

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**2019 “State of the Education Report for India: Children with Disabilities”**

The 2019 “State of the Education Report for India: Children with Disabilities” has been released by the UNESCO.

Key highlights of the report:

- There are 78,64,636 children with disability in India constituting 1.7% of the total child population.
- Three-fourths of the children with disabilities at the age of five years and one-fourth between 5-19 years do not go to any educational institution.
- The number of children enrolled in school drops significantly with each successive level of schooling.
- There are fewer girls with disabilities in schools than boys with disabilities in schools.
- A large number of children with disabilities do not go to regular schools but are enrolled at the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS).
- The percentage of children attending schools is the lowest among those with multiple disabilities, mental illnesses and mental retardation.

Challenges ahead:

- Significant gaps remain, even though successive government schemes and programs have brought large numbers of children with disabilities into schools.
- Only 61 percent of CWDs aged between 5 and 19 were attending an educational institution compared to the overall figure of 71 percent when all children are considered.
- Around 12 percent of CWDs dropped out of school, which is comparable with the overall percentage of dropouts among all children. 27 percent of CWDs never attended any educational institution, as opposed to the overall figure of 17 percent when the entire child population is taken into account.
- A review of enrolment figures at NIOS shows a decline for most categories of disabilities between 2009 and 2015.

Recommendations to improve the state of education for CWDs:

- Amend the RTE Act to better align with the RPWD Act by including specific concerns of education of such children.
- Establish a coordinating mechanism under HRD Ministry for effective convergence of all education programmes of children with disabilities.
- Ensure specific and adequate financial allocation in education budgets to meet the learning needs of children with disabilities.
- Strengthening data systems to make them robust and reliable and useful for planning.
- Massively expand the use of information technology for the education of children with disabilities.
- Give a chance to every child and leave no child with disability behind.
- Transform teaching practices to aid the inclusion of diverse learners.
- Overcome stereotypes and build positive dispositions towards children with disabilities, both in the classroom and beyond.

National Grid

The FM has promised a blueprint this year for developing “water grids” on the line of power grids in the country to push the government’s ‘One Nation, One Grid’ concept.

National Grid: It is the high-voltage electric power transmission network in mainland India, connecting power stations and major substations and ensuring that electricity generated anywhere in mainland India can be used to satisfy demand elsewhere.

Benefits of a National Grid:

- Better availability resulting in lesser power cuts.
- More stability in power.

Gandhipedia ‘to sensitize society’

A “Gandhipedia” is being developed in order to sensitize society, particularly the youth, about Gandhian values, Finance Minister informed in her Budget 2019-2010 speech.

What is Gandhipedia?

- With the government marking the 150th birth anniversary of Gandhi with several programmes throughout the year, an encyclopedia-like “Gandhipedia” would be among the efforts to spread his values.
- The National Council for Science Museums (NCSM), based in Kolkata, is developing a Gandhipedia “to sensitize” youth and society “at large” about positive Gandhian values.
- This comes about 10 months after President launched a web portal <http://gandhi.gov.in/> to provide people with free access to an online repository of Gandhian literature, philosophy, audios, videos and rare photographs of the Father of nation
- The Minister, however, did not share more details on ‘Gandhipedia’ project of the NCSM, which functions under the Union Culture Ministry.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.

Central welfare database of citizens

Economic Survey moots central welfare database of citizens.

About the Proposed Central Welfare Database of citizens:

- It will be created by merging different data maintained by separate Ministries and departments — which can be tapped for enhancing ease of living for citizens, particularly the poor.
- Governments can create data as a public good within the legal framework of data privacy. Care must also be taken not to impose the “elite’s preference of privacy on the poor, who care for a better quality of living the most.”
- Private sector may be granted access to select database for a fee.
- The datasets talked about include administrative data such as birth and death records, pensions, tax records, marriage records; survey data such as census data, national sample survey data; transactions data such as e-national agriculture market data, UPI data, institutional data and public hospital data on patients.

Significance:

- The governments already has a rich repository of administrative, survey, institutional and transactions data about citizens, but these data were scattered across numerous government bodies. Merging these distinct datasets would generate multiple benefits with the applications being limitless.
- The government could utilise the information embedded in these distinct datasets to enhance ease of living for citizens, enable truly evidence-based policy, improve targeting in welfare schemes, uncover unmet needs, integrate fragmented markets, bring greater accountability in public services and generate greater citizen participation in governance, etc.

INDIAN ECONOMY

Govt is considering enhancing RBI powers

The government is actively considering a proposal from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) seeking more powers to improve its regulatory and supervisory mechanism for Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs).

Why is this being proposed?

- Recent defaults and delays in loan repayments by a section of NBFCs have shaken the confidence in the financial markets, leading to fears that potential solvency risks at certain companies can be contagious.
- Liquidity for NBFCs with default ratings has completely dried up, creating broader challenges for policymakers.

What changes are being sought by RBI?

- In the light of recent developments, there is a case for having a fresh look at their regulation and supervision. Need of the hour is to have an optimal level of regulation and supervision so that the NBFC sector is financially resilient and robust.

Need: More powers will enable RBI to close regulatory gaps between banks (which are tightly regulated) and NBFCs. The RBI has already reduced the periodicity of the NBFC supervision to 12 months from 18 months earlier.

What is the scale of the challenge?

- NBFCs were the largest net borrowers of funds from the financial system with gross payables of around Rs 8.44 lakh crore and gross receivables of around Rs 7.23 lakh crore as on end-March 2019.
- These companies depend largely on public funds such as bank borrowings, debentures and commercial papers, which account for 70 per cent of the total liabilities of the sector.
- When banks and mutual funds stop fresh loans to NBFCs facing default possibility, it can potentially lead to contagion in the financial markets.

New Code on Wages Bill

The Union Cabinet has cleared the new version of Code on Wages Bill, which seeks to define the norms for fixing minimum wages. It will be applicable to workers of organised and unorganised sectors, except government employees and MNREGA workers. It will amalgamate the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965, and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.

New determining factors of wages

- As per the Bill, minimum wages will be linked only to factors such as skills and geographical regions.
- At present, minimum wages are fixed on the basis of categories such as skilled, unskilled, semi-skilled, high skilled, geographical regions, and nature of work such as mining.
- These are applicable for 45 scheduled employments in the central sphere and 1709 scheduled employments in states.
- This is expected to effectively reduce the number of minimum wage rates across the country to 300 from about 2,500 minimum wage rates at present.

Floor Wage

- A National Floor Level Minimum Wage will be set by the Centre to be revised every five years, while states will fix minimum wages for their regions, which cannot be lower than the floor wage.
- The current floor wage, which was fixed in 2017, is at Rs 176 a day, but some states have minimum wages lower than it such as Andhra Pradesh (Rs 69) and Telengana (Rs 69).

Importance

- An effective minimum wage policy is a potential tool not only for the protection of low paid workers but is also an inclusive mechanism for more resilient and sustainable economic development.
- A simple, coherent and enforceable Minimum Wage System should be designed with the aid of technology as minimum wages push wages up and reduce wage inequality without significantly affecting employment.

Committee on Core Investment Companies (CICs)

The Reserve Bank has constituted a working group that will review the regulatory and supervisory framework for core investment companies. The six-member working group is to be headed by Tapan Ray, non-executive chairman, Central Bank of India and former secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs. The terms of reference of the working group include examination of the current regulatory framework for CICs in terms of adequacy, efficacy and effectiveness of every component thereof and suggest changes therein.

Background: In August 2010, RBI had introduced a separate framework for the regulation of systemically important core investment companies (CICs), recognising the difference in the business model of a holding company relative to other non-banking financial companies.

Core Investment Companies (CICs)

- CICs are non-banking financial companies with asset size of Rs.100 crore and above which carry on the business of acquisition of shares and securities, subject to certain conditions.

- CICs, which are allowed to accept public funds, hold not less than 90% of their net assets in the form of investment in equity shares, preference shares, bonds, debentures, debt or loans in group companies.
- Investments of CIC in the equity shares (including instruments compulsorily convertible into equity shares within a period not exceeding 10 years from the date of issue) in group companies constitutes not less than 60% of its net assets as mentioned in clause.
- Exemption: CICs having asset size of below Rs 100 crore are exempted from registration and regulation from the RBI, except if they wish to make overseas investments in the financial sector.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

MOSAIC Mission

Scientists from 17 nations will take part in the year-long MOSAIC mission as they anchor the RV Polarstern ship to a large piece of Arctic sea ice to study climate change.

MOSAIC mission

- The MOSAIC mission stands for Multidisciplinary drifting Observatory for the Study of Arctic Climate.
- It is a one-year-long expedition into the Central Arctic, planned to take place from 2019 to 2020.
- For the first time a modern research icebreaker will operate in the direct vicinity of the North Pole year round, including the nearly half year long polar night during winter.
- It comes about 125 years after Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen first managed to seal his wooden expedition ship, Fram, into the ice during a three-year expedition to the North Pole.
- MOSAIC will contribute to a quantum leap in our understanding of the coupled Arctic climate system and its representation in global climate models.
- The focus of MOSAIC lies on direct in-situ observations of the climate processes that couple the atmosphere, ocean, sea ice, bio-geochemistry and ecosystem.

Why study Arctic climate?

- The Arctic is a key area of global climate change, with warming rates exceeding twice the global average.
- The observed rate of climate change in the Arctic is not well reproduced in climate models.
- Many processes in the Arctic climate system are poorly represented in climate models because they are not sufficiently understood.
- Understanding of Arctic climate processes is limited by a lack of year round observations in the central Arctic.

ODISHA DEVELOPMENT

Odisha hopes to attract more Foreign Students

The state capital Bhubaneswar, an emerging hub of education in the east, may benefit from the Centre's 'Study in India' programme, which aims to bring foreign students to Indian soil. At present, the city has students from as many as 28 countries. In the budget speech, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the objective of the 'Study in India' programme to bring foreign students to the country's higher educational institutions.

Provisions of the SIP

- The programme focuses on International students from select 30 countries across South-East Asia, Middle East and Africa for a period of two years i.e. for the academic years 2018-19 and 2019-20.
- It envisages participation of select reputed Indian institutes/universities by way of offering seats for the International students at affordable rates.
- This Programme does not offer any Scholarships, however, fee waivers to meritorious foreign students ranging from 100% to 25% are offered.
- A centralised admission web-portal (<https://studyinindia.gov.in/>) acts as a single window for the admission of foreign students.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Sometime you win, sometimes you learn.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: Why social security is necessary for differently-abled? What are the steps taken by the Govt of India for them?

Ans: India is a party to UN Convention on 'Rights of persons with disabilities'. Parties to the Convention are required to promote, protect, and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities and ensure that they enjoy full equality under the law. The Convention has served as the major catalyst in the global movement from viewing persons with disabilities as objects of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards viewing them as full and equal members of society, with human rights. Hence, Indian social security system has specific schemes for the Disabled/differently-abled. Art 41 of the Indian Constitution speaks of State's responsibility to provide social security to citizens of this country

Act/ Legal provisions for differently abled/disabled: Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 has provision of preventive social security measures such as pre-natal and post-natal care for the mother and child, mentions unemployment allowance and insurance, and supports the rights of disabled people and so on. Key features of the Act are-

- Reservation in vacancies in government establishments has been increased from 3% to 4% for certain persons or class of persons with benchmark disability.
- Every child with benchmark disability between the age group of 6 and 18 years shall have the right to free education.
- District level committees will be constituted by the State Governments to address local concerns of PwDs (persons with disabilities).
- Special Courts will be designated in each district to handle cases concerning violation of rights of PwDs.
- Broad-based Central & State Advisory Boards on Disability are to be set up to serve as apex policy-making bodies at the Central and State level.
- Office of Chief Commissioner and those of the State Commissioners of Persons with Disabilities has been strengthened.
- The Act says that any person who “intentionally insults or intimidates with intent to humiliate a person with a disability in any place within public view” is punishable with imprisonment.

Other Benefits/ Schemes for differently abled by government of India

1. Tax: Persons with disabilities and their legal guardians are eligible for income tax deduction.

2. Education:

- Provided 4% reservation in government and government aided educational institutions.
- Financial assistance is provided for procuring computer for students with visual impairment/hearing impairment for pursuing graduation and post-graduation.
- National Scholarship for students with disabilities. Criteria: 40% disability and family monthly income should not exceed 15000 rupees.
- Comprehensive Education Scheme for Disabled Children: The scheme provide for accessible and barrier free built-in-infrastructure and transport facilities, supply of books, special learning aids and scholarships for students with disabilities.
- Extra time in examinations for disabled students, exemption from third language and modification of curriculum for inclusive education.
- Inclusive Education for the Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) – This scheme supports children with disabilities aged 14 or above for completing their secondary education from class 9 to 12 in government aided schools.
- Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme: Provides scholarships to persons with disabilities to pursue higher education such as M Phil/ Ph D for five years. Cover all universities and institutions under UGC (University Grant Commission).

3. Employment:

- Government has reserved 5% posts in Group A, B, C and D positions in government PSUs, PSBs and services for persons with disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities are given age relaxation for recruitment in government positions.
- They are exempted from payment of application and examination fees.
- Persons with disabilities are given preference in postings nearest to their native places.
- Government has established special employment exchanges and special employment cells for recruitments to government posts reserved for persons with disabilities. However, they need to register themselves with these first.
- In private sector, the government provides incentives to employers for employment of persons with disabilities. For instance, the government pays the employer's contribution of the disabled employee's provident fund.
- Under the 'Scheme for Public Sector Banks for Orphanages, Women's Homes and Physically Handicapped Persons', the benefits of the differential rate of interest are available to physically disabled persons as well as institutions working for the welfare of the disabled people.

4. Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP Scheme) – The main objective of the scheme is to assist needy persons with disabilities in procuring durable sophisticated and scientifically manufactured aid and appliances that can promote their physical, social and psychological rehabilitation.

5. PM Awaas Yojana - It is a centrally sponsored housing scheme for providing dwelling units free of cost to rural poor living below the poverty line. Three percent of its funds are reserved for the benefit of disabled persons living below of the poverty line in rural areas.

6. Scheme of National Awards for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities – In order to recognise their effort and encourage others to strive to achieve excellence in this field, separate awards are being presented to the most outstanding employees with disabilities, best employers, best placement agency/officer, outstanding individuals and for outstanding technological innovation and adaptation of innovation to provide cost effective technology.

7. Trust Fund for the empowerment of persons with disabilities – An excess of Rs.723.79 crores annually from the borrowers through rounding off in collection of interest tax, should be transfer to Trust Fund which would be use for the welfare of the disabled people.

8. Technology Development Projects in Mission Mode – A scheme started during 1990-91 with a view to provide suitable and cost effective aids and appliances through application of technology and to increase employment opportunities of the disabled people.

9. Disability benefit – The 'Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923', requires the employer to pay compensation to employees or their families in case of employment related injuries that result in death or disability. But it is applicable only to organised sector.

10. Inclusive India Initiative – A conference for the persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs). It aims to include these people in the mainstream and in all-important aspects of social life namely three core focus areas: Inclusive Education, Inclusive Employment and Inclusive Community Life.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS BASED MCQS

1. Which of the following agencies publish the “State of the Education Report for India: Children with Disabilities”?
 - (a) Ministry of Women and Child Development
 - (b) NITI Aayog
 - (c) UNESCO
 - (d) Smile Foundation (NGO)
2. Consider the following statements w.r.t the National Grid.
 1. The project has been completed by the Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a Navratna Company.
 2. The union territories of Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep are not connected to the National Grid.
 Which of the statements is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) **Both 1 and 2**
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. Which of the following statements w.r.t the New Code on Wages Bill, 2019 is/are correct?
 1. It will be applicable to workers of organised and unorganised sectors, except government employees.
 2. It will amalgamate the Payment of Wages Act, 1936 and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.
 Select the correct answer from the codes given below:
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) **Both 1 and 2**
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. Consider the following statements w.r.t Core Investment Company.
 1. It is a non-banking financial companies with asset size of Rs.100 crore and above
 2. It is not allowed to accept public funds.
 3. It holds not less than 90% of their net assets in the form of investment in equity shares, preference shares, bonds, debentures.
 Which of the statements is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 and 2
 - (b) **1 and 3**
 - (c) 2 and 3
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3
5. Which of the following committees has been appointed to review the regulatory and supervisory framework for core investment companies?
 - (a) Bimal Jalan Committee
 - (b) V. G Kanna Committee
 - (c) Tapan Ray Committee
 - (d) T.N Manoharan Committee
6. Consider the following statement w.r.t the Arctic Region and MOSAiC Mission?
 1. The observed rate of climate change in the Arctic is not well reproduced in climate models.
 2. The MOSAiC is a one-year-long expedition into the Central Arctic, planned to take place from 2019 to 2020.
 3. The focus of MOSAiC lies on direct in-situ observations of the climate processes of the region.
 Which of the statements is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 and 2
 - (b) 2 and 3
 - (c) 1 and 3
 - (d) **1, 2 and 3**
7. Consider the following statements w.r.t the Study In India Programme.
 1. The programme will provide meritorious foreign students fee waiver and scholarship.
 2. It targets the countries who are members of the UNO.
 Which of the statements is/are incorrect?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) **2 only**
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2