



TNPSC GROUP 1 MAINS CURRENT AFFAIRS

JULY 2018 TO MAY 31ST 2019

Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill 2018

- It takes into consideration aggravated forms of trafficking. It includes trafficking for purpose of forced labour, begging, trafficking of a woman or child for the purpose of marriage or under the pretext of marriage or after marriage, trafficking by administering chemical substance or hormones on a person for the purpose of early sexual maturity etc
- It prescribes punishment for promoting and facilitating trafficking of person. It includes producing, printing, issuing or distributing unissued, tampered or fake certificates, registration or stickers as proof of compliance with Government requirements, or commits fraud for procuring or facilitating acquisition of clearances and necessary documents from Government agencies.
- It deals with confidentiality of victims and witnesses and complainants by not disclosing their identity. It will be maintained by recording their statement through video conferencing (it will help trans-border and inter-State crimes).
- It has provision for time bound trial and repatriation of the victims. It will be within a period of 1 year from taking into cognizance. It provides immediate protection of rescued victims and their rehabilitation. The victims will be entitled to interim relief immediately within 30 days to address their physical, mental trauma etc. and further appropriate relief within 60 days from the date of filing of charge sheet.
- It creates dedicated institutional mechanisms at District, State and Central level. They will be responsible for prevention, protection, investigation and rehabilitation work related to trafficking. The tasks of Anti-Trafficking Bureau at the national level will be performed by National Investigation Agency (NIA).



- The punishment prescribed under it ranges from rigorous minimum 10 years to life and fine not less than Rs. 1 lakh. In order to break the organized nexus, both at national and international level, it mandates for attachment & forfeiture of property and also proceeds for crime.
- It comprehensively addresses transnational nature of the crime. It entrusts National Anti-Trafficking Bureau (NATB) to perform functions of international coordination with authorities in foreign countries and international organizations.

National Policy for Domestic Workers

The Central Government has not enacted any separate law to protect the interest of domestic workers. However, the Ministry of Labour & Employment is considering to formulate a National Policy on Domestic Workers which is in the draft stage. The salient features of the proposed draft National Policy on Domestic Workers are as under:

- Inclusion of Domestic Workers in the existing legislations.
- Domestic workers will have the right to register as unorganized workers. Such registration will facilitate their access to rights & benefits.
- Right to form their own associations/unions
- Right to minimum wages, access to social security
- Right to enhance their skills
- Protection of Domestic Workers from abuse and exploitation
- Domestic Workers to have access to courts, tribunals for grievance redressal
- Establishment of a mechanism for regulation of private placement agencies.
- Establishment of a grievance redressal system for domestic workers.

To end mob lynching, Supreme Court gives an 11-point

- The state governments shall designate a senior police officer in each district for taking measures to prevent incidents of mob violence and lynching.
- The state governments shall immediately identify districts, subdivisions and villages where instances of lynching and mob violence have been reported in the recent past.



- The nodal officers shall bring to the notice of the DGP any inter-district co-ordination issues for devising a strategy to tackle lynching and mob violence related issues.
- It shall be the duty of every police officer to cause a mob to disperse, which, in his opinion, has a tendency to cause violence in the disguise of vigilantism or otherwise
- Central and the state governments should broadcast on radio and television and other media platforms including the official websites that lynching and mob violence shall invite serious consequence .
- Curb and stop dissemination of irresponsible and explosive messages, videos and other material on various social media platforms. Register FIR under relevant provisions of law against persons who disseminate such messages.
- Ensure that there is no further harassment of the family members of the victims.
- State governments shall prepare a lynching/mob violence victim compensation scheme.
- Cases of lynching and mob violence shall be specifically tried by designated court/fast track courts earmarked for that purpose in each district. The trial shall preferably be concluded within six months.
- To set a stern example in cases of mob violence and lynching, the trial court must ordinarily award maximum sentence upon conviction of the accused person.
- If it is found that a police officer or an officer of the district administration has failed to fulfill his duty, it will be considered as an act of deliberate negligence.

Section 377 of the IPC

- The Supreme Court has pronounced its much-awaited verdict on a clutch of petitions challenging the constitutional validity of section 377 of the IPC which criminalises consensual gay sex.
- The Court said gay sex among consenting adults is not an offence. The verdict assumes significance as in the earlier round of litigation in 2013 the Supreme Court had reversed the Delhi high court ruling decriminalising homosexuality or same sex relationship.



- However, bestiality will continue as an offence. Any kind of sexual activity with animals shall remain penal offence under Section 377 of the IPC
- The judgement is based on the interpretation of Article 14 (Right to Equality); Article 15 (prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth); Article 19 (Freedom of Speech and Expression); and Article 21 (Right to Life and Right to Privacy) of the Indian Constitution.
- Section 377 of IPC – which came into force in 1862 – defines unnatural offences. It says, “Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to 10 years, and shall also be liable to fine.”
- Delhi HC legalises homosexuality in July 2009 de-criminalised consensual homosexual acts in private by declaring as unconstitutional a part of Section 377 of IPC that criminalises unnatural sex, saying “the section denies a gay person a right to full personhood...”
- SC re-criminalises homosexuality: to reverse the verdict in December 2013. Upholding the constitutional validity of Section 377 IPC, an SC bench headed by Justice GS Singhvi (since retired), put the ball in the Parliament’s court, saying it was for the legislature to take a call on the desirability of the controversial provision.
- Law and morality: Those against legalising gay sex argue that it is against the moral values of the society. However, activists arguing for it say what is forbidden in religion need not be prohibited in law. They argue that morality cannot be a ground to restrict the fundamental rights of citizens.
- A legal wrong is necessarily a moral wrong but vice versa is not correct. A moral wrong becomes a legal wrong only when its consequences are for society and not just the person/s committing it.
- Challenges ahead: The Supreme Court judgment only deals with a narrow interpretation of Section 377. Besides decriminalising homosexuality, the judgment does not confer any further rights.
- Gay marriages: Marriages between same-sex partners are not recognised in india, but this can be changed by inserting a provision in the Special Marriage Act.
- Adoption: Law prohibits adoption of a child by a gay couple.



- Inheritance: One partner cannot inherit properties left behind by their same-sex partner, unless a will is drawn in favour of the person. A will, too, can be contested by family members of the partners.
- On pending criminal cases: The judgment will have a bearing on criminal cases pending trial, appeal or revision on disposed off cases. The judgment will have no bearing on disposed off cases and old cases cannot be reopened. It opens the flood gates for securing other civil rights.

RISE stands for Revitalising of Infrastructure and Systems in Education.

Women in the Indian Armed Forces

- In 1992, the Indian Army began inducting women officers in non-medical roles.
- In 2007, the United Nations first all-female peacekeeping force made up of 105 Indian policewomen was deployed to Liberia.
- All wings of the Indian Armed Forces allow women in combat roles (junior ranks) and combat supervisory roles (officers), except Indian Army (inducted for support roles only) and Special Forces of India (trainer role only).
- Females are not allowed to serve in combat units like the Infantry, the Armoured Corps and Mechanized infantry.
- Under the Short Service Commission (SSC) scheme, women are allowed to enter Army Service Corps, Ordnance, Education Corps, Judge Advocate General (JAG), Engineers, Signals, Intelligence and Electronics & Mechanical Engineering branches of the Army.
- Only in certain streams like the Judge Advocate General, Army Education Corps (AEC) and the Military Police, women are given permanent commission at par with male officers.
- Unlike male officers who could have joined under the SSC scheme and could have opted for a permanent scheme at the end of ten years, women SSC officers did not have the same option.
- However, Prime Minister has announced on Independence Day in 2018, that permanent commission would be granted to serving women officers of the armed forces. It will change the career paths of more than 3,700 women officers in the three services.



Issues with Women in Combat Role

▪ Physical issues

- The natural physical differences in stature, strength, and body composition between the sexes make women more vulnerable to certain types of injuries and medical problems. This is particularly so during vigorous and intensive training.
- Pre-entry physical fitness levels tend to be lower in most women recruits compared with men, and hence, when standards of training remain same for the two genders, there is a higher probability of injuries among the women.

▪ Physiological issues

- The natural processes of menstruation and pregnancy make women particularly vulnerable in combat situations. Lack of privacy and sanitation can result in an increased incidence of genitourinary infections.
- The effect of prolonged deployment in difficult terrains and grueling physical activity on the reproductive health of women is still unknown.

▪ Social and psychological issues

- Women tend to be more attached to their families, particularly their children. This translates into greater mental stress and requirement of social support to sustain themselves during prolonged separations from family.
- Another social aspect leading to mental stress in women in the military is that of isolation. This is due to the fact that men far outnumber women in the military, particularly in combat zones.
- The issue of military sexual trauma (MST) and its effect on the physical and mental well-being of women combatants is grave.
- MST may lead to grave, long-term psychological problems, including posttraumatic stress disorders (PTSDs), depression, and substance abuse.

▪ Conventional Barriers



- Cultural barriers in society may be the biggest impediment to induction of women in combat.
- The consequences of inserting a few women in an almost entirely male preserve, in cramped quarters, in inhospitable terrain, isolated from civilization, might raise conservative eyebrows of the society.
- Another major question that needs to be studied is the acceptance of orders of the women officers by the jawans.

Way Forward

- Creating history, the Indian Air Force, last year, had inducted three women as fighter pilots.
- A decision on having women as fighter pilots will be taken after evaluating the performance of the three women — Avani Chaturvedi, Bhawana Kanth and Mohana Singh who are now part of IAF's fighter squadron. On similar lines, a women combat squadron can be designed and studied extensively before any further development.
- Before inducting women in combat roles, first they can be trained as military police jawans, and gradually, they can be trained for combats.
- As for the concern of preserving female jawans modesty and dignity, there should be elaborate codes of conducts to ensure no untoward incident occurs.
- Administrative issues should not be cited as barriers to women entry. It is the responsibility of the government to create both administrative and social infrastructure for easy induction of women.
- Most importantly, a policy should be drawn wherein the framework for women's induction in the combat role is laid. Lack of a definite framework has delayed the decision-making process.
- The society has to be ready to accept that women too can play the crucial role of confronting the enemies. Arguments such as that Indian society is not ready to see women in body bags are misleading and should not be encouraged as an argument to stall women entry in combat roles.

Ease of Living Index



“Ease of Living Index” Andhra Pradesh has topped the charts among States in terms of “Ease of Living Index” rankings launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA). It was followed by Odisha and Madhya Pradesh

NCRB

- NCRB is nodal agency under Union Home Ministry for authentic source of data on crime on various parameters including accidents, suicides from across all the states of the country and prisons for policy matters and research.
- It was established in 1986 as the central police organisation.
- It is headquartered in New Delhi.
- It is implementing and monitoring agency of Crime & Criminal Tracking Network System (CCTNS), a Mission Mode Project under the National e-Governance Plan of Government.

President has promulgated the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Ordinance 2018, popularly known as Triple Talaq ordinance.

- This ordinance makes Instant Triple Talaq or Talaq-e-biddat a cognizable offense.

Background

- In August 2017, the Supreme Court ruled that Instant Triple talaq or talaq-e-biddat is unconstitutional and illegal in *Shayara Bano vs. Union of India and Ors.*
- To enforce the Supreme Court ruling, the government brought The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017.
- The bill was passed by Lok Sabha, but the bill remains pending in Rajya Sabha.
- The ordinance gives effect to amended version of The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017 as presented in Rajya Sabha by the government.

Provisions in Ordinance



- Any pronouncement of Talaq by a Muslim husband upon his wife in any manner, written, spoken or electronic, will be illegal.
- Any husband who pronounces triple talaq can be punished by a jail term up to three years and will also be liable for fine.
- Muslim women will now be entitled to custody of her minor children.
- Muslim women are now entitled to receive maintenance for herself and her dependent children upon whom talaq is pronounced.
- Triple talaq is now a cognizable offense if the case is filed by married Muslim women or any person related to her by blood or marriage.
- The offense will be compoundable, i.e. there can be a compromise but only on the insistence of the wife and magistrate will determine the terms and conditions.
- The offender can be granted bail by a magistrate but only after hearing the victim wife and magistrate is satisfied that there is reasonable ground for bail.

What is instant triple talaq?

- In the practice of talaq-e-biddat, when a man pronounces talaq thrice in a sitting, or through phone, or writes in a talaq-nama or a text message, the divorce is considered immediate and irrevocable, even if the man later wishes to re-conciliate. However, Women cannot pronounce triple talaq and are required to move a court for getting the divorce under the Sharia Act, 1937.
- There are three forms of talaq (divorce) in Islam: Ahsan, Hasan, and Talaq-e-Biddat (triple or instant talaq). Ahsan and Hasan are revocable but talaq-e-Biddat is irrevocable.
- Triple talaq is a practice mainly prevalent among India's Muslim community following the Hanafi Islamic school of law.
- Triple talaq divorce is banned by many Islamic countries, including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Turkey, UAE, and Indonesia.

Triple Talaq and the Indian constitution

- Article 25 of the Constitution guarantees religious freedom as Freedom of Practice and Propagation of Religion.



- Like all other Fundamental Rights, it is subject to restrictions and does not protect religious practices that can negatively affect the welfare of citizens.
- Hence, Article 25 is overridden by Article 14, which guarantees the Right to Equality as triple talaq denies a Muslim woman's equality before the law.
- Article 25 is also subject to Article 15 (1) which states that the State "shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex..." Since triple talaq does not work in the favour of women, it violates Article 15 (1) of the Constitution.

What is NCBC?

- 102nd Constitution Amendment Act, 2018 provides constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC).
- It has the authority to examine complaints and welfare measures regarding socially and educationally backward classes.
- Previously NCBC was a statutory body under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Background

- Two Backward Class Commissions were appointed in 1950s and 1970s under Kaka Kalelkar and B.P. Mandal respectively.
- In Indra Sawhney case of 1992, Supreme Court had directed the government to create a permanent body to entertain, examine and recommend the inclusion and exclusion of various Backward Classes for the purpose of benefits and protection.
- In pursuant to these directions parliament passed National Commission for Backward Classes Act in 1993 and constituted the NCBC.
- 123rd Constitution Amendment bill of 2017 was introduced in Parliament to safeguard the interests of backward classes more effectively.
- Parliament has also passed a separate bill to repeal the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993, thus 1993 act became irrelevant after passing the bill.



- The bill got the President assent in August 2018 and provided the constitutional status to NCBC.

Structure of NCBC

- The Commission consists of five members including a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and three other Members appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal.
- The conditions of service and tenure of office of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and other Members is determined by President.

Constitutional Provisions

- Article 340 deals with the need to, inter alia, identify those "socially and educationally backward classes", understand the conditions of their backwardness, and make recommendations to remove the difficulties they face.
- 102nd Constitution Amendment Act inserted new Articles 338 B and 342 A.
- The amendment also brings about changes in Article 366.
- Article 338B provides authority to NCBC to examine complaints and welfare measures regarding socially and educationally backward classes.
- Article 342 A empowers President to specify socially and educationally backward classes in various states and union territories. He can do this in consultation with Governor of concerned State. However, law enacted by Parliament will be required if list of backward classes is to be amended.

Powers and Functions

- The commission investigates and monitors all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the socially and educationally backward classes under the Constitution or under any other law to evaluate the working of such safeguards.
- It participates and advises on the socio-economic development of the socially and educationally backward classes and to evaluate the progress of their development under the Union and any State.



- It presents to the President, annually and at such other times as the Commission may deem fit, reports upon the working of those safeguards. The President laid such reports before each House of Parliament.
- Where any such report or any part thereof, relates to any matter with which any State Government is concerned, a copy of such report shall be forwarded to the State Government.
- NCBC has to discharge such other functions in relation to the protection, welfare and development and advancement of the socially and educationally backward classes as the President may, subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament, by rule specify.
- It has all the powers of a civil court while trying a suit.

How Does The New Commission Be Different From Its Earlier Version?

- The new act has recognized that BCs also need development in addition to reservations. There are provision in the act for development of Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEdBCs) and the new NCBC's role in the development process.
- The new NCBC is entrusted with the additional function of grievance redress of backward classes.
- Article 342(A) introduces greater transparency as its made mandatory to take the concurrence of Parliament for adding or deleting any community in the backward list.
- Apart from list-inclusion and reservation, it requires comprehensive and holistic development and advancement of each community towards equality in all parameters of development and welfare.

NDSO

National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO), which is accessible only to law enforcement agencies, will assist in effectively tracking and investigating cases of sexual offences. It is a central database of "sexual offenders" in the country which will be maintained by the NCRB for regular monitoring and tracking by the State Police.

CCPWC

The Cyber Crime Prevention Against Women and Children (CCPWC) portal is convenient and user friendly that will enable complainants in reporting



cases without disclosing their identity. This will not only aid the victims/complainants but also help the civil society organizations and responsible citizens to anonymously report complaints pertaining to child pornography, child sexual abuse material or sexually explicit material such as rape and gang rape.

Swayangsiddha, which means self-reliance, will be executed by the West Bengal Police.

Highlights of the scheme:-

1. The scheme aims to empower young boys and girls to make informed choices so that they are less vulnerable to trafficking and child marriage.
2. Swayangsiddha Groups have been formed in schools and colleges with interested students. These groups were formed with students between the age group of 12 to 21 years.
3. Raising awareness on human, gender and child rights and strengthening prevention of human trafficking and child marriage using a converging approach.
4. Engaging youth from different schools and colleges to combat human trafficking and child marriage.
5. Strengthening response mechanism in collaboration with Police and child protection committees to build a safe community.
6. Strengthening access to schemes and entitlements on education, training, livelihood and food security for vulnerable groups.

Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA)

One of the key components of the National Rural Health Mission is to provide every village in the country with a trained female community health activist, ASHA or Accredited Social Health Activist. Selected from the village itself and accountable to it, the ASHA will be trained to work as an interface between the community and the public health system. Following are the key components of ASHA:

- ASHA must primarily be a woman resident of the village married/ widowed/ divorced, preferably in the age group of 25 to 45 years.



- She should be a literate woman with due preference in selection to those who are qualified up to 10 standard wherever they are interested and available in good numbers. This may be relaxed only if no suitable person with this qualification is available.
- ASHA will be chosen through a rigorous process of selection involving various community groups, selfhelp groups, Anganwadi Institutions, the Block Nodal officer, District Nodal officer, the village Health Committee and the Gram Sabha. Capacity building of ASHA is being seen as a continuous process.
- ASHA will have to undergo series of training episodes to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and confidence for performing her spelled out roles.
- The ASHAs will receive performance-based incentives for promoting universal immunization, referral and escort services for Reproductive & Child Health (RCH) and other healthcare programmes, and construction of household toilets. Empowered with knowledge and a drug-kit to deliver first-contact healthcare, every ASHA is expected to be a fountainhead of community participation in public health programmes in her village.
- ASHA will be the first port of call for any health related demands of deprived sections of the population, especially women and children, who find it difficult to access health services.
- ASHA will be a health activist in the community who will create awareness on health and its social determinants and mobilise the community towards local health planning and increased utilisation and accountability of the existing health services. She would be a promoter of good health practices and will also provide a minimum package of curative care as appropriate and feasible for that level and make timely referrals.
- ASHA will provide information to the community on determinants of health such as nutrition, basic sanitation & hygienic practices, healthy living and working conditions, information on existing health services and the need for timely utilisation of health & family welfare services. She will counsel women on birth preparedness, importance of safe delivery, breast-feeding and complementary feeding, immunization, contraception and prevention of common infections including Reproductive Tract Infection/Sexually Transmitted Infections (RTIS/STIs) and care of the young child.
- ASHA will mobilise the community and facilitate them in accessing health and health related services available at the Anganwadi/sub-centre/primary health centers, such as immunisation, Ante Natal



Check-up (ANC), Post Natal Check-up supplementary nutrition, sanitation and other services being provided by the government. She will act as a depot Holder for essential provisions being made available to all habitations like Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORS), Iron Folic Acid Tablet (IFA), chloroquine, Disposable Delivery Kits (DDK), Oral Pills & Contraceptions etc.

International Day of the Girl Child

International Day of the Girl Child 2018 is being observed today i.e. 11th October 2018 across the globe and puts the spotlight on enhancing skillset of girls so they enter the future workforce on equal terms as their male counterparts.

Global Hunger Index

The 2018 Global Hunger Index report has been released. The report is a peer-reviewed publication released annually by Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide

The GHI scores are based on a formula that captures three dimensions of hunger—insufficient caloric intake, child undernutrition, and child mortality—using four component indicators: India has been ranked at 103 out of 119 countries in the Global Hunger Index 2018, with hunger levels in the country categorized as “serious”

POCSO Act amendment

The Union Cabinet has approved amendments to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 to make punishment more stringent for committing sexual crimes against children.

- The earlier amendment allowed the death penalty only in cases of sexual assault of girls below 12 years but now it will be applicable to boys also.

Key Amendments

- Gender neutral: The amendment will include the death penalty in all cases of aggravated penetrative sexual assault against children, both boys and girls, below the age of 18, thus making the Act gender neutral.



- Definition: The definition of 'sexual assault' in POCSO has been amended to include administering hormones to children expedite their sexual maturity for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation.
- The existing definition covers 20 categories of penetrative sexual crimes against children and the Cabinet has approved adding sexual assault of children who are victims of calamities or natural disasters, taking it up to 21 categories.
- New category: The Ministry of Women and Child Development has cited reported rapes of young girls in the aftermath of Kedarnath floods and that children constitute 50-60% of victims of calamities to make a case for including rapes in course of natural calamities as the 21st category.
- List of perpetrators: The 21 categories under aggravated penetrative sexual assault cover child victims who have been subject to penetrative sexual assault by a police officer or a member of the armed forces or security forces, by a public servant, a relative, the staff of a jail or remand home or protection home, staff of a hospital, educational institution, or religious institution among others.
- More stringent punishment: The amendments extend the punishment for aggravated penetrative sexual assault from a minimum of 10 years to a minimum of 20 years, up to a maximum of life imprisonment and even the death penalty under Section 6 of POCSO Act.
- Punitive measures have been made more stringent in cases where children are used for pornography as well as for storing such content.
- It also includes the gangrape of a child or use of deadly weapons during penetrative sexual assault, a sexual assault that incapacitates the child physically or mentally, makes a girl child pregnant, inflicts the child with HIV or any life-threatening disease.
- The maximum punishment of death will also be applicable when sexual assault victims are children with mental or physical disabilities, in cases of repeat offenders, rape and attempt to murder, and rape during communal violence.

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012



- The POCSO Act, 2012 was enacted to Protect the Children from Offences of Sexual Assault, Sexual harassment and pornography with due regard for safeguarding the interest and well-being of children.
- The Act defines a child as any person below eighteen years of age, and regards the best interests and welfare of the child as matter of paramount importance at every stage, to ensure the healthy physical, emotional, intellectual and social development of the child.
- The Act defines different forms of sexual abuse, including penetrative and non penetrative assault, as well as sexual harassment and pornography.
- The Act deems a sexual assault to be “aggravated” under certain circumstances, such as when the abused child is mentally ill or when the abuse is committed by a person in a position of trust or authority like a family member, police officer, teacher, or doctor.
- The Act also casts the police in the role of child protectors during the investigative process.
- The Act stipulates that a case of child sexual abuse must be disposed of within one year from the date the offence is reported.

‘SHe Box’

‘SHe Box’ (Sexual Harassment electronic Complaint Box) has been created through Internet in all Districts for women to lodge complaints in respect of violation of women’s rights, sexual atrocities and extraordinary situations that develop in work places. This is monitored by the officials of the social welfare Department. Besides, setting up a “One Stop Centre” to offer medical and legal assistance to women victims of violence and offer them consultations, an awareness is also being instilled about the social welfare schemes and social safety laws for women.

SDG India Index

The NITI Aayog has released its SDG India Index which intends to provide a holistic view on the social, economic and environmental status of the country and its States.

Index

- First of its kind ‘SDG India Index’ has been developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI),



Global Green Growth Institute, United Nations in India, and NITI Aayog.

- In September 2016, MoSPI developed a National Indicator Framework (NIF) which is a consolidated list of possible national indicators. It consists of 306 statistical indicators to serve as a backbone for monitoring of SDGs.
- NITI Aayog has prepared the SDG India Index spanning across 13 out of 17 SDGs (leaving out Goals 12, 13, 14 and 17).
- Being the baseline report, it does not consider time series comparison of data. As a result, the SDG India Index tells us where a State/UT currently stands on each of the indicators considered, and will present incremental change in subsequent versions.
- Classification Criteria based on SDG India Index Score is as follows: Aspirant: 0-49; Performer: 50-64; Front Runner: 65-99; Achiever: 100.

Key Findings

- Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have emerged as the front runners in the race to achieve key sustainable development goals (SDGs) in a ranking of states released by NITI Aayog.
- Kerala's top rank is attributed to its superior performance in providing good health, reducing hunger, achieving gender equality and providing quality education.
- Himachal Pradesh ranks high on providing clean water and sanitation, in reducing inequalities and preserving mountain ecosystem.
- The toppers in gender equality, Sikkim and Union territories Andaman and Nicobar islands and Chandigarh have crossed the halfway mark in reaching the goals.
- Jharkhand, Odisha and Nagaland are among the states that have a lot more ground to cover in the overall rankings.

DRAFT NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Key provisions and highlights of the draft policy:



- *Application of the policy:* The policy will apply to all Institutions and organisations including corporate and media houses government or private sector.
- As per the policy all organisations must have a *code of conduct* based on zero tolerance of child abuse and exploitation.
- The policy requires organisations to *lay down that employees don't use language or behaviour* that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- Institutions should also designate a *staff member* to ensure that procedures are in place to ensure the protection of children as well as to report any abuse.
- Any individual who suspects physical, sexual or emotional abuse must report it to the helpline number 1098 or police or a child welfare committee.

Gender Gap Index 2018

- India has been ranked 108th out of 149 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index 2018, the same as 2017.
- The report benchmarks countries on their progress towards gender parity on a scale from 0 (disparity) to 1 (parity) across four key pillars- economic participation and opportunity (42%), educational attainment (4.4%), health and survival (4.6%), and political empowerment (77%).

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill

Lok Sabha has passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016 to give transgender persons equal rights and protection under law through a voice vote.

Highlights of the Bill:

- The Bill defines a transgender person as one who is partly female or male; or a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male. In addition, the person's gender must not match the gender assigned at birth, and includes trans-men, trans-women, persons with intersex variations and gender-queers.
- A transgender person must obtain a certificate of identity as proof of recognition of identity as a transgender person and to invoke rights



- Such a certificate would be granted by the District Magistrate on the recommendation of a Screening Committee. The Committee would comprise a medical officer, a psychologist or psychiatrist, a district welfare officer, a government official, and a transgender person.
- The Bill prohibits discrimination against a transgender person in areas such as education, employment, and healthcare. It directs the central and state governments to provide welfare schemes in these areas.
- Offences like compelling a transgender person to beg, denial of access to a public place, physical and sexual abuse, etc. would attract up to two years' imprisonment and a fine.

National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (2018-2023)

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has drafted a five-year action plan for addressing the problem of drug and substance abuse in the country, dumping a long-pending draft policy on the matter.

The National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (2018-2023) aims to employ a multi-pronged strategy involving education, de-addiction and rehabilitation of affected individuals and their families to address the issue.

Aim of this National Action Plan

- The plan focuses on preventive education, awareness generation, counselling, treatment and rehabilitation of drug-dependent people, besides training and capacity-building of service providers through collaborative efforts of the Centre, state and NGOs, he said.
- The ministry has planned several measures — including coordination with implementing agencies for controlling sale of sedatives, painkillers and muscle relaxant drugs, and checking online sale of drugs by stringent monitoring by cyber cell — under the national action plan.
- It includes holding awareness generation programmes at schools, colleges, universities, workplaces and for police



functionaries, paramilitary forces, law enforcement agencies, judicial officers and Bar council, among others.

- The official said plans are also afoot for awareness generation through social, print, digital and online media, and engagement of celebrities, besides strengthening the national tollfree helpline for drug prevention.
- It also calls for persuading principals, directors, vice chancellors of educational institutions to ensure that no drugs are sold within/nearby the campus.
- Increasing community participation and public cooperation in the reduction of demand by involving Panchayati Raj institutions, Urban Local Bodies, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan and other local groups like Mahila Mandals, self help groups etc is also planned.
- The objective of the NAPDDR is to create awareness and educate people about the ill-effects of drugs abuse on the individual, family, workplace and the society at large in order to integrate them back into the society.

National Girl Child Day

- National Girl Child Day was celebrated on 24, January 2019.
- Theme for this year National Girl Child Day is “Empowering Girls for a Brighter Tomorrow”.
- It will be celebrated with objectives of generating awareness on the issue of declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and create a positive environment around valuing the girl child.

ASER

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

- ASER 2018 is a nation-wide household survey that provides a snapshot of children’s schooling and learning for a representative sample of children across rural India.
- Children in the age group 3 to 16 are surveyed to find out their enrollment status in school or pre-school. Children in the age group 5



to 16 are assessed one-on-one to understand their basic reading and arithmetic abilities.

- ASER continues to be the only national source of information about children's foundational skills across the country.

National Rural Economic Transformation Project

The Union Cabinet has approved the implementation of an externally aided project namely National Rural Economic Transformation Project (NRETP) under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) through loan assistance from World Bank

Salient features

- DAY-NRLM lays special emphasis on targeting the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable communities and their financial inclusion.
 - Innovative projects will be undertaken under NRETP to pilot alternate channels of financial inclusion, creating value chains around rural products, introduce innovative models in livelihoods promotion and access to finance and scale-up initiatives on digital finance and livelihoods interventions.
- DAY-NRLM provides for mutually beneficial working relationship and formal platforms for consultations between Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs).
 - NRLM has also developed activity map to facilitate convergence in different areas of interventions where NRLM institutions and PRIs could work together which has been disseminated to all state Rural Livelihood Missions

Operation Blackboard

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has launched Operation Digital Board (ODB) to leverage technology in order to boost quality education in the country.

- ODB aims to have digital and interactive boards in every classroom, which is on the lines of Operation Blackboard which was started in 1987 to supply the bare minimum crucial facilities to all primary schools in the country.

Features



- The digital board will be introduced all over the country in government and government aided schools from class 9th onwards as well as in higher education institutions, from the coming session of 2019 itself.
- University Grants Commission (UGC) will be the implementing agency for ODB in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). It will be implemented as a Central scheme, as a loan from Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA).
- At school level, Digital / SMART board will be provided in all Government and Government – aided schools by the Central Government in collaboration with the State and UTs.
- It aims at converting a classroom into a digital classroom.
- Ensure availability of e-resources at any time and at any place to students.
- Help in provisioning of personalised adaptive learning as well as Intelligent Tutoring by exploiting emerging technologies like Machine Learning, Artificial Intelligence & Data Analytics.

World Happiness Report

Indians are not as happy in 2019 as they were in 2018 and the country figures at 140th place, seven spots down from last year, on UN World Happiness Report- 2019,

The Sustainable Development Solutions Network for the United Nations released the World Happiness Report on March 20, which was designated as the World Happiness Day by the UN General Assembly in 2012.

The report ranks countries on six key variables that support well-being:

- Income,
- Freedom to make life choices,
- Trust,
- Healthy life expectancy,
- Social support and
- Generosity.



Draft National Education Policy, 2019

The Draft National Education Policy, 2019 prepared by a committee chaired by Dr K. Kasturirangan has been shared by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development for public comments. The policy aims at making India a knowledge superpower by equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge. It also focuses on eliminating the shortage of manpower in Science and Technology, academics and industry. The Draft Policy is built on foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability & Accountability.

Key Features of the Draft Policy

- The policy covers school education, higher education and professional education which in turn include agricultural education, legal education, medical education and technical education.
- It also looks at the verticals of vocational education by including teacher education and the research and innovation.
- The early child care and education have been sought to be integrated within the Ministry of Education (a changed name has been suggested for the Ministry of Human Resource and Development - MHRD).
- The policy also tries to focus on certain foundational skills that children should have in the proposed new structure of 5+3+3+4.
 - The first stage of five years (for children of 3-8 years of age) i.e. foundational stage looks at discovery learning and learning by play. The foundational literacy and numeracy skills is a mission mode approach under it that includes National Tutors' Program, remedial instructional aid programmes etc. It considers nutrition as very critical for strengthening the levels of 3-8 years of children.
 - The next stage is Preparatory Stage for the children in the age group of 8 to 11 years (grades 3 to 5) followed by the Middle Stage (grades 6 to 8) for the students in the age group of 11-14 years and the Secondary Stage (Grades 9-12) for students in the age group of 14-18 years.
- For school education, governance level changes have also been suggested. A State regulatory authority has been suggested for regulating education in the country. The body will decide the



accreditation of different schools. The government will continue to fund and operate education in the country.

- Main takeaways for higher education:
 - Restructuring of the higher education system into Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3.
 - Tier 1 includes research universities focusing equally on research and teaching, Tier 2 includes teaching universities focusing primarily on teaching; and Tier 3 includes colleges focusing only on teaching at undergraduate levels. All such institutions will gradually move towards full autonomy - academic, administrative, and financial. The idea is to spread 'research culture' at the undergraduate level.
 - The policy also talks about National Scholarship Fund to financially support students for higher education.
- Promotion of classical and regional languages have been emphasised upon.
- The policy also proposes to increase the class of compulsory education up to grade 12 (age-18).
 - The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act - RTE, 2009 (represents Article 21-A of the Indian Constitution) made education, a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14.
- The policy aims to achieve a fully literate society where all adults are literates by 2030 or so.