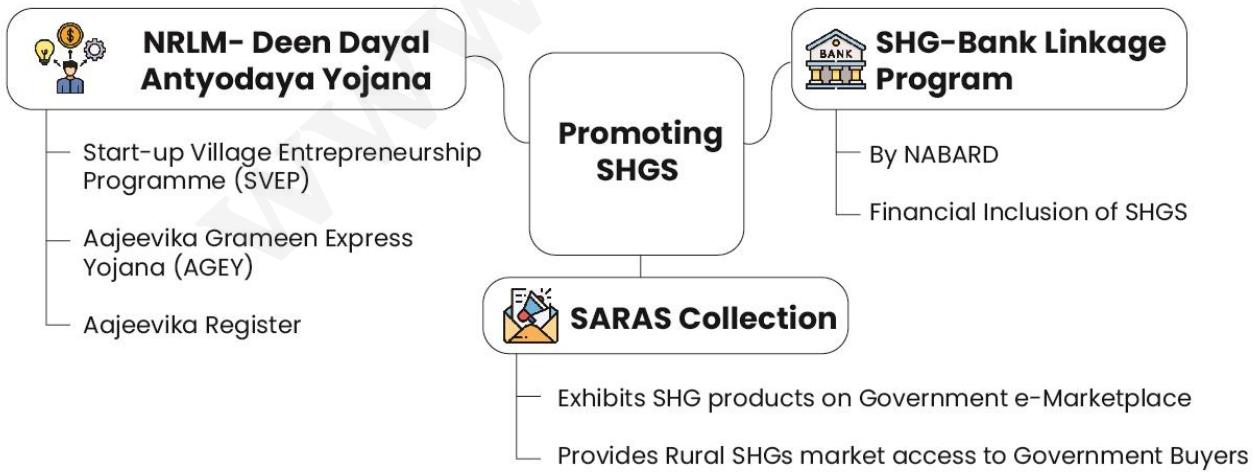
More on the News

- The PM also released a **Revolving Fund (RF) of ₹ 2,500 crore**, benefiting about 48 lakh members of 4.3 lakh SHGs.
 - The RF is a permanent fund mechanism to **accelerate the process of internal lending** and to **inculcate the habit of thrift and credit among the SHG members** and build their institutional capacities

About Lakhpatti Didi Initiative

- Launched in **2023**.
- Target:** Enabling **three crore Lakhpatti Didis**.
- It is one of the outcomes is of **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)** under the **Union Ministry of Rural Development**.
- A **Lakhpatti Didi** is a **SHG member** who earns an annual household income of **Rs. 1 Lakh** or more calculated for **at least four agricultural seasons** and/or **business cycles**, with an average **monthly income exceeding Rs. 10,000**.
 - SHGs are **self-governed, peer-controlled, informal associations** of up to **20** members with similar socio-economic background who choose to come together for a common purpose.
- Financial Assistance**
 - Capitalization Support: RF and Community Investment Fund (CIF)**
 - Bank Loan:** Collateral-free bank loan up to Rs. 20 lakh for SHGs, Interest Subvention (maximum of Rs. 3 Lakh per SHG), Overdraft Facility (upto Rs. 5,000 for women SHG member having a Jan Dhan account)
 - Women Enterprise Acceleration Fund:** Medium to long term debt financing to women entrepreneurs.
 - Vulnerability Reduction Fund (VRF):** It is a fund given to the Village Organisations (VOs) as a Revolving Fund given by the Cluster Level Federations.
 - VRF is a corpus fund** given to address the vulnerabilities like food insecurity, health risk, hospitalization, natural calamity, etc., faced by the household(s) or community.

Measures taken to Promote Self-Help Groups (SHGs)



1.2. GLOBAL GENDER GAP REPORT 2024

Why in the News?

The Global Gender Gap Report 2024 was released by the **World Economic Forum (WEF)**.

More on the News

- Report is based on the **Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI)** which annually benchmarks the current state and evolution of gender parity based on **14 indicators across four key dimensions**.

Key findings

- Global**
 - Top 3 Countries:** Iceland, Finland, and Norway.
 - 68.5%** of the global gender gap has been **closed** in 2024.
 - The **Health and Survival** gender gap has closed by **96%**, while the **Educational Attainment** gap closed by **94.9%**,
 - At the current rate of progress, it will take **134 years to reach full gender parity**.
- India**
 - Ranked **129th out of 146 countries** (ranked 127th in 2023).
 - 5th in South Asia after **Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan**.
 - Saw small **decline** in **Educational Attainment** and **Political Empowerment** dimensions while **Economic Participation and Opportunity** slightly improved.

The Global Gender Gap Index Framework: Dimensions



- Economic Participation and Opportunity**
- Educational Attainment**
- Health and Survival**
- Political Empowerment**

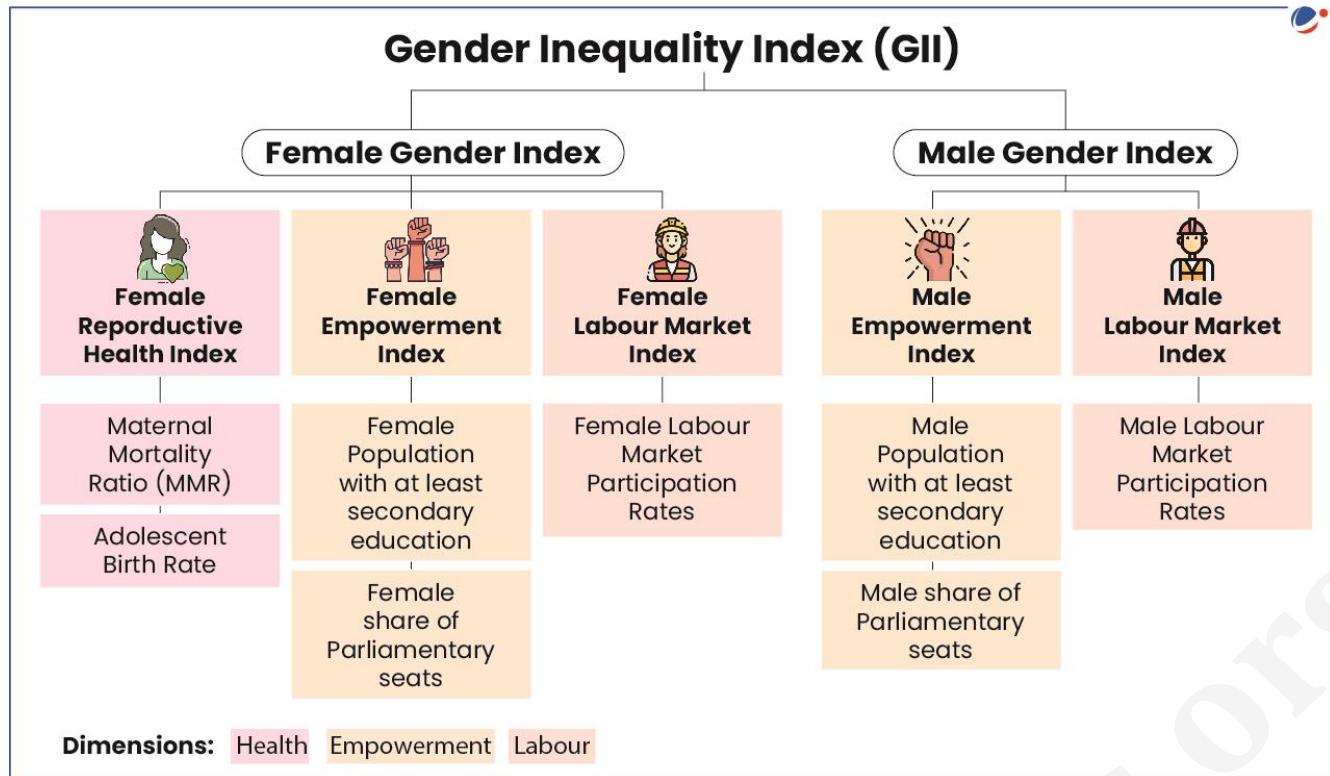
1.3. GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX (GII) 2022

Why in the News?

The **GII, 2022** was released by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in their Human Development Report 2023/2024 “Breaking the gridlock Reimagining cooperation in a polarized world.”

About GII, 2022

- GII Score:** Ranges from **0 (where women and men fare equally)** to **1 (where one gender fares as poorly as possible)** in all measured dimensions.
 - Lower the GII score, lower the gender inequality.**
- India:** Ranked **108th out of 193 countries (2022)** (ranked 122nd out of 191 countries in 2021).
- Top 3 ranked countries:** Denmark, Norway, and Switzerland.



Related News: Alliance for Global Good: Gender Equity and Equality

- It is a **Global Collective** of Governments, Industry and Development Organizations to bring together **global good practices, knowledge sharing, and investments** in the field of **women's health, education, and enterprise**.
- Genesis:** Launched in **Davos 2024** with the endorsement of **World Economic Forum (WEF)** and India, it is born out of the **G20 Leaders' Declaration**.
 - It is **supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** and anchored by the **CII Centre for Women Leadership** with the **WEF** as a '**Network Partner**' and **Invest India** as an '**Institutional Partner**'.

1.4. SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AT WORKPLACE

Why in the News?

Recently the **Justice Hema Committee report** revealed exploitation, sexual harassment of women in the **Malayalam film industry** highlighting the persistent issue of sexual harassment of women at workplace.

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act)

- Aim:** To prevent and address incidents of sexual harassment of women at their workplace and provide a mechanism for **redressal of complaints** related to such harassment.
- Defines 'sexual harassment'** in line with the **Supreme Court's definition** in the **Vishaka Judgment**.
- Complaints Committee:** Provides for **Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)** and **Local Complaints Committee (LCC)** to handle complaints of sexual harassment.
- About ICC & LCC**
 - ICC:** To be set up at each office or branch, of an organization employing 10 or more employees.
 - Composition:**
 - Presiding Officer:** Woman employed at a senior level at the workplace from amongst the employees.
 - Members:** Not less than 2 members from amongst employees.
 - Not less than half** of the ICC Members shall be **women**.

- ✓ **External member:** From an **NGO or association** committed to the cause of women or **person familiar** with issues relating to sexual harassment.
- > **Term:** Maximum **3 years**.
- > A **minimum of 3 Members** of the ICC including the **Presiding Officer** are to be present for conducting the **inquiry**.
- **Local Complaints Committee:** To be set up at the **District level** by the **Government** for complaints from the **unorganized sector** or where **ICC** has **not** been constituted or the complaint is **against the employer**.
- **Powers of the ICC/LCC:** Powers of a **Civil Court** under the **Code of Civil Procedure, 1908** while conducting an inquiry.

Other Initiatives for Prevention of Sexual Harassment



Vishaka Guidelines (1997): Laid down by the Supreme Court in response to the Vishaka vs. State of Rajasthan case



Sexual Harassment electronic-Box (SHe-Box): Online complaint management system



Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023: Chapter V deals with sexual offenses against Women and Children.



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW): Ratified by India in **1993**, it recognizes protection against sexual harassment and right to work with dignity as universal human rights.



1.5. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Why in the News?

The **Supreme Court** reiterated that the **Domestic Violence Act** is applicable to **every woman irrespective of religious affiliation and/ or social background** to protect them from domestic abuse.

Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005

- Enacted in exercise of the powers under **Article 15(3) of the Constitution of India**, the **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005** enacted.
 - **Article 15 (3)** empowers the legislature to make **special provision for women and children**.
- **Domestic violence** includes **actual abuse or threat of abuse**, whether **physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, or economic**.
- **Coverage:** **All women** who may be mother, sister, wife, widow, or partners living in a shared household. A **child** is also entitled to relief under the Act.
- **Complaint could be filed against:**
 - Any person who is, or has been, in a **domestic relationship with aggrieved woman**.
 - > Supreme Court in 2016 in **Hiral P Harsora and ors Vs. Kusum Narottamdas Harsora & Ors Case** has struck down the words "**adult male**" before the word "**person**".
 - **Relatives (both male and female)** of husband or male partner.
- Only provides for **civil remedies for marital rape** and **no criminal proceedings** can be initiated against their perpetrator.

Other Provisions related to Domestic Violence

- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023:** **Sections 85 and 86** define and address the issue of cruelty towards married women by their husbands or relative of husband.
- **Section 498A of the IPC**, introduced in 1983, also contained the provisions to address domestic violence and harassment faced by married women by their husband or his relatives.

1.6. ABORTION

Why in the News?

Supreme Court used special powers under Article 142 to permit abortion of a 14-year-old minor rape-survivor beyond 24 weeks of Pregnancy.

Legal Framework for Abortion in India

- Sections 88 to 92 under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 contain provisions related to causing the miscarriage of women.
- Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971:** It provides for the **termination** of certain pregnancies by **Registered Medical Practitioners (RMPs)**.
- MTP (Amendment) Act, 2021:** The amendment **increases the time period** within which **abortion** may be carried out. (See Table)

Medical Intervention required	Gestation Period according to MTP (Amendment) Act, 2021
Opinion of 1 Doctor (RMP)	Up to 20 weeks
Opinion of 2 Doctors (RMPs)	20-24 weeks (Special categories of women as listed in the MTP Rules, 2021)
Special Considerations	Beyond 24 weeks: Available only on grounds of foetal abnormalities on advice of a Medical Board constituted by States/UTs.

Special categories of women permitted abortion between 20-24 weeks



Survivors of rape or incest,



Change of marital status during ongoing pregnancy,



Risk to life of pregnant woman or of grave injury to her physical or mental health,



Risk of abnormalities to child,



Differently abled women,



Minors, and



Pregnancy in humanitarian settings or disaster or emergencies.

- In 2022, Supreme Court ruled that for the **sole purpose of the MTP Act**, the meaning of rape must **include marital rape**.
 - Further, SC also **extended the right to safe and legal abortion upto 24 weeks to unmarried and single women**.

1.7. SURROGACY

Why in the News?

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare notified **Surrogacy (Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2024** amending the Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022.

About Surrogacy and its types

- Surrogacy is a practice whereby **one woman bears and gives birth to a child for an intending couple**.
 - Intending couple** means a couple who have a medical indication necessitating gestational surrogacy and who intend to become parents through surrogacy.
 - Gestational surrogacy** is a practice whereby a **surrogate mother carries a child for intending couple** through implantation of an embryo in her womb and **child is not genetically related to surrogate mother**.

- **Traditional surrogacy** is the result of artificial insemination of the surrogate mother with the intended father's sperm making her biological mother of the child she carries.
- **Types of surrogacy**
 - **Altruistic surrogacy:** It involves **no monetary compensation** to surrogate mother **other than medical expenses and insurance coverage** during pregnancy.
 - **Commercial surrogacy:** It includes surrogacy, or its related procedures undertaken **for monetary benefit or reward** (in cash or kind) exceeding the basic medical expenses and insurance coverage.
- The government **banned surrogacy for foreign nationals in 2015.**

Surrogacy Laws in India

- **Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021 (Surrogacy Act 2021)**
 - **Only altruistic surrogacy is allowed** and penalises commercial surrogacy.
 - Establish **National Assisted Reproductive Technology and Surrogacy Board (NARTSB)** to review and monitor implementation of Act, supervise functioning of State ARTSB (SARTSB), etc.
 - **Abortion of surrogate child** requires **written consent of surrogate mother and authorization** of appropriate authority.
 - > This authorization must be **compliant with MTP Act, 1971.**
 - An **Indian woman** who is a **widow or divorcee** between the ages of **35 to 45 years** can also avail the **surrogacy**, subject to the **fulfilment of other conditions.**

 Eligibility criteria for surrogate mother	 Eligibility criteria for intending couples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A married woman having a child of her own, and 25 to 35 years old. ● No woman shall act as a surrogate mother more than once in her lifetime. ● Possess a certificate of medical and psychological fitness for surrogacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If they have been married for five years, wife aged between 25-50 years and husband between 26-55 years. ● Couple must not have any living child (biological, adopted or surrogate), except when child is mentally or physically challenged or suffers from life threatening disorder or fatal illness. ● Should have 'essential' certificate if suffering from proven infertility of either partner certified by District Medical Board, and an order of parentage and custody of the surrogate child, passed by a Magistrate's court. ● Insurance coverage for 36 months for the surrogate mother, covering any postpartum complications.

- **Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act, 2021 (ART Act)**
 - It aims to **regulate and supervise ART clinics and banks**, prevent its misuse and ensure safe and ethical practice of ART services for addressing the issues of reproductive health.
- **Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022**
 - **Number of attempts** of any surrogacy procedure on surrogate mother shall **not be more than 3 times.**
- **Surrogacy (Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2024**
 - **Surrogacy with a donor gamete (egg or sperm) is allowed**, if the District Medical Board certifies that a couple needs a donor egg or sperm due to a medical condition.
 - > However, such a child must have at least one gamete from the couple.
 - > Previously, **Rule 7 of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022** prohibited the use of donor gametes.
 - **Single women** (widow or divorcee) undergoing surrogacy **must use self-eggs and donor sperms** to avail surrogacy procedure.
 - In 2023, the Supreme Court in **Arun Muthuvel vs. Union of India case** allowed a **woman with Mayer-Rokitansky-Kuster-Hauser (MRKH) Syndrome to undergo surrogacy with a donor egg.**
 - > MRKH is a rare congenital disorder that **affects female reproductive system** and causes **absolute uterine factor infertility.**

1.8. OTHER IMPORTANT NEWS

1.8.1. MATERNITY BENEFIT ACT, 1961

Madras High Court ruled that **contractual employees** are also entitled to **maternity benefits**.

- The provisions of the **Maternity Benefit Act, 1961** would prevail over contractual conditions if the latter either deny or offer less favourable benefits.

Maternity Benefit Act, 1961

- It provides **paid maternity leave to women workers**.
- Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017** brought following changes:
 - Increased** paid maternity leave from **12 weeks to 26 weeks** for women with **less than two surviving children**.
 - > Out of these 26 weeks, **not more than 8 weeks shall be preceding the expected date of delivery**.
 - Depending upon the **nature of work**, Act provides for **work from home for nursing mothers**.
 - Extension of 12 weeks** of maternity benefit to **commissioning mothers and adopting (a child below 3 months) mother**.

1.8.2. CHILD CARE LEAVE (CCL)

The Supreme Court (SC) noted that **denying women Child Care Leave (CCL) is violation of the Constitution** and directed the Himachal Pradesh government to review its policies on CCL.

Key highlights of the SC Directive

- Participation of women in workforce** is a constitutional entitlement **protected by Article 15** of the Constitution.
 - Article 15** provides that the State shall **not discriminate** on grounds only of religion, race, caste, **sex**, place of birth.
- Maternity benefits** provisioned were not sufficient and are perhaps **distinct** from the concept of **CCL**.

About Child Care Leave (CCL)

- Rule 43-C of the Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules, 1972** provides for 2 years (730 days) of CCL to **female employees and single male parents** (unmarried or widower or divorcee).
 - It is available for taking care of **two eldest surviving children upto the age of 18 years**.
 - There is **no age limit in case of disabled child**.
 - CCL may be granted for **not more than three spells** in a calendar year.
 - > **Exception:** A single female government servant is allowed **up to 6 spells** in a calendar year.
- State of Himachal Pradesh has not adopted** these provisions of CCL.

2. ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO CHILDREN

2.1. CHILD LABOUR

Why in the News?

25th anniversary of International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No. 182, dealing with “worst forms of child labour” was observed recently.

About ILO Convention No. 182

- Dealing with “worst forms of child labour”, it is the first ILO Convention to be universally ratified.
- India ratified it in 2017 along with Convention No. 138 which deals with “minimum age of employment.”

Prevalence of Child Labour in India

- As per Census 2011, 10.1 million children (3.9% of total child population (5-14 years)) are working, either as ‘main worker’ or as ‘marginal worker’.
- Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh constitute nearly 55% of total working children in India.
- Child labour mostly persists in agriculture, household industries, roadside dhaba, etc.

Government measures to prevent child labour

- Constitutional Provisions
 - Fundamental Rights (Article 24): Prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 years in any factory, mine, or hazardous occupation.
 - Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 39): Requires the State to direct its policy towards ensuring that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children is not abused.
- Legal Framework
 - Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016 prohibits “the employment of children (below 14 years) in all occupations and of adolescents (14-18 years) in scheduled hazardous occupations.
 - ✓ Exceptions include help in family enterprise, work as an artist in audio-visual entertainment industry, sports activities except circus, etc.

International Initiatives to prevent Child Labour



Target 8.7 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):
Aims to eliminate all forms of child labour by 2025.



ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC): Prevention and elimination of all forms of child labour, prioritizing action on worst forms of child labour.



United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Protects children from exploitation, hazardous work, and education-disrupting employment, requiring governments to set a minimum employment age and ensure proper working conditions.

HQ: Geneva, Switzerland



International Labour Organization (ILO)



Genesis: ILO was created in 1919, as a part of the **Treaty of Versailles** that ended World War I as a **League of Nations Organization**.

► It became the **United Nations' first specialized agency** in 1946.



About: It is the **only tripartite U.N. agency** that brings together governments, employers and workers.



Aim: To promote **social justice and internationally recognized human and labour rights** by setting **labour standards**, developing **policies** and devising **programmes** promoting **decent work** for all women and men.



Members: 187 (**India** is a member since 1919)



ILO was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize in 1969**.



ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998): Establishes 5 fundamental principles,

- Freedom of **association** and the effective recognition of the **right to collective bargaining**;
- Elimination of all forms of **forced or compulsory labour**;
- Effective abolition of **child labour**;
- Elimination of **discrimination** in respect of **employment and occupation**; and
- A **safe and healthy working environment**.

Important Reports:

- ILO's **World Social Protection Report 2024–26**: Universal social protection for climate action and a just transition.
- Regional Companion Report for Asia and the Pacific
- **India Employment Report 2024 (ILO and Institute for Human Development (IHD))**
- **ILO Global Estimates on International Migrants in the labour force**

India and ILO

Hosted 1st Preparatory Asian Regional Conference (2nd ILO Regional Conference) in New Delhi, 1947

Ratified Conventions (6 out of 8)

- Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)
- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)
- Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)
- Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)
- Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)

Not Ratified Conventions

- Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)
- Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)



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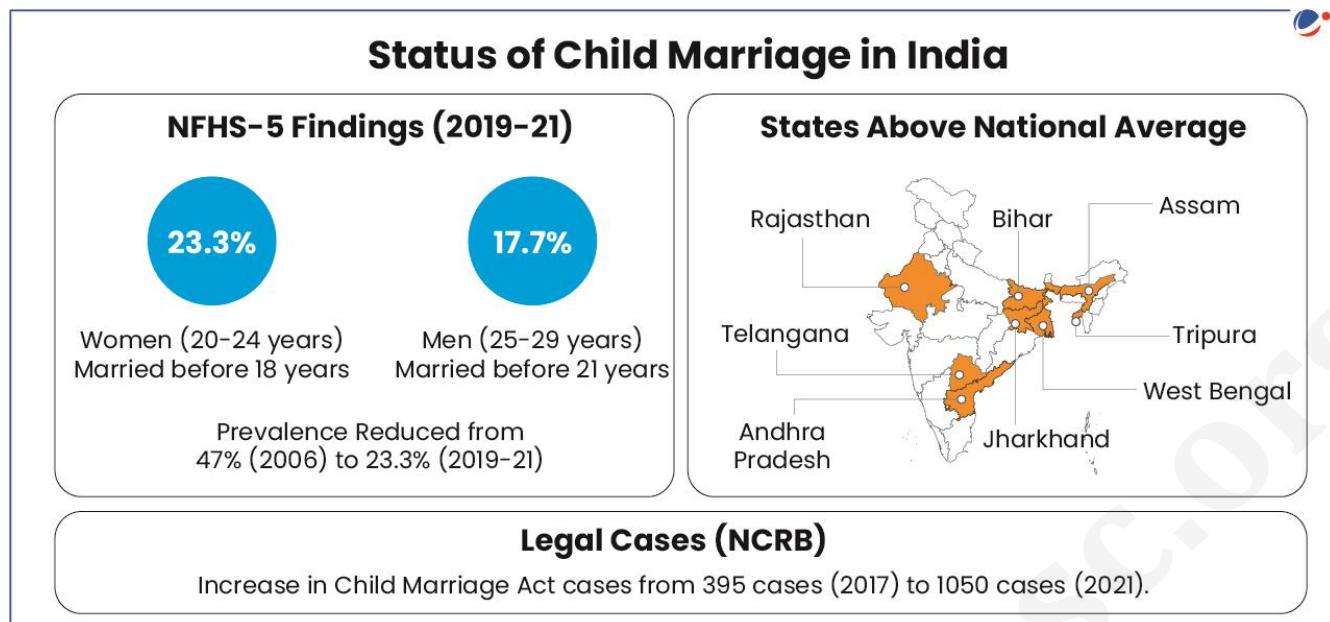
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2.2. CHILD MARRIAGE IN INDIA

Why in the News?

The Supreme Court, while issuing **guidelines** for prohibition of child marriage in **Society for Enlightenment and Voluntary Action v. UoI Case**, held that **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA)** cannot be stunted by personal laws and traditions.



Key Provisions of Guidelines

- Legal Enforcement**
 - State Governments and Union Territories (UTs) must appoint **Child Marriage Prevention Officers (CMPO)**.
 - Establishment of a **Specialized Police Unit** and **State Special Child Marriage Prohibition Unit**.
- Judicial Measures**
 - Empowering Magistrates to take Suo Moto action** and issue preventive Injunctions.
 - Exploration of **Special Fast-Track Courts** for Child Marriage cases.
- Other**
 - Adoption of the **Child Marriage Free Village Initiative**, in line of "Open Defecation Free Village" model.
 - Establishing **technology-driven monitoring system** to track daily **attendance** for school-going girls up to the 12th grade.



Key Provisions of PCMA, 2006

- Objective:** To prohibit solemnization of child marriage and provide relief to victims and enhance punishment for those who abet, promote or solemnise such marriages.

- Defines a **child** as a **male under 21 years** of age and a **female under 18 years** of age.
- Child Marriage can be **annulled** if the party who was a **child at marriage chooses** to do so, regardless of when the marriage was solemnised.
- **Authority:** **Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs)** are to be appointed in **every state** to prohibit child marriages, ensure victim protection and prosecution of the offenders.
 - **Authorities for Reporting Child Marriages:** Nearby **Police station, Metropolitan Magistrate** or a Judicial Magistrate of First Class, **ChildLine/ District Magistrate**, and **Child Welfare Committee**.
- **Petition to Nullify and Annulment**
 - **Annulment** can be **sought within 2 years after** the child involved in the marriage had **attained majority**.
 - **Specific conditions** under which child marriages can be **declared null and void by the Courts**:
 - > Where a marriage has been **solemnised** despite an **injunction order passed to prohibit the child marriage**.
 - > When the **child is taken away** from their legal guardian **by force or deceit**.
 - > When the child is **trafficked for marriage or sold**.
 - **Punishment:** Offences under the Act are **cognisable and non-bailable**. The punishable persons include,
 - > Any person who **conducts or directs or abets** any child marriage.
 - > A **male adult above 18 years** who **marries a child**.
 - > Any person having **charge of the child** (parent or guardian or any member of the organisation), **promoting, permitting, participating** in a child marriage or **failing to prevent it**.

Important Judicial Pronouncements related to Age of Consent



Rukhmabai case (1884): It was related to age of consent and restitution of conjugal rights where women's agency and consent were upheld.



Phulmoni Dasi's case (1889): Case of marital rape and death of the minor girl inspired Malabari's campaign to raise the age of consent and led to the passing of the **Age of Consent Act, 1891** (raised the age of consent from 10 years to 12 years).



Independent Thought v. UoI (2017): Supreme Court increased the age of consent for sexual intercourse within marriages to 18 by striking down inconsistencies in **Section 375 IPC**. (**Section 63 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023** is in line with this provision.)

Other Measures taken by Government to prevent Child Marriages

- **The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015:** It has provisions for **care and protection** of children who are at **imminent risk of marriage** before attaining the legal age of marriage.
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme (2015):** It aims to break gender stereotypes through components of **celebration of Birth of Girl Child**, linking **Sukanya Samriddhi accounts** with birth of girl child and **preventing child marriages**.
- **National Action Plan to Prevent Child Marriage:** It is a **comprehensive framework** to provide **support** to girls who are at **risk of early marriage**.
- **Emergency Outreach Services:** Introduction of **CHILDLINE (1098)**, a 24X7 telephone emergency service for **children in crisis**, including for **prevention of child marriages**.
- **Himachal Pradesh Assembly** passed bill **raising marriage age for women** from **18 to 21 years**

2.3. JUVENILE JUSTICE ACT, 2015

Why in the News?

Supreme Court's judgment in “**Child in Conflict with Law (CCL) through his mother v. State of Karnataka**” case dealt with Act's provision for **preliminary assessment of CCL** in heinous offences.

Key Highlights of the Judgment

- An appeal against the preliminary assessment order of the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) would be filed before the Children's Court (not Sessions Court) wherever available.
 - Also, court has prescribed 30 days' time limit for preferring such appeals.
- The time period of 3 months prescribed for completion of preliminary assessment is not mandatory but merely directory in nature.

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (JJ Act) 2015

- Defines child as a person who has not completed 18 years of age.
- In 2015, it introduced a provision wherein a child in age group of 16-18 years could be tried as an adult in case of heinous offenses.
 - Juvenile Justice Board carries assessment to determine whether to try such a child as an adult or a minor.
- Institutional setup: Mandates setting up Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) and Child Welfare Committee's (CWC) in every district to deal with cases of CCL.
- Special provisions for juveniles between 16 to 18 years who commit serious crimes: Under Section 15 the JJB shall conduct a preliminary assessment to assess capacity of the child.
 - After preliminary assessment, the Children's Court may decide that whether the child can be tried as adult.
- Mandatory registration of Child Care Institutions (CCIs): All CCIs (State-run, voluntary or NGOs) intended to give shelter to children, regardless of whether they receive government grants must be registered. Non-compliance is to be severely penalized.

Juvenile Justice (Amendment) Act, 2021

Specifications	JJ Amendment Act, 2021
Adoption	District Magistrates (DM), including Additional DM, can issue adoption orders.
Appeals	Any person aggrieved by an adoption order passed by DM may file an appeal before the Divisional Commissioner, within 30 days of such order.
Designated Court	All offences will be tried in Children's Court.

2.3.1. MODEL FOSTER CARE GUIDELINES, 2024

Why in the News?

Ministry of Women and Child Development released Model Foster Care Guidelines (MFCG), 2024.

About the Guidelines

- These guidelines are in consonance with Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) (JJ) Act, 2015 and JJ Model Rules, 2016, Adoption Regulations, 2022 and Mission Vatsalya.
- Foster care is the placement of a child in the domestic environment of a family, other than the child's biological family.
 - Such family is selected and approved by the Child Welfare Committee for providing foster care.

Child Adoption Framework in India



Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA): Nodal body for adoption of Indian children and regulates in-country and inter-country adoptions. It is a **statutory body** of MWCD, established under **JJ Act 2015**.



CARA primarily deals with **adoption of orphan, abandoned and surrendered children** through its associated /recognised adoption agencies.

Key provisions in Revised Guidelines

- **Children eligible for foster care:**
 - children **above 6 years** age living in childcare institutions or community including hard-to-place children;
 - children having special needs and children having **unfit guardians**.
- **Eligibility to Foster:** Any person, irrespective of marital status, and whether they have a biological son/daughter. (**Only married couple were eligible under MFCG 2016**).
 - Allows single females to foster and adopt a child of any gender, however, **single males can only do so for male children**.
 - Spouse/couple shall have a **stable marital relationship of 2 years**.
- **Foster Adoption:** Allows the foster parent, who is already fostering the child for **minimum 2 years** (as opposed to 5 years earlier), to adopt the same child.

The advertisement features the logos for VisionIAS Sandhan and A.I.T.S. The VisionIAS logo includes a stylized figure and the text "VISIONIAS INSPIRING INNOVATION". The Sandhan logo is in red and blue. The A.I.T.S. logo features a clock and the text "A.I.T.S. ALL INDIA GS PRELIMS TEST SERIES 2025". A central banner reads "Personalise Your UPSC Prelims Preparation". Below the banner are two boxes for the test series: one for 2025 (English Medium, 9 February) and one for 2026 (English Medium, 2 February). A red box labeled "HINDI & ENGLISH MEDIUM" is positioned above four circular icons with text: "Access 25000+ questions", "Choose your subject and topic", "Create your test from VisionIAS or UPSC PYQs", and "Performance and Progress Analysis".

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3. OTHER VULNERABLE SECTIONS

3.1. PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDS)

Why in the News?

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Amendment) Rules, 2024 have been notified by the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment under Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

Key highlights of the amended Rules

- Required Documents for disability certificate include proof of identity, recent photograph (not older than six months) and Aadhaar card.
 - **Issuance Authority:** Medical authority or notified competent medical authority at the district level in the district of residence of the applicant.
- **Processing Time:** Extended from **one month to three months**.
- Applications to lapse or become "inactive", if **undecided for over 2 years**.
 - Applicants must re-apply or contact the authority to reactivate the application.



About PwDs

- "**Person with disability**" means a person with long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, **hinders his full and effective participation in society equally** with others. (**RPwD Act, 2016**)
- PwDs constitute **2.21%** of the total population. (**Census 2011**)
- **69% of all PwDs live in rural areas** while **21% of all PwDs are elderly**.

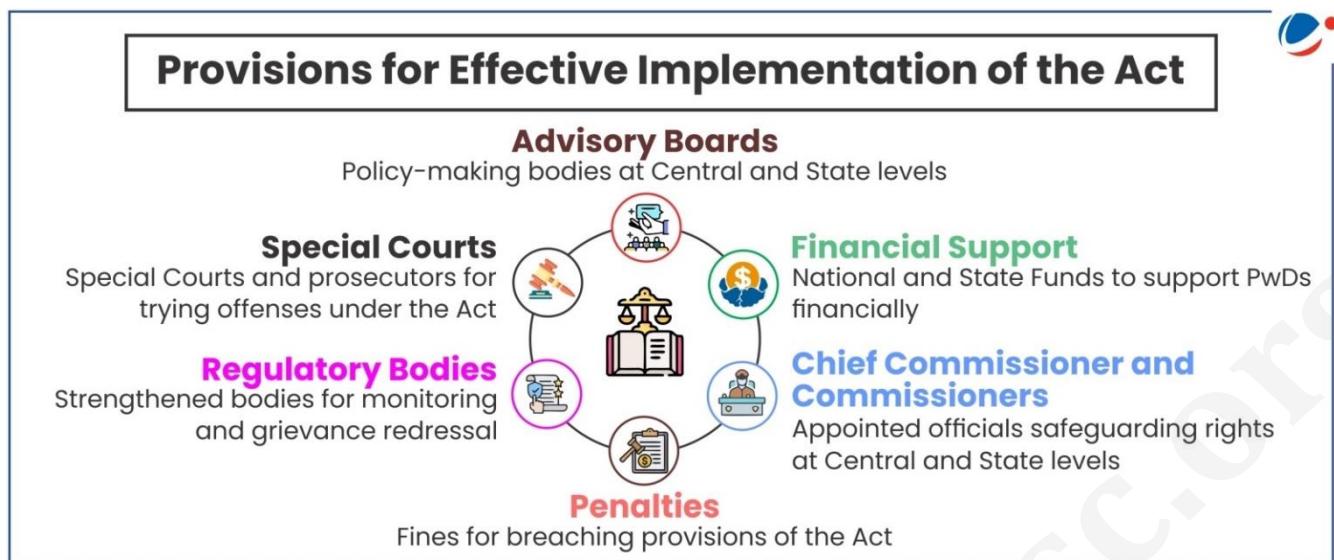
Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016

- **Aim:** To ensure that **all PwDs can lead their lives with dignity**, without discrimination and with equal opportunities.
- It was enacted to give effect to the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**, to which **India is a signatory**.
- **Administered by:** Union Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MoSJ&E).

Key Provisions of the RPwD Act

- It provides for a **wide definition of PwDs**, recognizing **21 types of disabilities** including **acid attack victims, intellectual disability, mental illness, etc.**
- **Rights of PwDs**
 - Governments are responsible for ensuring PwDs enjoy the **right to equality, life with dignity and respect**.
 - **Protection from abuse**, cruelty, inhuman treatment, violence and exploitation, etc.
 - **Other rights:** Right to home and family, reproductive right, accessibility in voting, the right to own or inherit property.
- **Persons with Benchmark disabilities:** Persons with **at least 40% of a specified disability**, whether defined in measurable terms or not as certified by the relevant authority.
 - **Special provisions:** Right to free education for child (6 to 18 years), 5% reservation in Government and Government aided higher educational institutions and 4% reservation in Government jobs.

- Government may incentivise employers in private sector to ensure that at least 5% of their workforce constitutes PwDs.
- **Appointment of limited Guardianship:** If a PwD cannot make legally binding decisions even with support.
 - Limited guardianship is a **joint decision-making system** based on mutual understanding and trust between the guardian and the PwD. It follows the **PwD's will** and is **limited to specific periods, decisions, and situations**.
- **Social security:** Mandates the government to formulate necessary programmes to safeguard the rights of PwDs for an **adequate standard of living** to enable them to live independently or in the community.



Steps Taken for Welfare of PwDs	
Policies and Legislations	Schemes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National Policy for PwDs 2006 ● National Legislations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992 ○ National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999 ○ RPwD Act, 2016 ○ Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scheme for Implementing of Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 (SIPDA) ● Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan) (2015) ● Assistance to disabled persons for purchase/ fitting of aids/assistive devices (ADIP) ● National Action Plan for Skill Training of PwDs ● Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS).

India is also a signatory to the following international initiatives:

- Adoption of Incheon Strategy “To make the Right Real” for **Persons with Disabilities in Asia and Pacific**.
- Declaration on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in **the Asia-Pacific Region**.
- Biwako Millennium Framework working towards an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society.

Related News: UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 17th session of the Conference of State Parties to UN-CRPD took place in New York with the theme “Rethinking disability inclusion in the current international juncture and ahead of the Summit of the Future ”.

About UN-CRPD

- Adopted in **New York in 2006** (entered into force in **2008**).
- **Objective:** To promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all **human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities**, and to promote **respect** for their inherent dignity.

- **Persons with disabilities** include those who have **long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments**.
- **Members:** 164 Signatories (**including India**).

3.2. DHARTI AABA JANJATIYA GRAM UTKARSH ABHIYAN (PM-JUGA)

Why in the News?

Prime Minister launched the Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan, also known as **Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan (PM-JUGA)**, for improving socio-economic conditions of tribal communities.

Key Features of the Scheme

- The scheme is named after **Birsa Munda** (popularly known as **Dharti Aaba**), the tribal leader who resisted the British Empire and led '**Ulgulan movement**'.
- **Objective:** It envisions **saturation of critical gaps** in social infrastructure, health, education, livelihood, **through different schemes** by convergence and outreach.
 - Based on learnings and success of **PM-JANMAN** (Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan).
- **Funding:** From **existing Development Action Plan for Scheduled Tribes (DAPST)** grants allocated **under Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes**.
- **Tenure: 5 Years (2024-25 to 2028-29)**
- **Coverage:** This will cover around **63,000 villages** benefitting more than **5 crore tribal people**.
- **Mission Components:** It comprises of **25 interventions** which will be implemented by **17-line ministries**.
 - Funds to be allocated under **Development Action Plan for Scheduled Tribes (DAPST)** in next 5 years.
- **Mapping and Monitoring:** Tribal villages covered under the Abhiyan would be **mapped and monitored on PM Gati Shakti Portal**.

Goals under the Mission	
Goal-1: Developing Enabling Infrastructure (SDG 9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pucca house for eligible Households with other entitlements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Under the PM Awas Yojana (Gramin) with availability of tapped water (Jal Jeevan Mission) and electricity supply. ○ Access to Ayushman Bharat Card (PM Jan Arogya Yojana). • Improving Village infrastructure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensuring all weather road connectivity to ST majority villages (PM Gram Sadak Yojana), ○ Provide access to mobile connectivity (Bharat Net) and internet, ○ Infrastructure for improving health, nutrition, and education (National Health Mission, Samagra Shiksha and Poshan).
Goal-2: Promotion of Economic Empowerment (SDG 8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill Development, Entrepreneurship promotion and Enhanced Livelihood (self-employment) – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Providing access to training (Skill India Mission) and ensuring that ST boys/girls get access to long-term skill courses after 10th/12th standard every year. ○ Marketing support through Tribal Multipurpose Marketing Centre (TMMC), ○ Tourist Home Stays, and ○ Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fishery support for FRA Patta holders.
Goal-3: Universalization of Access to Good Education (SDG 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) to the national levels • To make quality education affordable and accessible to ST students (Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan) by setting up tribal hostels in schools at district/block level.
Goal-4: Healthy Lives and Dignified Ageing (SDG 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure enhanced access to quality health facilities to ST households (PM ABHIM), • To reach towards the national standards in Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR),

- **Coverage of immunisation** through Mobile Medical Units in areas where sub-centre is more than 10 km in plain areas and 5 kms in Hilly areas (National Health Mission).

Innovative Schemes under PM-JUGA

- **Tribal Home Stay:** To tap the tourist potential, 1000 Home stays will be promoted under **Swadesh Darshan** through **Ministry of Tourism**.
- **Sustainable Livelihood Forest Right Holders (FRA):** Mission has special focus on 22 lakh FRA patta holders and convergence of different schemes.
- **Improving infrastructure of Government residential Schools/Hostels** for upgradation on the lines of PM-SHRI Schools.
- **Advance facilities for diagnosis of Sickle Cell Disease (SCD):** Centre of Competence (CoC) would be set up in AIIMS and premier Institutes in the States where the SCD is prevalent.
- **Tribal Multipurpose Marketing Centre (TMMC):** 100 TMMCs will be set up to enable the tribal producers to get right price for their produce, minimizing post-harvest losses and facilitate the consumers in buying tribal produce.

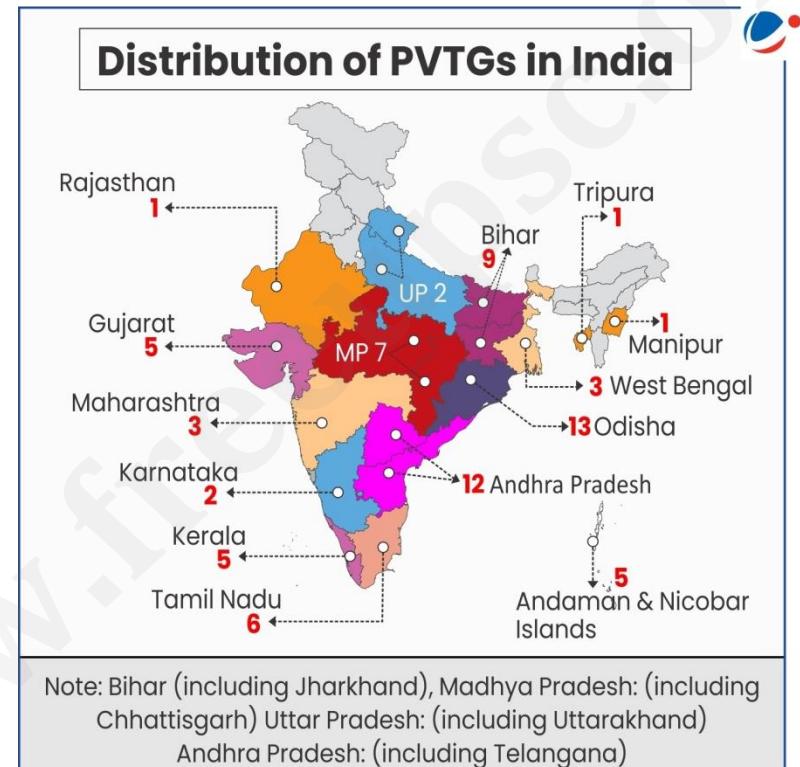
3.3. PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS (PVTG)

Why in the News?

District Level Committee approves **Habitat Rights for Juangs of Keonjhar and Mankidia tribes, PVTGs in Odisha.**

About Habitat Rights

- Habitat rights are given to PVTGs under **Section 3(1) (e)** of the **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006**, also known as the **Forest Rights Act (FRA)**.
- FRA defines ‘habitat’ as the ‘area comprising the **customary habitat** and such other habitats in **reserved and protected forests** of primitive tribal groups, pre-agricultural communities, and other forest dwelling STs’.
- **Habitat Rights** are accorded after a **sequence of consultation** with stakeholders involved.
- **Tribes having habitat rights:**
 - **Odisha (7):** Paudi Bhuyans of Deogarh, Saora tribals of Gajapati, Juang in Keonjhar and Jajpur districts, Chuktia Bhunja of Nuapada and Hill Khadia of Mayurbhanj, Dongria Kondhs and Mankidia tribe.
 - **Madhya Pradesh:** Bharias.
 - **Chhattisgarh:** Kamars and Baigas.
 - **Maharashtra:** Maria Gond.



About PVTGs

- Government has recognised **75 PVTGs** spread across **18 states and one UT** based on the recommendations of the **Dhebar Committee (1960-61)**.
- **Odisha houses 13 PVTGs** which is highest among all the states and UTs.

- **Criteria for identifying PVTG:**
 - Forest-based livelihoods,
 - Pre-agriculture level of existence
 - A stagnant and declining population
 - Extremely low literacy and
 - A subsistence economy
- **'Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) Scheme'**
 - **Aim:** Comprehensive socio-economic development of PVTGs while retaining their culture and heritage.
 - **Centrally Sponsored Scheme with 100% Central assistance** in form of funding (Grant-in-Aid and Creation of Capital Assets).
 - **Financial assistance** is provided to the States/UT under the scheme for activities like Education, Housing, Agricultural development, strengthening of infrastructure through construction of community assets, Installation of non-conventional sources of energy for lighting purpose, Social security, etc.
 - **Micro plan approach** through formulation of **Conservation cum Development (CCD) plans**.
- **Ranking of the PVTG Population in Different States (2001 Census):** Chhattisgarh + Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand (Top 3).

3.3.1. DENOTIFIED TRIBES (DNTS)

Why in the News?

Supreme Court in **Sukanya Santha vs. UoI & Others Case** struck down provisions of **Prison Manuals of several States** as per which jobs were assigned to prisons based on castes.

Key Highlights of the Judgement

- Key issues highlighted in the case include **persistent caste-based discrimination in prisons** with respect to **segregation of barracks, division of manual labour**, and provisions that **discriminate against prisoners belonging to Denotified tribes (DNTs)** and “habitual offenders”.
- Court **struck down caste-based discrimination** within prison walls as **unconstitutional** for being violative of **Articles 14, 15, 17, 21, and 23 of the Constitution**.

About Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes

- All **nomadic tribes (NTs)** are not DNTs, but all DNTs are NTs.
- Nomads and Semi-Nomads are **social groups who undertake a fairly frequent, usually seasonal physical movement** as part of their livelihood strategy and moves from one place to another.
- **Three types of nomadic communities:**
 - **Hunter/trappers** of birds and animals, gamer, etc., such as Konda Reddis, Chenchus etc.
 - **Pastoral communities** such as Pardis, Guzzars, Banjaras, Bhils, Kurabas, Madhuras, etc.
 - **Peripatetic groups of peddlers**, fortune tellers, storytellers, acrobats, dancers, dramatists, etc.

About Denotified Tribes and ‘Habitual Offenders’

- Denotified Tribes (DNTs), most vulnerable and deprived, are communities that were ‘**notified**’ as being ‘**born criminal**’ during British regime under the **Criminal Tribes Act, 1871**.
 - These are a **heterogeneous group engaged in various occupations** such as transport, key-making, salt trading, entertainment (acrobats, snake charmers, jugglers, etc.), pastoralists, etc.
- **Criminal Tribes Act, 1871** was repealed in **1949** and subsequently ‘criminal tribes’ were **denotified in 1952**.
 - Several Denotified Tribes were included in ST, Scheduled Caste (SC) and Other Backward Caste (OBC) lists because they come from diverse social backgrounds.
- As per **Renke Commission (2008)**, there are nearly **1,500 nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes** and **198 Denotified tribes**, comprising 15 crore Indians.
- **August 31** is celebrated as **Vimukta Jatis day** by DNTs in India.
- ‘**Habitual Offenders**’ are defined under Habitual Offenders Act of respective States to categorize person who has been convicted of multiple crimes and are considered a danger to society.
 - **Idate Commission (2017)** recommended to immediately **repeal Habitual Offenders Act** by respective States as it gives scope for harassment of the members of DNTs.



Other Steps Taken by Government for DNTs



National Commission for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (NCDNT): To prepare a state-wise list of castes belonging to DNTs.



Dr. Ambedkar Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarship for DNTs' Boys and Girls: Centrally sponsored scheme to for educational empowerment of DNTs who are not covered under SC/ST/OBC category.



Nanaji Deshmukh Scheme of construction of Hostels for DNTs' Boys and Girls: Centrally sponsored scheme would be run through State Governments/UT Administrations.



Scheme for Economic Empowerment of DNT Communities (SEED): Launched by Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment to provide free competitive exam coaching to DNTs students, provide health insurance to families etc.



Development and Welfare Board for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities constituted in 2019.

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4. EDUCATION

4.1. EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION (ECCE)

Why in the News?

Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) launched **Aadharshila**, a National Curriculum for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for Children from Three to Six Years, 2024.

About Aadharshila

- **Aadharshila (translated as foundation stone)** is a detailed 48-week curriculum meant for learning in the age-group of three to six-year-olds in anganwadis.
- The curriculum includes a **weekly based play calendar with**
 - **Four weeks of initiation** that include academic activities to help children transition from home to anganwadi centre by engaging them in fun and free play.
 - **Next 36 weeks are spent in exploring, free play, conversation, creation and appreciation, reflection** that involves various activities, including storytelling, singing rhymes, art and craft and so on.
 - **Last eight weeks** are spent in recap and reinforcing learnings of previous weeks with worksheets and observation of kid's performance.
- It will serve as a **base for States to develop their own culturally appropriate curriculums seen** as a solution to tackle later school challenges of children.

Key Features of the 'Aadharshila'

- **Based on Panchakosha concept:**
 - **Physical Development** (Sharirik Vikas),
 - **Development of Life Energy** (Pranik Vikas),
 - **Emotional/Mental Development** (Manasik Vikas),
 - **Intellectual Development** (Baudhik Vikas), and
 - **Spiritual Development** (Chaitshik Vikas).
- **Teaching Language and Literacy in Early Years:** Focus on developing children's emergent Mathematical and Literacy Skills like print awareness, drawing, scribbling, etc.
- **Positive Learning Habits (Executive Function and Self-Regulation Skills):** Focus on establishing routines, establish an atmosphere of positive relationship, empowering the child to lead and make independent choices.
- **Play as Learning:** Knowledge acquired through play becomes a lasting part of the child's experience. E.g. puzzles, Story creation, language and math games etc.
- **Others**
 - **Embracing learning diversity** in the Anganwadi Centre is crucial for Anganwadi educators.
 - **Ensuring gender equality from an early age is crucial**, because gender initiation and internalization start early, influencing children's self-concept, aspirations, and behaviour.
 - **Divyang Inclusion:** Anganwadi Protocol for Divyang Children was released by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2023, providing for screening, inclusion and referrals of children with disabilities.

About the ECCE

- ECCE is defined as the care and education of children from birth to eight years. **85% of brain development occurs before the age of 6 years.**
- **Legal and Policy Framework for ECCE in India**
 - **Article 45:** Directs the state to provide for ECCE until the age of six.
 - **RTE Act, 2009:** Government to make necessary arrangements for pre-school education.
 - **National ECCE Policy, 2013.**
 - **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** Recommended a sub-framework for 0-3 years old under National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education

- **National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (NCF-FS) 2022:** Provides guidelines tailored for fostering quality ECCE for 3-6 years and the age group of 0-3 years.

Other Initiatives for ECCE	
National	Global
 Mission Shakti: Palna and PM Matru Vandana Yojana	 Global Partnership Strategy (GPS) for Early Childhood by UNESCO to ensure that ECCE, Early childhood development, and Early childhood investment services are fully inclusive, accessible, affordable, gender-responsive and equitable for each child
 Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0: Includes ECCE (3-6 years) as a primary vertical.	 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989 and Education for All (EFA) 1990 which has postulated ECCE as the very first goal to be achieved for Education For All , since "learning begins at birth".
 Integrated Child Development Services: To ensure responsive care, early learning and development which includes physical and motor; language.	▶ India is also a signatory to both.

4.1.1. NAVCHETANA - NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD STIMULATION (ECS)

Why in the News?

'Navchetana - National Framework for Early Childhood Stimulation (ECS)' released by **MoWCD for Children from Birth to Three Years.**

Key highlights of the Navchetna ECS Framework

- **Objective:** To empower caregivers and Anganwadi Workers for holistic early stimulation, through responsive caregiving and opportunities for early learning, for optimal development of children.
- Document emphasizes on **two of the five components of nurturing care framework: 'responsive caregiving' and 'creating opportunities for early learning'.**
 - **Nurturing care framework** for Early Childhood Development was **provided by WHO in 2018.**
- Entails **36 sets of activities** for children from months 0 to 36 for holistic stimulation of child's **cognitive, socio-emotional, language, physical, and creative development.**



About Early Childhood Stimulation (ECS)

- **The Framework for Stimulation (0-3 years)** aims to fill the **gaps in implementing care and stimulation from birth until the first three years** of a child's growth.

- The framework guides **engagement inside the home as well as at Anganwadi centres or creches**.
- To facilitate inclusion of children with disabilities, an age-appropriate screening tool has been included.

4.2. HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

Why in the News?

UGC issued draft guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning in Higher Education.

About Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

- It is a **formal mechanism** used to evaluate a person's existing knowledge, skills, and experience gained through formal, non-formal, or informal learning.
- **Purpose:** To integrate informal and non-formal learning into the formal education system via assessments and certifications.

Status of Higher Education in India

- In 2021-22, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education for age group 18-23 years increased to 28.4 from 23.7 in 2014-15.
- Female GER increased to 28.5 in 2021-22 from 22.9 in 2014-15.

Salient Features of NEP for Higher Education

- Multiple exit options, the Undergraduate degrees will be of either 3 or 4-year duration, with multiple exit options.
 - With a **certification** at end of first year, a **diploma** after second year, a **Bachelor's degree** after third year and an **Honours degree along with a Bachelor's degree** at the end of the fourth year.
 - **Academic Bank of Credit (ABC)** to digitally store the academic credits earned from various institutions.
- Internationalization of education through institutional collaborations, and allowing entry of Top world Universities to open campuses in India.
- Organizational Framework
 - **National Research Foundation (NRF)** to catalyse and expand research and innovation across the country.
 - **National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)** to be established as a platform for free exchange of ideas on the use of technology to enhance learning, assessment and administration both for schools and higher education.



Goals of NEP, 2020 for Higher Education

-  At least one large multidisciplinary HEI in or near every district by 2030.
-  All HEIs shall aim to become autonomous with an empowered Board of Governors by 2035.
-  All higher education institutions (HEIs) shall aim to become multidisciplinary institutions by 2040.
-  Increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education including vocational education from 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035.
-  By 2025, at least 50% of learners through the school and higher education system shall have exposure to vocational education.

4.2.1. ANUSANDHAN NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION (ANRF)

Prime Minister chaired First Meeting of the Governing Board of Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF).

Key initiatives announced

- **Partnerships for Accelerated Innovation and Research (PAIR):** Pairing universities where research is at nascent stage with top tier established institutions for mentorship in **hub and spoke mode**.
- **Mission for Advancement in High-impact Areas (MAHA):** To support **priority-driven, solution-focused research** in priority areas like EV mobility, Advanced Materials, Solar Cells, Health & Medical Technology, etc.
- **ANRF Centre of Excellence (ACE):** To establish **world-class research centers** with substantial funding support.

About ANRF

- **Genesis:** Establishment under the ANRF Act 2023 and erstwhile Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) is subsumed into ANRF.
- **Aim:** To **seed, grow and foster a culture of research and innovation** throughout the country as per recommendations of National Education Policy.
 - **ANRF strives to making India knowledge-driven society**
- **Funding:** Mobilisation of **₹50,000 crore for the period 2023-2028** (Rs 14,000 crore from Centre and Rs 36,000 crore from private sources).
- **Governance**
 - **Administrative department:** Department of Science and Technology (**DST**)
 - **Governing Board**
 - > **Ex-officio President:** PM
 - > **Ex-Officio Vice-Presidents:** Union Minister of **Science and Technology**, and Minister of **Education**.
 - **Executive Council:** Chaired by the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India.



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4.2.2. NATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL RANKING FRAMEWORK (NIRF) 2024

Why in the News?

Ministry of Education released the **India Rankings 2024** (9th edition) which implements the **National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)**.

About NIRF

- Launched in 2015 by the **Ministry of Education**,
- Objective: Outlines a methodology to **rank educational institutions** across the country based on parameters.
- Five parameters: Teaching, Learning and Resources; Research and Professional Practices; Graduation Outcomes; Outreach and Inclusivity; and Perception.
 - Integration of “**Innovation**” ranking into the India Rankings using NIRF framework.
- Implementing Agency: **National Board of Accreditation (NBA)** in collaboration with the **INFLIBNET Centre in Gandhinagar**.
 - NBA assess qualitative competence of the programs offered by educational institution **from diploma level to post-graduate level** in engineering and technology, management, pharmacy, architecture and related disciplines.
- **2024 Rankings**
 - New additional Categories for ranking: Open Universities, State Public Universities and Skill Universities.
 - IIT Madras topped in the **Overall category** for the 6th consecutive time.
 - IISc Bangalore topped in the **Universities category** for the 9th consecutive time.

Other Global Rankings

World University Rankings 2025

- Published by **Times Higher Education (THE)**, 2025 rankings include **2,092 ranked universities from 115 countries** and territories.
- It includes **18 indicators to assess** institutions across **five key areas: teaching, research environment, research quality, industry engagement and international outlook**.
- **Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore** is the **top ranked Indian University** ranked **251-300th**.
- **4 Indian Universities** are placed in the bracket of **401-500**.

QS World University Rankings, 2025

- Released by **Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)**.
- It is based on **9 Performance indicators**.
- **Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT-B)** is the top-most ranked Indian Institution at **118**.

University Impact Rankings 2024

- Published by **THE**, it identifies universities that excel across multiple **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
- **Top-ranked Indian University: Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham (Rank: 81st)**.
- **India is the most-represented country** in the overall table, with **96 institutions**.

4.3. FOREIGN UNIVERSITY CAMPUS IN INDIA

Why in the News?

The Union Government issued a Letter of Intent (LoI) to the **University of Southampton**, United Kingdom, to establish their campus in Gurugram, India.

More on the news

- It will be the first international university to set up a campus in India under **UGC (Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India) Regulations, 2023.**

About UGC (Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India) Regulations, 2023

- Aim:** To facilitate the entry of higher-ranked Foreign Universities, as envisaged in National Education Policy 2020 to provide an international dimension to Higher Education.
- Criteria to set up Foreign University campus:** FEHIs ranked in global top 500, either overall or in relevant subject areas or should possess outstanding expertise in a particular area.
 - Two or more than two FHEIs can collaborate to set up campuses** in India, provided each Foreign Higher Educational Institution meets the eligibility criteria individually.
 - Approval:** UGC shall initially grant **in-principal approval and issue a LoI** to applicant FEHI. They are expected to **set up campuses in India within 2 years from date of issue of LoI.**
 - Faculty and staff structure:** Autonomy to decide the qualifications, salary structure, and other conditions of service for appointing faculty and staff.
 - Award the Degrees/qualification:** Qualification(s) offered in the campus of the FHEI in India shall be awarded under the name and seal of the FHEI in the country of origin.
 - Mobility and credit transfers** of students from main campus of FHEI to FHEI Campus in India and vice versa, and **between an Indian Institution and FHEI Campus and vice versa are permitted.**



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Highlights of the Program

- Coverage of the entire UPSC Prelims and Mains Syllabus
- Highly experienced and qualified team of senior mentors
- Development of Advanced answer writing skills
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5. HEALTH

5.1. NATIONAL FAMILY HEALTH SURVEY-5 (NFHS) REPORT

Key highlights of Survey (All India level)		
Indicator	NFHS-5 (2019-21)	NFHS-4 (2015-16)
 Total Fertility Rates (TFR) (birth per women in reproductive age) ► TFR of 2.1 is called replacement-level fertility, essential to keep population growth in check.	 2.0	2.2
 Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR)	 67%	54%
 Antenatal care (ANC) visits by pregnant women in their first trimester	 70%	58.6%
 Unmet needs of family planning	 9%	12.9%
 Full immunization in kids aged 12-23 months	 76.4%	62%
 Sex ratio (females per 1,000 males) ► This is the first time, in any NFHS or Census, that the sex ratio is skewed in favour of women.	 1020	991
 Neonatal mortality rate ► Number of deaths among all live births during the first 28 days of life per 1000 live births.	 24.9	29.5
 Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) ► IMR is the number of infant deaths (before 1st birthday) for every 1,000 live births.	 35.2	40.7
 Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) ► It is the probability of a child born in a specific year or period dying before reaching the age of five.	 41.9	49.7
 Anaemia among women aged 15-49 years	 57%	53.1%
 Anaemia among Children aged 6-59 months	 67.1%	58.6%
 Women age 20-24 years married before age 18 years (%)	 23.3%	26.8%
 Men age 25-29 years married before age 21 years (%)	 17.7%	20.3%
 Institutional births	 88.6%	78.9%
 Children under 5 years who are stunted (height-for-age)	 35.5%	38.4%
 Children under 5 years who are wasted (weight-for-height)	 19.3%	21%
 Children under 5 years who are underweight (weight-for-age)	 32.1%	35.8%

5.2. NATIONAL HEALTH ACCOUNTS ESTIMATES

Why in the News?

Recently, Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) released the National Health Account (NHA) estimates for the fiscal years 2020-21 and 2021-22.

About National Health Accounts Estimates

- Released by MoHFW since 2013-14, envisaged in National Health Policy, 2002.
- Prepared by: National Health Accounts Technical Secretariat (NHATS) with guidance and support from NHA Steering Committee and NHA Expert Group for India.
- Offers a detailed description of the financial flows within India's health system, illustrating how funds are collected from various sources, how they are spent across the healthcare sector, and how healthcare services are utilized.
- Derived within the framework of National Health Accounts Guidelines for India, 2016 and prepared by using System of Health Accounts, 2011.

System of Health Accounts (SHA) 2011

- It is a global standard framework for producing health accounts and facilitates comparison of estimates across countries.
- It provides a standard for classifying health expenditures according to the three axes of consumption, provision and financing.
- It is a result of a joint cooperation among Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), World Health Organization (WHO), and Eurostat.

Key findings of NHA Estimates for India

Health Indicator	Trend in 2021-22 (since 2017-18)
Total Health Expenditure (THE) as percent of GDP and Per Capita <ul style="list-style-type: none">• THE constitutes current and capital expenditures incurred by Government and Private Sources.	THE as percent of GDP increased to 3.83% from 3.31%. THE per capita increased to Rs. 6,602 from Rs. 4,297
Government Health Expenditure (GHE) as percent of THE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• GHE constitutes spending under all schemes funded and managed by Union, State and local Governments including funds channeled through Government Organisations.	Increased to 48% from 40.8%
Current Health Expenditures (CHE) as percent of THE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CHE constitutes only recurrent expenditures for healthcare purposes net all capital expenditures.• CHE as percent of THE indicate operational expenditures on healthcare in the year.	Decreased to 87.3% from 88.5%
Out-of-Pocket Expenditures on Healthcare (OOPE) as percent of THE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• OOPE are expenditures directly made by households at the point of receiving healthcare.	Decreased to 39.4% from 48.8%
Social Security Expenditure (SSE) on health as percent of THE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SSE includes government-funded health insurance schemes (PMJAY, RSBY etc.), social health insurance	Decreased to 8.7% from 9.0%

<p>programs, and medical reimbursements to government employees for healthcare purposes.</p>	
<p>Private Health Insurance Expenditures (PHIE) as percent of THE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PHIE constitute spending through health insurance companies.	Increased to 7.4% from 5.8%
<p>External/Donor Funding for health as percent of THE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It constitutes all funding available to the country by assistance from donors.	Increased to 1.1% from 0.5%

5.3. EUTHANASIA

Why in the News?

Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare released **draft guidelines** for withdrawal of life support in terminally ill-patients, i.e. **Passive Euthanasia**.

More on the News

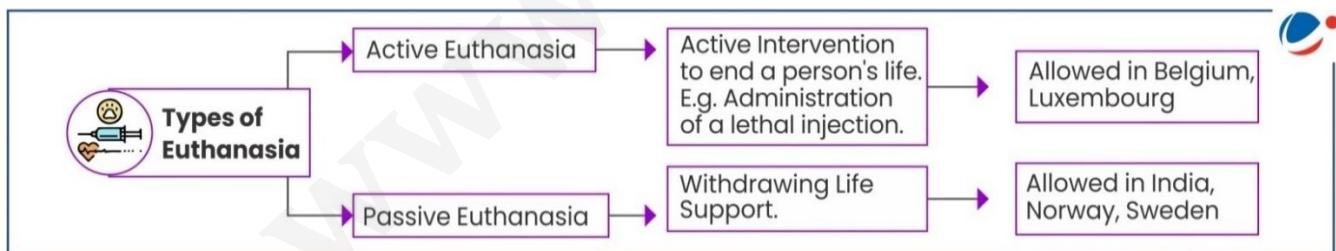
- Recently, **Karnataka became the second state** (after Kerala) to **allow terminally ill patients to die with dignity**, in line with the Supreme Court directives.

Key Highlights of Guidelines

- **Definition of Terminal illness** and delineation of **conditions for withdrawing Life Sustaining Treatments (LST)**.
- Compliance with procedure prescribed by Supreme Court in **Common Cause vs. Union of India & Anr. Case**.
- **Constitution of Primary Medical Board (PMB) and Secondary Medical Board (SMB)**, both comprising at least 3 members.
 - Foregoing of LST proposals should be made by consensus by members of PMB. SMB must validate PMB decision.
- **Clinical Ethics Committee** of multi-professional members constituted by hospitals for audit, oversight, and conflict resolution.

About Euthanasia

- Also called mercy killing, it is the practice of **ending the life of a patient to limit the patient's suffering**.
- It can be administered only by a physician.



Important Judicial Pronouncement related to Euthanasia

- **Aruna Ramachandra Shanbaug vs UoI (2011) case**: Supreme Court (SC) for the first time recognised the legality of passive euthanasia.
- **Common Cause vs. Union of India & Anr. (2018) case**: SC recognised right to die with dignity as a fundamental right under Article 21 and upheld legal validity of passive euthanasia.

- In 2023, SC modified the **guidelines for living will** and **withholding/ withdrawing life-sustaining treatment**.
 - **Living will** (Advance Medical Directive) refers to a written document that a person uses to give his explicit instructions in advance about medical treatment to be administered, if he becomes incompetent or is unable to communicate.

2023 SC Guidelines on Living will

- It should have **characteristics of an informed consent** given without any undue influence or constraint.
- **Attestation by a notary or gazetted officer would be sufficient** for a person to make a valid living will.
- **More than one guardian or close relative can be named** in document.
- Patient may choose to **incorporate their Advance Directive as a part of digital health records**, if any.
- **PMB** (consisting of one treating physician) and **SMB** (consist of one registered medical practitioner nominated by Chief Medical Officer of District) will be constituted.
- **In cases where there is No Advance Directive**, PMB shall discuss with family physician, if any, and patient's next of kin/next friend/guardian.
- **Upon their written consent**, PMB may certify the course of action to be taken preferably within 48 hours of the case being referred to it.

5.4. AMENDMENTS TO INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS (IHR), 2005

Why in the News?

The 77th annual **World Health Assembly (WHA)** meeting recently concluded with an agreement on a crucial set of amendments to the **IHR, 2005**.

About IHR

- Successor of the **International Sanitary Regulations (1951)**.
- **Aim:** An overarching **legally binding framework** that defines countries' **rights** and **obligations** in handling public health events and emergencies that have the potential to cross borders.
- **Members:** Comprises all 194 WHO Member States (**including India**) plus **Liechtenstein** and **the Holy See**.
- **Need of Amendments:** Experience of epidemics and pandemics, from Ebola to COVID-19, highlighted the need of better public health surveillance, response and preparedness mechanisms around the world

About World Health Assembly (WHA)

- The decision-making body of the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**.
- **Functions:** To determine the **policies of the Organization**, appoint the Director-General, supervise financial policies, and review and approve the proposed programme budget.

Key Amendments

- **Defining the Pandemic emergency** as a **communicable disease** that has a "wide geographical spread" or a high risk of one, and has exceeded or can exceed the ability of national health systems to respond.
- Establishing a **Coordinating Financial Mechanism** to address the needs and priorities of developing countries.
- Establish a **States Parties Committee** for effective IHR implementation.
- Create **National IHR Authorities** to improve coordination among countries.

6. NUTRITION AND SANITATION

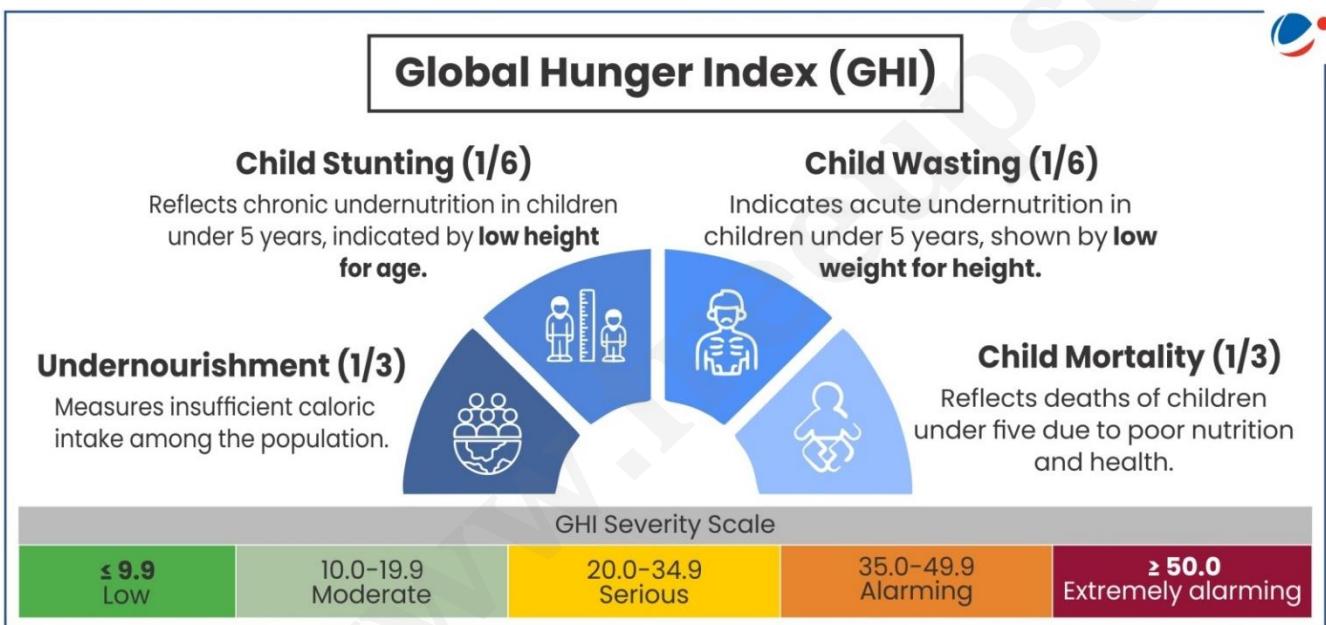
6.1. GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX

Why in the News?

Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2024 has been released by **Concern Worldwide** and **Welthungerhilfe**, Non-Government Organizations from Ireland and Germany respectively.

Key findings of the GHI

- **Global Findings:**
 - Hunger levels in **42 countries** are at alarming levels, making **goal of Zero Hunger by 2030 unattainable**.
 - > World's GHI score is **18.3**, which is considered **moderate** in the severity of **hunger scale**.
 - Highlights link between **gender inequality, climate change, and hunger**.
 - > Women and girls are typically hardest hit by **food insecurity and malnutrition**, effects of **weather extremes and climate emergencies**.
- **India Related findings:**
 - Ranked **105th out of 127th countries** (up from **111th in 2023**), falling under "**serious**" category.
 - > **13.7%** of India's population suffers from **undernourishment**.
 - **GHI score is 27.3**, has fallen since 2000, however, **child wasting and stunting** remain very high.
 - > For children under the age of five, **>18.7%** experience **child wasting** and **>35.5%** are **stunted**.
 - **Maternal health and nutrition:** Maternal malnutrition perpetuates **child under nutrition** in India, creating an **intergenerational cycle** of poor nutritional status.



Initiatives taken for Tackling Hunger in India

- **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)** to provide food grains free of costs to 80 crore poor.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojna**: Registered women were provided **Rs 5000/-** on the **birth of first child** for wage support and nutritious food.
- **Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0**: Provision of Supplementary Nutrition to bridge gap between Recommended Dietary Allowance and Average Daily Intake.
- **National Food Security Act (NFS), 2013**: Recognizes the right to food as a statutory right.
- **POSHAN Abhiyan (National Nutrition Mission), Eat Right Movement**

Initiatives taken for Tackling Global Hunger

- **World Food Programme:** Food assistance branch of **United Nations**, established in **1961**. Its mission is to combat hunger worldwide by providing food aid, promoting food security, and enhancing nutrition.
- Role of **UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**, **SDG 2 (Zero hunger)** etc.
- **Rome Declaration on Nutrition:** Declaration commits countries to **eradicate hunger and prevent all forms of malnutrition worldwide** – particularly undernutrition in children, anaemia in women and children, among other micronutrient deficiencies.
- **Zero Hunger Challenge:** An initiative by the **UN Secretary-General** that invites countries to work towards a future where everyone has **access to adequate nutrition**.

Related News: Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty

- **Genesis:** The Alliance was launched at the **G20 Leaders' Summit 2024 in Brazil**.
- **Aim:** To support and accelerate efforts to **eradicate hunger and poverty (Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 and 2), while reducing inequalities (SDG 10)**.
- Through its **Policy Basket (various policy instruments)**, it acts as a neutral facilitator in building **partnerships** and **mobilizing financial and knowledge resources** to implement these policy instruments.
- The Alliance calls to action in **three Pillars — National, Financial, and Knowledge**.
- **Members:** **91 countries (India is a member)**, 25 International Organizations etc.

6.2. OTHER IMPORTANT NEWS

6.2.1. STATE OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report, 2024 was released by **five specialized agencies of the UN - FAO, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), UNICEF, World Food Programme, and WHO**.

About State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report, 2024

- The **theme** of the report focuses on the **financing to end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms**.
- The report puts forward a new definition of financing for food security and nutrition:
 - Refers to the **public and private financial resources, both domestic and foreign**, directed towards eradicating hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition.
 - It aims at **availability, access, utilization and stability of nutritious and safe foods**, along with **strengthening the resilience of agrifood systems**.

Status of Food Security and Nutrition

- The world is far off track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, Zero Hunger.
- **1 in 11 people faced hunger globally in 2023**.

6.2.2. THE GLOBAL NETWORK AGAINST FOOD CRISES (GNAFC)

The GNAFC launched the **Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC)** which is produced **annually** by the **Food Security Information Network (FSIN)**.

About GNAFC

- It was launched in **2016** by the **European Union**, the **UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** and the **World Food Programme (WFP)** at the World Humanitarian Summit.
- It seeks to better **link, integrate and guide** existing **initiatives, partnerships, programmes and policy processes** to address the root causes of food crises.

- It brings together **governments, international organisations, and NGOs** to improve humanitarian responses and reduce the number of people facing acute food insecurity.

6.2.3. FOOD WASTE INDEX REPORT 2024

UN Environment Programme (UNEP) with **WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme)** launched the Food Waste Index (FWI) Report 2024.

About Food Waste Index Report 2024

- FWI tracks **global and national generation of food and inedible parts wasted at retail and consumer (household and food service) levels**.
- It supports the **goals of two indicators of SDG 12.3** which is to be achieved by 2030 i.e.
 - **SDG 12.3.1 (a), Food Loss Index (FLI)**, reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses. **Food and Agriculture Organization is custodian** of FLI.
 - **SDG 12.3.1 (b), FWI**, halve per-capita global food waste at retail and consumer levels. **UNEP is custodian of FWI**.
- **Key findings**
 - Households across all continents **wasted over 1 billion meals a day in 2022**.
 - Food Waste **generates an estimated 8–10% of global greenhouse gas emissions**.

6.2.4. NATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARDS (NQAS) ASSESSMENT

Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched virtual **NQAS Assessment** and **Spot food license initiative** to promote “Healthcare for All.”

About Initiatives

- **NQAS Assessment:** It has been launched for **Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (AAM)** and **Integrated Public Health Laboratories (IPHL)**.
 - It is launched in compliance with **Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS)**.
 - > **IPHS** is digital platform for **real-time monitoring of public health facilities** that provides a comprehensive overview of the assessment and compliance status of public health facilities
- **Spot Food License Initiative:** It is for the instant issuance of licenses and registrations through pan-India IT platform the **Food Safety and Compliance System (FoSCoS)**.
 - It aims to simplify the licensing and registration processes.

6.2.5. GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR IMPROVED NUTRITION (GAIN)

GAIN, launched a report titled ‘**The Case for Investment in Nutritious Foods Value Chains: An Opportunity for Gender Impact**’ promoting **nutrition investments** in the **agri-food sector** which can reduce **gender inequalities**, increase productivity and enhance business resilience.

About GAIN

- It is a **Swiss-based Non-Governmental Organization** launched at the **United Nations** in **2002** to tackle the human suffering caused by **malnutrition**.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland (Office in India).
- It supports **public-private partnerships** to increase **access to the missing nutrients in diets**.

7. ORGANIZATIONS IN NEWS

7.1. UN WOMEN

HQ: New York, USA

UN Women



Genesis: Created by UN General Assembly in **2010** as a UN entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.



Purpose: Focused on 4 strategic priorities:

- » Women **lead, participate** in and **benefit equally from governance** systems.
- » Women have **income security, decent work and economic autonomy**.
- » All women and girls live a life **free from all forms of violence**.
- » Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in **building sustainable peace and resilience**, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action.



7.2. UN INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY FUND (UNICEF)

HQ: New York, USA



Genesis: Created in **1946** by **UN General Assembly**.



About: UNICEF runs the world's largest humanitarian warehouse and is **the world's largest provider of vaccines**.



Mandate: Advocate for children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

- » It works in over **190 countries** and territories to protect the rights of every child.



Role:

- » Supporting the **Convention on the Rights of Child (1989)**, a global human rights treaty for children.
- » Provide and advocate for **education, health and nutrition services**.
- » **Protect** children from **violence and abuse**.
- » Keep them safe from **climate change and disease**.



Funding: Entirely funded by voluntary contributions from governments, intergovernmental organizations, private sector etc.



Publication: State of World's Children, Child Nutrition Report.



In 1965, UNICEF was awarded the **Nobel Prize for Peace**.

7.3. UNITED NATION POPULATION FUND (UNFPA)

HQ: Rome, Italy.



United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA)



Genesis: Created in **1969** as a subsidiary organ of the UN.



About: UNFPA (erstwhile **United Nations Fund for Population Activities**) is the **United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency**.



Goal: Ending the unmet need for **family planning, preventable maternal death, gender-based violence, harmful practices including child marriage and female genital mutilation by 2030**.

UNFPA aims to achieve three transformative results that promise to change the world for every woman, man, and young person by 2030:

ZERO

preventable maternal deaths

ZERO

unmet need for family planning

ZERO

gender-based violence and other harmful practices



Funding: It is entirely supported by **voluntary contributions** of donor governments, intergovernmental organizations and the private sector.



Features: It receives **policy guidance** from the **UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**.



Publication: State of World Population Report.

7.4. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (ICPD)

International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)



Genesis: 179 governments adopted the **ICPD Programme of Action (PoA)** in Cairo in 1994.



About: ICPD sets the **standard for people-centred development**, guiding national policies and programmes.



Purpose: It provided recognition that **reproductive health and rights**, as well as **women's empowerment and gender equality**, are cornerstones of **population and development programmes**.



Key Features: The **UNFPA** is guided by the PoA adopted at ICPD, Cairo and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

7.5. FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO)

HQ: Rome, Italy



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)



Genesis: FAO is a **specialized agency of UN to defeat hunger**, established in **1945**.



Membership: 195 Members – 194 Countries (including **India**) and European Union (EU).



Mandate: To improve **nutrition**, increase **agricultural productivity**, raise the **standard of living** in rural populations and contribute to global economic growth.



Key Initiatives:

- **FAO Food Price Index (FFPI):** Introduced in **1996**, it is a measure of **monthly change** in international prices of **a basket of food commodities** consisting of 5 commodities.
- **Global Family Farming Forum (GFFF):** Launched at **FAO's World Food Forum 2024**, marking the halfway completion of the **United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019–28 (UNDFF)**.
- **Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative:** Supports nations to **accelerate agrifood systems** transformations.
- **Green Cities Initiative:** To improve the overall **resilience of 1000 cities globally by 2030**.
- **Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS):** To identify and safeguard GIAHS and their associated landscapes, agricultural biodiversity and knowledge systems.
- **GIAHS sites in India:** Traditional Agriculture System, **Koraput**; Saffron Heritage of **Kashmir**; **Kuttanad** below sea level farming system.
- **Others:** **WASAG – The Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture**, **Global Soil Partnership**, **Global Action on Green Development of Special Agricultural Products** etc.



Important Reports:

- The Impact of Disasters on Agriculture and Food Security;
- State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) Report 2023;
- State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2024.

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2025	ENGLISH MEDIUM	9 FEBRUARY	हिन्दी माध्यम	9 फरवरी
2026	ENGLISH MEDIUM	2 FEBRUARY	हिन्दी माध्यम	2 फरवरी



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7.6. WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP)

HQ: Rome, Italy



World Food Programme (WFP)



Genesis: It is established in 1961 as a joint organ of FAO and the United Nations.



Membership: It is the largest humanitarian agency saving lives in emergencies and using assistance to help communities become self-sufficient and resilient to shocks.

» **Presence in over 120 countries** and territories, including India, to bring life-saving food to people displaced by conflict and made destitute by disasters.



Funding: It is entirely funded through voluntary contributions of donor governments, institutions, corporations and individuals.



WFP was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020.



Reports by WFP: Global Report on Food Crisis.



WFP in India

» Functioning in India since 1963.

» **Transforming Targeted Public Distribution System:** Piloting innovative solutions such as 'Annapurni'.

» **Fortification of government distributed food:** Pioneering multi-micronutrient fortification of school meals under Mid-Day Meal program.

» **Food insecurity mapping and monitoring:** Supporting government's Poverty and Human Development Monitoring Agency in establishing State-level Food Security Analysis Units.

7.7. INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE (IFPRI)

HQ: Washington DC, USA



International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)



Genesis: Established in 1975, it is a research center of the Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers (CGIAR).



About: IFPRI provides research-based policy solutions to sustainably reduce poverty and end hunger and malnutrition in developing countries.



Aim: To achieve progress in CGIAR's five impact areas:

- » nutrition, health, and food security;
- » poverty reduction, livelihoods, and jobs;
- » environmental health and biodiversity;
- » gender equality, youth, and social inclusion; and
- » climate adaptation and mitigation.

7.8. UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (UNHRC)

HQ: Geneva, Switzerland



UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC)



Genesis: Established in **2006** by the General Assembly. UNHRC replaced the **United Nations Commission on Human Rights**.



About: It is the main **intergovernmental body** within the **United Nations** for strengthening the promotion and protection of **human rights**.



Members: 47 Member States (**India is a member**).



Mandate: Review the human rights records of all UN Member States via the **Universal Periodic Review**, authorize commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions on **war crimes and crimes against humanity etc.**

7.9. OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR)

HQ: Geneva, Switzerland



The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)



Genesis: The **UN General Assembly** established **OHCHR in 1993** through its **resolution 48/141**.

→ It was recommended at the **Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights**.



About: Also known as **United Nations Human Rights**, OHCHR is part of the **UN Secretariat**, and is the **lead UN office for human rights**.

→ It represents the **world's commitment** to the promotion and protection of the full range of **human rights and freedoms** set out in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**.



Mandate: To promote and protect the enjoyment and full realization, by all people, of all human rights.



Role: Promote and protect all human rights; Help **empower** people through **research, education, and advocacy** activities; Inject a **human rights perspective** into **all UN programmes and Assist Governments**.

7.10. GLOBAL ALLIANCE OF NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS (GANHRI)

HQ: Geneva, Switzerland



Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)



Genesis: It was established as the **International Coordinating Committee** of institutions **for the promotion and protection of human rights** in 1993.

- » It was renamed as GANHRI in 2016.



About: GANHRI is an **independent, non-profit organization** comprised of **National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)** from around the world.



Members: 120 members (**India is a member (NHRC)**)

Functions:

- » It **accredits NHRIs with a 'A status' (full compliance) or 'B status' (partial compliance)** based on their adherence in meeting the requirements of the **Paris Principles**.



- **Paris Principles** set out internationally **agreed minimum standards** that NHRIs must meet to be considered **credible** and **independent**.
- » GANHRI works closely with various **UN agencies**, including the **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**, the **UN Development Program (UNDP)**, and the **UN Global Compact**.

7.11. HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE (HRC) UNDER ICCPR

Human Rights Committee (HRC)



Genesis: The HRC, comprising **18 independent experts**, monitors implementation of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

- » ICCPR is a **multilateral treaty** adopted by the **UN General Assembly in 1966** (in force from **1976**).

- » It Deals with freedom of movement; equality before the law; the right to a fair trial; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of opinion and expression; peaceful assembly; etc.

- » **State Parties:** 174 (**India became a State Party to the ICCPR in 1979**)

- » **Features:** Part of the **International Bill of Human Rights** along with **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948** and the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966**.



About: HRC is a **human rights treaty body** of United Nations.



Functions:

- » To maintain in place those **laws, policies and practices** that enhance the enjoyment of **civil and political rights**.

- » The Committee shall **submit to the General Assembly of the United Nations**, through the **Economic and Social Council**, an annual **report** on its activities.

7.12. UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)

HQ: Geneva, Switzerland



United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)



Genesis: Formally known as **Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees**, UNHCR was established by the **United Nations General Assembly** in **1950** in aftermath of the World War - II.



About: It is a **global organization** that leads international action to **protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people**.



Mandate: The **1951 Refugee Convention** and its **1967 Protocol** are the key legal documents that form the **basis of UNHCR's work**.

› They **define the term 'refugee'** and outline their **rights** and the **international standards** of treatment for their protection.



Received **Noble Peace prize in 1954 and 1981**.

7.13. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)

HQ: Geneva, Switzerland.



International Organization for Migration (IOM)



Genesis: It is the **leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration** established in **1951**, part of the **UN System**.



Purpose: Saving lives and protecting people on the move, driving solutions to displacement and facilitating pathways for regular migration.



Members: 175 member states. (**India** is a member)

Initiatives:

› **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration:** It was set up in **2018** by the UNGA in line with the **New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants**.

› It is the **first intergovernmental agreement (non-binding)** covering all dimensions of international migration.

› **IOM Strategic Plan 2024–28:** It is aimed at delivering on the promise of **safe, orderly, and regular migration** while supporting the world's most vulnerable. **It sets goals like:**

› **Saving lives and protecting people on the move**, a core function of IOM's broad and global humanitarian work

› **Driving solutions to displacement**, and

› **Facilitating pathways for regular migration**, which will help migration become safer and more orderly.

› **Global Appeal 2025:** It is a **\$10 billion appeal** made by the **UNHCR** to implement sustainable solutions for millions of **refugees and displaced persons**.



7.14. UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (UNESCAP)

HQ: Bangkok, Thailand.



About UNESCAP



Genesis: Established in **1947** as **Economic Commission for Asia and Far East (ECAFE)** and in **1976**, it became **ESCAP**.



About: It is the **intergovernmental platform** supporting inclusive, resilient and **sustainable development** in the **Asia-Pacific region** by generating action-oriented knowledge, technical assistance and capacity-building.

» **UNESCAP is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations.**



Function: It provides **a forum for all governments of region to review and discuss economic and social issues** and to strengthen regional cooperation.



Members: 53 members and 9 associate members (**India** is a member).



Publications: Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2024

8. MISCELLANEOUS

8.1. LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIPS

Why in the News?

Recently enacted Uttarakhand's Uniform Civil Code mandates the registration of live-in relationships within 30 days of entering into relationship.

Live in Relationships in India

- In India, **live-in relationships are not explicitly governed by law or custom.**
- However, through judicial decisions, the **Supreme Court has expanded the recognition of live-in partnerships** and established guidelines for handling such relationships.
- **Supreme Court Judgements related to Live-In Relationships**
 - **Badri Prasad v. Dy. Director of Consolidation (1978):** Observed live-in relationships as legal if they meet the requirements of marriage, such as legal age, consent, and mental capacity.
 - **Lalita Toppo vs The State of Jharkhand (2018):** Ruled under the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act, 2005 the live-in-partner would be entitled to more relief than what is contemplated under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.
 - **Bharatha Matha vs R Vijay Renganathan & Ors (2010):** Held that the children born through live-in relations will be considered legitimate children and will be allowed share in the ancestral undivided property.
 - **Indra Sarma v. VKV Sarma (2013):** Affirmed that a mutual live-in relationship is not illegal if both partners are unmarried, and does not constitute an offense.

8.2. DRAFT NATIONAL SPORTS POLICY (NSP), 2024

Why in the News?

Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports released the draft National Sports Policy (NSP) 2024, building upon previous initiatives such as the **NSP 2001, Khelo India Scheme, and Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)**.

Key Features of the Policy

- **Need:** Existing NSP was formulated more than two decades ago.
 - Formulating a new comprehensive NSP that encompasses the latest developments in the field of Sports and presents a roadmap to address the present and future challenges is imperative.
- **Vision:** "Sports for Nation Building – Harness the Power of Sports for Nation's Holistic Development", in line with principles of '**Viksit Bharat**'
- **5 Pillars:**
 - **Excellence on the Global Stage:** Enhanced infrastructure, talent identification, etc.
 - **Sports for Economic Development:** Leveraging sports to boost industries such as tourism, manufacturing, etc.
 - **Sports for Social Development:** Promoting Indigenous games and facilitating inclusivity, health, and education through sports.
 - **Sports – A People's Movement:** Engaging communities, establishing National Fitness Ranking & Indexing system, revamping the Physical Education Framework etc.
 - **Harmonize NSP 2024 with NEP, 2020:** Integrating sports with education.

8.2.1. DOPING IN SPORTS

Why in the news?

India recorded **highest percentage of doping offenders (3.26%)**, according to the 2022 testing figures released by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

About Doping

- It is the act of consuming banned artificial and often illegal substances to gain an advantage over others in sporting competitions.
- Doping may also include other methods like **increasing oxygen in the bloodstream** through blood transfusions.

About World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)

- **Headquarters:** Montreal, Canada
- **Genesis:** Established in **1999**, after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) convened the **First World Conference on Doping in Sport, in Lausanne, Switzerland**.
 - It resulted in the **Lausanne Declaration on Doping in Sport** which provided for the creation of an independent international anti-doping agency to be operational for the XXVII Olympiad in 2000.
- **About:** An independent international agency composed and funded equally by the Olympic Movement and Governments of the world.
- **Function:** To lead a collaborative worldwide movement for doping-free sport. The Anti-Doping Administration & Management System (ADAMS) of WADA coordinates and simplifies anti-doping activities.

Efforts to stop doping

India

- **National Anti-Doping Act, 2022:** To strengthen the framework and mechanisms for carrying out the doping control program.
 - It provided for the constitution of **National Anti-Doping Agency** as a **statutory** body.
- **National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA):** An **autonomous** body under the **Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports** to implement the anti-doping programme in India, in line with the **World Anti-doping Code 2021**.
 - It was set up as a registered society under the **Societies Registration Act of 1860** in **2005**.
- **Key Initiatives of NADA:**
 - **Program for Education and Awareness on Anti-Doping in Sports (PEADS)** for education and awareness regarding doping.
 - **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with South Asia Regional Anti-Doping Organization (SARADO)** to increase the Regional Cooperation in anti-doping in sport.
 - **Anti-Doping helpline number** for the athletes and athlete support personnel to provide information about Anti-Doping rules and guidelines.
 - **#PlayTrue Campaign conducted by NADA to commemorate WADA's Play True Day.**
- **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985**

Global

- **UNESCO International Convention against Doping in Sport:** Adopted in 2005 at Paris (France), it aims to **promote** the **prevention** of and the **fight against doping in sport**, with a view to its **elimination**.
 - It is the **only international treaty in this domain** and **harmonizes** anti-doping **legislation, regulations and rules internationally** to ensure a level playing field.
 - India has **signed and ratified** the Convention.

8.3. OTHER IMPORTANT NEWS

8.3.1. MULTILINGUALISM IN EDUCATION

In line with New Education Policy 2020, Union Ministry of Education launched Asmita Project along with two other initiatives to promote multilingualism in education.

About Three Initiatives

- **ASMITA (Augmenting Study Materials in Indian languages through Translation and Academic writing) Project:** Ensuring that students have access to **high-quality study materials** in their **native languages**.
 - Under it, 22,000 books will be produced in 22 scheduled languages in 5 years.
 - **Implementing Agencies: University Grants Commission (UGC) and Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti (BBS)**
- **Bahubhasha Shabdakosh:** A comprehensive multilingual dictionary repository.
- **Real-time Translation Architecture:** Enhancing translation with cutting edge technology.

8.3.2. PROJECT NAMAN

Why in the News?

Indian Army launched **Project NAMAN: SPARSH-centric Common Service Centres (CSCs)**, to be established across India.

About Project NAMAN

- **Aim:** It is designed to provide **dedicated support and services to Defence Pensioners, Veterans and their families** through implementation of the **SPARSH (System for Pension Administration Raksha)**.
 - **SPARSH** is a **digital pension system**, which streamlines pension related processes for Defence Pensioners, addressing the need for **accessible facilitation points** for Veterans and Next of Kin (NOK) across the country.

- Each CSC is **managed by a Village Level Entrepreneur (VLE)**, selected from among the **veterans or NOKs** by the respective Local Military Authorities (LMAs).

8.3.3. SARTHIE 1.0 INITIATIVE

The **Department of Social Justice and Empowerment (DoSJE)** and **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)** launched **SARTHIE 1.0**.

- **Aim:** Empower disadvantaged communities (like Scheduled Castes, Transgenders, Denotified and Nomadic Tribes, etc.) through **awareness generation, legal support** promoting effective access to welfare schemes.
 - Offers synergy between **executive and judiciary** to further **social justice**.

8.3.4. NATIONAL MEDICAL REGISTER (NMR) PORTAL

Union Health Minister launches **National Medical Register (NMR) Portal** as a comprehensive database for all allopathic (MBBS) registered doctors in India.

About NMR

- It is mandated under Section 31 of the **National Medical Commission (NMC) Act, 2019**.
 - It requires the **Ethics & Medical Registration Board (EMRB) of NMC** to keep an electronic National Register of licensed medical practitioners' names, addresses, and qualifications.
- To be **linked with the Aadhaar ID of the doctors** to ensure the individual's authenticity.
- It aids in interlinking of **State Medical Councils (SMCs)** involved in verification of registrations.

About NMC

- It is a **statutory** body that came into force in **2020** replacing the **Medical Council of India**.
- **Aim:** Improve **access to quality and affordable medical education, ensure availability of adequate and high-quality medical professionals, objectively assess medical institutions** periodically in a transparent manner; etc.
- **Functions of NMC**
 - **Policy formulation and regulation** of medical education, medical institutions, medical researches and medical professionals.
 - Frame guidelines for **fee determination for 50% seats in Private** medical institutions and deemed to be universities.
 - **Assess requirements of healthcare** and develop a roadmap for meeting requirements.

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