



Chapter-15: Welfare

Introduction

- In **1985-86**, the **erstwhile Ministry of Welfare** was bifurcated into the **Department of Women and Child Development** and the **Department of Welfare**.
- The **Scheduled Castes Development Division**, **Tribal Development Division** and the **Minorities** and **Backward Classes Welfare Division** were shifted from the **Ministry of Home Affairs** and also the **Wakf Division** from the **Ministry of Law** to form the then **Ministry of Welfare**.
- Subsequently, the **name of the Ministry was changed to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.
- Two departments have been created under the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** namely: **Department of Social Justice and Empowerment** and **Department of Disability Affairs** since renamed as **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities**.

Events Related to Scheduled Caste Welfare

- **Celebration of Constitution Day**
 - The **Constitution day is celebrated on 26 November** every year as drafted Constitution was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on **November 26, 1949**, and **came into effect on January 26, 1950**.
 - With its adoption, the Union of India became the modern and contemporary Republic of India replacing the **Government of India Act 1935** as the country's fundamental governing document.
 - It provides a **legal framework for social transformation** from a society of castes and communities to a modern society of citizens based on equal consideration of individuals without regard for caste, creed or gender.
- **Birth Anniversary of Babasaheb**
 - **Dr B.R. Ambedkar** is regarded as the **principal architect** in the framing of the **Constitution of India** which is the longest written constitution of any sovereign country in the world.
 - The **birth anniversary of Dr B.R. Ambedkar is celebrated on 14th April** every year in the Parliament House Lawns, New Delhi.

Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

- The Constitution contains several provisions to safeguards the Scheduled Castes which are mentioned under
 - The **Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955**, and
 - The **Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989**.
- They aim at curbing **untouchability and atrocities against SCs and STs**, and are therefore very important for the Scheduled Castes.

Protection of Civil Rights

- In pursuance of **Article 17** of the Constitution of India, the **Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955 was enacted**. Subsequently, it was **amended and renamed in 1976 as the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955**.
- The Act extends to the whole of the country and provides punishment for the practice of untouchability. It is implemented by the respective state governments and union territory administrations.

Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989

- The **Act came into force in 1990**. It aims at preventing commission of offences by persons **other than scheduled castes and scheduled tribes against scheduled castes and scheduled tribes**.
- Comprehensive Rules under this Act, titled **Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Rules, 1995 were notified in 1995**, which, inter-alia, provide norms for relief and rehabilitation.

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2015 and 2018

- To strengthen the existing **SC and ST (PoA) Act 1990** and to make the relevant provisions more effective, few amendments were made.
- The amendment covers **five broad areas** which are:
 - The establishment of exclusive special courts for the speedy trial of offences of atrocities against the members of SCs and STs and specification of exclusive special public prosecutors are provided.
 - A new chapter relating to **Rights of Victims and Witnesses is inserted**.
 - Certain duties and responsibilities are imposed upon the state for making **necessary arrangements for protection of victims, their defendants and witnesses**.
 - Relief amount for various offences of atrocities is provided for and phasing of payment of relief amount rationalised.
 - **The admissible relief is to be paid within seven days. Investigation and filing of charge sheets is to be done within sixty days.**
- The **Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2018** seeks to **amend the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989**. The Act prohibits the commission of offences against members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and establishes special courts for the trial of such offences and the rehabilitation of victims.
- The **Act inserts section 18A (1) (a) in the 1989 Act**, that says a **“preliminary enquiry shall not be required for registration of an FIR against any person”** or (b), which says **“the investigating officer shall not require approval for the arrest, if necessary, of any person against whom an accusation of having committed an offence under this Act has been made and no procedure, other than that provided under this Act or the Code, shall apply”**.
- The amendments rule out any provision for anticipatory bail for a person accused of atrocities against SC/STs, notwithstanding any court order.

National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)

- The National Commission for SCs and STs was set up under **Article 383** of the Constitution in **1990**.
- It was further bifurcated into two Commissions namely, **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) after the 89th Constitutional (Amendment) Act, 2003**.
- The NCSC is responsible for monitoring the safeguards provided for Scheduled Castes and also to review issues concerning their welfare.
- Functions of the NCSC as enumerated in the **Article 338 (5)** of the Constitution are:
 - to investigate and monitor all matters relating to the **safeguards provided for the scheduled castes** under the Constitution or under any other law for the time being in force or under any order of the government and to **evaluate the working of such**

safeguards;

- to inquire into **specific complaints** with respect to the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the scheduled castes;
- to participate and advise on the **planning process of socio-economic development of the scheduled castes and to evaluate the progress** of their development under the Union and any state;
- to present to the President, annually and at such other times as the Commission may deem fit, reports upon the working of those safeguards;
- to make in such reports, recommendations as to the **measures that should be taken by the Union or any state** for the effective implementation of those safeguards and other measures for the protection, welfare and socio-economic development of the scheduled castes; and
- to discharge such other functions in relation to the **protection, welfare and development and advancement of the scheduled castes** as the President may, subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament, by rule specify.

Educational Empowerment

Scholarship Schemes for SC and Others

- **Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme for SC and Others:**
 - A Centrally Sponsored Scheme targeting **SC students** with parents/guardians' **annual income less than 2.5 lakh** and other disadvantaged categories at the **Pre-Matric stage**.
- Aimed at providing **financial assistance**.
- Consists of two components:
 - **Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme for SC students.**
 - Pre-Matric Scholarship scheme **for children of parents/guardians engaged in unclean and hazardous occupations.**
- Funding Pattern:
 - Split is **60:40** between **Centre and states/Union Territories (UTs) (90:10 for Northeast states, Uttarakhand, and Himachal Pradesh).**
 - **For UTs without legislatures, Centre provides 100% funding.**
- Academic Allowance:
 - Ranges from **3,500 to 8,000**, with an **additional 10%** allowance for disabled students.
- Disbursement:
 - Scholarship amount is paid directly into the students' or parents' accounts.
 - Preferably through **DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) using Aadhaar Based Payment System (Aadhaar Payment Bridge).**

Post Matric Scholarship for SC Students (PMS-SC)

- The Post-Matric Scholarship **for SC students** in India is a significant initiative by the Government, active since **1944**.
- Eligibility is based on parents' annual income not exceeding 2.5 lakh per annum.
- Funding is divided between the **Centre and states/UTs, with a 90:10 ratio in NE states and 60:40 elsewhere.**
- The goal is to **increase the gross enrolment ratio of SC students in higher education**, particularly from impoverished households.
- Financial assistance is provided at the **post-matriculation or post-secondary** level to support completion of education.
- Assistance covers compulsory **non-refundable fees**, including tuition fees, and academic allowance ranging from **2,500 to 13,500 (with an additional 10% allowance for disabled students)**.

National Overseas Scholarship for SCs

- The Scheme covers **various fees charged** by institutions, including actual fees, monthly maintenance allowance, passage visa fee, insurance premium, annual contingency allowance, and

incidental journey allowance.

- Eligibility for the Scheme allows **only two children from the same parents or guardians to benefit. The second child is considered only if slots are available for that year.**
- Prospective awardees must be **under 35 years of age.**
- The **maximum number of awards given each year is 100, with 30% reserved for women candidates.**

Special Central Assistance

Scheduled Castes Sub Plan

- **Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCSP)** initiated in **1980** as a central sector Scheme.
- Provides **100% grants to states/Union Territories (UTs)** in addition to their **Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCSP).**
- Aimed at accelerating economic development among Scheduled Castes (**SCs**) **below the poverty line.**
- Focuses on **family-oriented schemes** to uplift the **economic status of SCs.**
- Designed to address the specific needs and challenges faced by SC communities.

Scheduled Castes Development Corporations

- The scheme for participating in the equity share of **Scheduled Castes Development Corporations (SCDCs)** was **initiated in 1979.**
- The ratio for participation is **49:51 between central and state governments respectively.**
- Currently, **SCDCs operate in 27 states/Union Territories (UTs).**
- The primary functions of these corporations include **identifying eligible Scheduled Caste (SC) families** and encouraging them to engage in **economic development initiatives.**
- SCDCs sponsor schemes to financial institutions for credit support.
- They provide **financial assistance in the form of margin money at a low rate of interest and subsidies to reduce repayment liabilities.**
- SCDCs establish necessary tie-ups with other poverty alleviation programs.

Credit Enhancement Guarantee Scheme for Scheduled Castes

- **In 2014,** the government allocated **200 crore rupees** towards a credit **enhancement facility.**
- The facility is aimed at **supporting young and start-up entrepreneurs from scheduled castes.**
- The objective is to **encourage entrepreneurship among lower-income groups.**
- The initiative targets those aspiring to be **part of the neo-middle class.**
- The goal is to **foster economic growth and job creation.**

Tribal Affairs

Development of Scheduled Tribes

- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs was **established in 1999.**
- It emerged after the division of the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.**
- Its primary goal is to provide a **concentrated effort towards the integrated socio-economic development of the scheduled Tribes (STs).**
- **STs** are recognized as the **most underprivileged segment of society.**
- The Ministry aims to **coordinate and plan initiatives for the upliftment of STs** effectively.

Scheduled Areas and Tribal Areas

- Scheduled Tribes reside in contiguous areas, simplifying development and regulatory measures.
- Constitutional provisions like the **Fifth and Sixth Schedules safeguard tribal interests regarding land and social factors.**
- The **Fifth Schedule defines Scheduled Areas,** with criteria including tribal population

preponderance and economic backwardness.

- **The President declares Scheduled Areas after consultation with the state Governor, with provisions for alterations.**
- Scheduled Areas empower Governors to **regulate land transfer and money lending to tribes, with exceptions.**
- Governors must report on Scheduled Areas administration annually, with Union's executive power extending to giving directives.
- **Tribes Advisory Council (TAC)** advises state governments on tribal welfare, mainly comprising ST-MLAs.
- **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA)** extends Panchayat provisions with special considerations for tribes.
- **Sixth Schedule** identifies autonomous districts in **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.**
- Tribal Areas have district/regional councils with powers over various sectors like education, health, and infrastructure.
- **North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong** Autonomous Councils have additional legislative powers over secondary education, agriculture, etc.
- Councils also possess judicial and revenue authority for their areas and management of natural resources.

Procedure for Declaration of Scheduled Tribes

- The term scheduled tribes is defined in the Constitution of India under **Article 366 (25)** as such tribes or tribal communities or parts of groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under **Article 342 to be scheduled tribes.**
- **Article 342** prescribes the procedure to be followed in the matter of specification of scheduled tribes.
 - In terms of **Article 342 (1)**, the President may, with respect to any state or union territory, and where it is a state, after consultation with the Governor thereof, notifies tribes or tribal communities or parts thereof as scheduled tribes.
 - This confers on the tribe or part of it a constitutional status invoking the safeguards provided for in the Constitution, to these communities, in their respective states UTs.
 - Thus, in terms of **Article 342(1)**, only those **communities who have been declared as such by the President through an initial public notification will be considered as scheduled tribes.**
 - Any further amendment in the list is to be done through an Act of Parliament, Article (342 (2)).

Scheduling and De-Scheduling of Tribes

- **Scheduled tribes in a state/union territory are identified by a presidential order** after consulting relevant state governments.
- Criteria for identifying scheduled tribes include:
 - Primitive traits,
 - Distinctive culture,
 - Shyness of contact with the larger community,
 - Geographical isolation or backwardness.
- These criteria are not explicitly stated in the Constitution but are established through various sources.
- Sources informing the criteria include:
 - Definitions from the **1931 Census**,
 - Reports from the first **Backward Classes Commission (Kalelkar Committee) in 1955**,
 - Reports from the Advisory Committee on **Revision of SC/ST lists (Lokur Committee) in 1965**,
 - Reports from the Joint Committee of Parliament on the **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Bill (Chanda Committee) in 1967**.
- There are over **700 tribes identified under Article 342** of the Constitution of India, spread across different states and union territories, with some tribes overlapping in multiple regions.

National Commission on Scheduled Tribes (NCST)

- It was **set up in 2004** by amending **Article 338** and inserting a new **Article 338A** in the Constitution, through the Constitution (**Eighty-ninth Amendment**) Act, 2003.
- The main duties of the Commission are to investigate and monitor all matters relating to the **safeguards provided for the scheduled tribes and to evaluate the working of such safeguards**; and to inquire into **specific complaints with respect to the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the scheduled tribes**.
- The Commission is vested with all the **powers of a civil court trying a suit while investigating any matter** or inquiring into any **complaint relating to deprivation of rights and safeguards of the scheduled tribes**.
- The **Chairman and the Vice-Chairman** of the Commission have been conferred the rank of **Union Cabinet Minister and Minister of State respectively**, while the members of the **Commission** have been given the rank of a **Secretary to the Government of India**.

Tribal Sub Plan (TSP)

- It was **initially developed by an Expert Committee** set up by the **Ministry of Education and Social Welfare in 1972** for rapid socio-economic development of tribal people and was adopted for the first time in the **Fifth Five Year Plan**.
- The salient features are the funds provided under the Tribal Sub Plan of the state have to be **at least equal in proportion to the ST population of each state or UT**;
- Tribes and tribal areas of a state or union territories are given benefits under the TSP, in addition to what percolates from the overall Plan of a state/UT;
- The Sub-Plan should;
 - identify the **problems and need** of tribal people and critical gaps in their development;
 - identify all **available resources for TSP**;
 - prepare a **broad policy framework** for development;
 - define a **suitable administrative strategy** for its implementation; and
 - specify the mechanism for monitoring and evaluation.
- The Ministry has issued revised guidelines for inter-state allocation of funds and implementation of programmes/activities under provision to **Article 275 (1)** of the Constitution and under special central assistance to **Tribal Sub Plan (SCA to TSP) in 2016**.
- These guidelines provide focused approach on **sectoral allocation and revised inter-state allocation factoring population**, area and outcome based performance as parameters. Further, inter-district allocation is also clearly spelt out.

National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC)

- It was set up in **2001** under the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** and it has been granted licence under **Section 25 of the Companies Act (A Company not for profit)**.
- It provides **financial assistance to the scheduled tribes**, who are having **annual family income upto double the poverty line (presently it is 39,500 per annum for the rural areas and 54,500 for urban areas)**.
- It also provides **financial assistance as a grant for skill and entrepreneurial development of the target group**.
- However, the **financial assistance is channelized through government owned agencies** nominated by the respective ministries/state governments and union territory administrations.
- It also provides financial assistance for **procurement and marketing** minor forest produce so as to avoid the distress sale of produce/products by the scheduled tribes.

Special Schemes

- **Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana (AMSY)** is designed specifically for the economic empowerment of **Scheduled Tribe (ST) women**.
- It offers term **loans at highly concessional interest rates**.
- The loans are provided by the **National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC)**.
- Individuals can avail loans for schemes or projects costing **up to 50,000 per unit or profit**

center.

- **NSTFDC provides financial assistance covering up to 99% of the total scheme or project cost.**

Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation

- The **Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED)** was established in **1987** under the **Multi State Cooperative Societies Act, 1984 (MSCS Act)**.
- TRIFED operates as a **national-level apex body**.
- Its primary role is to act as a **'market developer' for tribal products**.
- Additionally, it functions as a **'service provider'** to its member federations.
- TRIFED's objective is to **promote and market products made by tribal communities in India**.
- The organization works to **enhance the economic well-being** of tribal people by facilitating the marketing of their products.

Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission

- A scheme called Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission is **initiated for tribal development over the next five years**.
- The scheme **focuses on livelihood improvement for tribes**.
- It involves the formation of Vandhan groups, which will operate through Vandhan Kendras.
- TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India) is designated as the **nodal agency for scheme implementation**.
- The objective is to **establish a system ensuring fair returns for tribal efforts in collection, processing, storage, packing, and transportation**.

Forest Rights of STs

- The Scheduled Tribes and Other **Traditional Forest Dwellers Recognition of Forest Rights Act, 2006**, aims to **acknowledge and grant forest rights** and occupation in forest land to scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.
- This recognition is for those who have been living in such forests for generations but whose rights were not adequately acknowledged during the colonial and independent India periods, leading to historical injustice.
- **The Act came into operation in 2007**.
- **Rules for implementing the Act were notified in 2008**, which include the formation of committees at various levels: sub-divisional, district, and state monitoring committees.
- State governments are responsible for nominating nodal officers to implement the Act.
- State governments are also urged to take measures to raise awareness about the Act's objectives, provisions, and procedures.

Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana

- The central government introduced **Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana (VKY)** to promote the comprehensive development of tribal populations.
- **VKY focuses on translating available resources into tangible developmental outcomes for tribal communities**.
- It is designed as a strategic approach aimed at **creating an enabling environment** for holistic development.
- The goal of VKY is to ensure that the benefits of government programs and schemes reach tribal communities effectively.
- This is achieved through **convergence of resources and appropriate institutional mechanisms**.
- VKY emphasizes a **need-based and outcome-oriented approach** to tribal development.
- Its objective is to **address the specific needs of tribal populations and facilitate their overall progress**.

Scholarship Schemes

- The **Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA)** administers five scholarship schemes.
- These schemes include **pre and post-matric scholarships**, which are centrally sponsored.
- Additionally, there are **national fellowship and scholarship programs for higher education of ST (Scheduled Tribe) students**.
- The national fellowship and scholarship schemes are called National Fellowship and National Scholarship.
- There's also a National Overseas Scholarship specifically for ST candidates.
- The **pre and post-matric** scholarships are categorized as **centrally sponsored schemes**.
- Meanwhile, the **national fellowship and scholarship programs** are considered **central sector schemes**.

Adivasi Grants Management System

- **Adivasi Grants Management System (ADIGRAMS)** Portal is established as a central database.
- It serves the **Ministry and state tribal development/welfare departments**.
- Purpose: **to access, interact, and analyze up-to-date physical and financial information and progress of schemes**.
- **Enables officials/stakeholders at various levels** (central, state, district, block, village) to access, monitor, and measure performance in real-time.
- Aims to facilitate **informed decision-making**.
- Covers schemes under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (**MoTA**), including grants under **Article 275(1)** of the Constitution of India, Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Scheme, and Scheme for development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

Eklavya Model Residential Schools

- **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs)** were established in **1997-98**.
- **Purpose:** Provide quality education to **Scheduled Tribes (ST)** students in remote tribal areas.
- Initially funded under a Special Area Programme, 'Grants under **Article 275(1)** of the Constitution of India'.
- **In 2019-20**, it became a separate scheme.
- **Scope:** Covers upper primary, secondary, and senior secondary levels.
- **Aim:** Bridge educational gaps and improve educational outcomes for ST students.
- **Geographical focus:** Remote tribal areas.
- **Objective:** Enhance access to education and quality teaching.
- **Overall goal:** Empowerment of Scheduled Tribes through education.

Tribal Freedom Fighters' Museum

- The Ministry has decided to establish Tribal Freedom Fighter Museums in Indian **Ocean states**.
- The **Bhagwan Birsa Munda Memorial Udyan cum Freedom Fighters Museum was inaugurated in Ranchi in 2021**.
- The museum honors **Bhagwan Birsa Munda and other tribal freedom fighters like Shahid Budhu Bhagat, Sidhu-Kanhu, Nilambar-Pitambar, Diwa-Kisun, TelangaKhadiya, Gaya Munda, Jatra Bhagat, Poto H, Bhagirath Manjhi, Ganga Narayan Singh**.
- Tribal Freedom Fighters' Museums are expected to become **tourist attractions due to their location, architecture, and audio-video displays**.
- These museums will play a crucial role in **preserving and promoting tribal culture, handicrafts, and tribal art**.
- They will showcase the struggles of tribals for protecting forests, land rights, and their culture.
- The museums will also highlight the **biological and cultural diversity of the country, which is significant for nation-building**.

Pradhan Mantri Aadi Adarsh Gram Yojana

- **Pradhan Mantri Aadi Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAAGY)** initiated to **target remote and underdeveloped tribal villages**.
- Aims to accelerate **development in these villages** lagging behind in development indicators.
- Emphasizes the convergence of programs from **41 ministries** to ensure **comprehensive**

development.

- Goal is to transform these villages into model villages (Adarsh Gram) through holistic development approaches.

Janiatiya Gaurav Divas

- **In 2021, the Government of India designated November 15th as "Janjatiya Gaurav Divas."**
- This declaration is made **to honor tribal freedom fighters for their contributions.**
- The aim is to acknowledge their role in the freedom struggle and cultural heritage preservation.
- Additionally, the day serves to **reignite efforts for socio-economic development in tribal regions.**
- **November 15th** is chosen as it commemorates the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda, a significant tribal leader and freedom fighter.

1000 Springs Initiative

- **In 2019, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) launched the '1000 Spring Initiative' to safeguard natural springs and improve water access for tribal communities in rural areas.**
- The initiative trained tribal youths as barefoot hydrologists, combining traditional and scientific knowledge to identify, map, protect, and manage springs sustainably.
- **Over 550 springs** have been mapped and cataloged using a web-based 'GIS enabled Spring ATLAS'.
- Community participation is central, with various government schemes like **MGNREGA** and watershed development being integrated to support the initiative's goals.

PM Vishwakarma Scheme

- **The PM Vishwakarma Scheme** is launched on **Vishwakarma Jayanti** to support traditional artisans and craftspeople.
- **It includes a logo, tagline, and portal launch alongside the scheme.**
- Components released include a customized stamp sheet, a tool kit e-booklet, and a video.
- The scheme targets Indian artisans in eighteen traditional trades.
- **Registration for eligible beneficiaries (Vishwakarmas) is free through common service centres using a biometric-based portal.**
- Benefits include recognition through a **certificate and ID card, skill upgradation with basic and advanced training, and a toolkit incentive.**
- Collateral-free credit support **up to 1 lakh (first tranche) and up to 2 lakh (second tranche) at a concessional interest rate of 5% is provided.**
- Additional incentives include support for digital transactions and marketing.
- The Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprise is the nodal ministry for the scheme.

Welfare of Other Backward Classes

- The **Second Backward Classes Commission (commonly known as Mandal Commission), constituted under Article 340, and submitted its report in 1980.**
- In the light of this report, the **Government of India provided 27% reservation** in central government posts for persons belonging to the socially and economically backward classes, (also referred to as "Other Backward Classes" or OBCs).
- The **National Commission for Backward Classes was set up in 1993** as per the provision of the National Commission for **Backward Classes Act, 1993**. The Constitution (**One Hundred and Second Amendment) Act passed in 2018** gave constitutional status to the Commission.

Pre-Matric Scholarship for OBCs

- The aim of this Scheme is to **motivate children of OBCs studying at pre-matric stage.** In this scheme, the expenditure is **shared between centre and state in 50:50 ratio.**
- The income ceiling for eligibility should **not exceed `2,50,500/-per annum.**

Post-Matric Scholarship for OBCs

- The objective of the Scheme is to **provide financial assistance to the OBC students** studying at post-matriculation or post-secondary stage to enable them to complete their education.

National Fellowship for OBC Students

- The scheme aims to **provide financial assistance to OBC (Other Backward Class)** students for pursuing quality **higher education** leading to degrees like M.Phil and Ph.D.
- It offers **300 Junior Research Fellowships (JRFs) annually since 2014-15 and 300 Senior Research Fellowships (SRFs) starting from 2016-17.**
- From the **academic year 2018-19, the intake for JRFs is being increased to 1000.**
- The **University Grants Commission (UGC)** is responsible for implementing the scheme and advertises it through media for suitable dates.
- The scheme covers all universities and institutions recognized by the UGC.

VISVAS Yojana Scheme

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment launched a scheme called **Vanchit Ikai Samooh aur Vargo ko Arthik Sahayata (VISVAS), previously known as the Interest Subvention Scheme (OSS).**
- The scheme aims to **benefit over 3.5 lakhs** individuals from the Other Backward Classes (**OBC**) and **Scheduled Caste communities.**
- Vanchit Ikai Samooh aur Vargon ki Aarthik Sahayta Yojana (**VISVAS Yojana**) targets **Scheduled Castes and OBC Self Help Groups (SHGs)** or individual members with an **annual family income up to 3 lakh.**
- Eligible SHGs will receive interest subvention on loans/credit **up to 4.00 lakh at an interest rate of 5% per annum.**
- Individual members will be eligible for interest subvention on loans **up to 2.00 lakh at 5% interest per annum.**

Dr. Ambedkar Scheme of Interest Subsidy on Educational Loans

- **Scheme objective:** The Scheme aims to **provide interest subsidy to meritorious students** from Other Backward Classes (**OBCs**) and **Economically Backward Classes (EBCs).**
- **Purpose:** Facilitate higher education abroad and improve employability among the target groups.
- **Launch and revision:** Launched in 2014-15 and revised in 2017-18.
- **Eligibility criteria for OBC candidates:**
 - Total income from all sources of employed candidates or their parents/guardians (in case of unemployed candidates) should not exceed the present **creamy layer criteria.**

Dr. Ambedkar Scholarship for DNTs

- Centrally sponsored scheme **initiated in 2014-15** for the **welfare of Denotified Tribes (DNT) students not covered under SC, ST, or OBC categories.**
- Income ceiling for eligibility is set at Rs. [specify the amount] per annum.
- Implemented through state governments/UT administrations.
- Expenditure is shared between the **center and state in a 75:25 ratio.**

Welfare of Persons with Disabilities

- **In 2012,** the Department of Disability Affairs was established separately from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to address policy issues and initiatives concerning **Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).**
- The department serves as a central agency for matters related to disability, aiming to **enhance coordination among various stakeholders such as central ministries, state/UT governments, and NGOs.**
- **Census 2011** indicates that there are **2.68 crore PWDs in India, constituting 2.21% of the total population.**

- Among these, approximately **1.50 crore are men, and 1.18 crore are women.**
- Disabilities encompass a range, including visual, hearing, speech, and locomotor impairments, mental illness, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, and others.

Constitutional Provisions

- The Constitution of India, in its Preamble, aims to **ensure justice (social, economic, and political), liberty (of thought, expression, belief, faith, and worship), and equality (of status and opportunity) to all citizens.**
- **Part III of the Constitution guarantees six Fundamental Rights**, including Right to Equality, Right to Freedom, Right against Exploitation, Right to Freedom of Religion, Cultural and Educational Rights, and Right to Constitutional Remedies.
- Persons with Disabilities (**PwDs**) are entitled to these Fundamental Rights, even though they are **not explicitly mentioned in this part of the Constitution.**
- **Part IV of the Constitution** includes **Directive Principles of State Policy**, which although **non-justiciable**, are fundamental in guiding the governance of the country. These principles provide guidance to future legislatures and executives.
- The **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD)** has initiated the Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan), a nationwide effort to achieve universal accessibility for PwDs.
- **The campaign targets three main areas: the built-up environment, transportation ecosystem, and information and communication ecosystem.**
- Ambitious targets with defined timelines have been set, and the campaign aims to leverage IT and social media for awareness and engagement of stakeholders.
- States have been asked to identify **50 to 100 public buildings** in major cities and citizen-centric public websites that, if made fully accessible, would greatly benefit PwDs.

Legislative Framework

- The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) oversees legislation related to empowerment of persons with disabilities.
- Key laws under its purview include:
 - The **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.**
 - The **Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992.**
 - The National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation, and **Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999.**

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

- The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 was **passed in 2016**, replacing the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.
- **According to Section 2(s) of the Act**, a **"person with disability"** is defined as someone with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that, when interacting with barriers, hinder their full and effective participation in society equally with others.
- The new Act is focused on rights, whereas the previous Act was focused on welfare.
- **The RPwD Act, 2016** outlines various rights and entitlements for persons with disabilities, including equality, non-discrimination, community life, protection against cruelty, access to justice, legal capacity, living in family and community, reproductive rights, etc.
- **The number of recognized disabilities has increased from 7 to 21.**
- The Act mandates governments to create schemes and programs in areas such as inclusive education, skill development, social security, health, rehabilitation, recreation, and sports to empower and include persons with disabilities effectively.
- **Special provisions regarding education, employment, and social security are made for persons with benchmark disabilities.**

Scholarship for Students with Disabilities

- The Department is implementing a Scheme titled '**Scholarships for Students with Disabilities**'.

- Six components of the Scheme include:
 - **Pre-matric** (Classes IX and X)
 - **Post-matric** (Classes XI to Post Graduate Degree/Diploma)
 - **Top Class Education** (Graduate and Post Graduate Degree/Diploma in notified Institutes of excellence in education)
 - **National Fellowship** (M. Phil/Ph.D in Indian Universities)
 - **National Overseas Scholarship** (Master's Degree and Ph.D in Foreign Universities)
 - **Free Coaching** (for competitive exams for group A and B posts and entrance examinations for admission to technical and professional courses).
- The scholarship amount is released directly to the Students' bank account in DBT mode.

National Action Plan for Skill Development of PwDs

- The Department implements the "**National Action Plan for Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)**," a central sector scheme **launched in 2015**.
- The aim is to **enhance the skills of persons** with disabilities (PwDs) to meet job requirements in both public and private sectors, facilitating gainful wage employment or self-employment.
- Skill training is provided through various channels, including organizations under the department's administrative control like **NHFDC, National Institutes (NIs), and their Composite Regional Centers (CRCs)**.
- Training is also offered through government and non-government organizations empanelled as **Training Partners (ETPs)** across the country.
- The scheme's ultimate goal is to enable PwDs to participate effectively in the workforce.

National Trust

- The National Trust for the welfare of persons with autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation, and multiple disabilities is a statutory body established under the National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation, and **Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999**.
- Its primary goals include **enabling and empowering individuals with these disabilities to live as independently as possible**.
- It also provides support to registered organizations offering need-based services.
- The National Trust works to develop procedures for the appointment of legal guardians for individuals with disabilities who require such protection.

Mental Health Act

- Mental illness is acknowledged as a form of disability under the **Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act of 1995**.
- The **Mental Health Act of 1987** regulates the treatment and care of individuals with mental illnesses.
- Administration of the Mental Health Act falls **under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- Both Acts aim to ensure equal opportunities, protection of rights, and full participation for individuals with mental illnesses.

National Policy for Older Persons

- It was **announced in 1999** to reaffirm the commitment to ensure the well-being of the older persons.
- The Policy envisaged state support to ensure financial and food security, health care, shelter and other needs of older persons, equitable share in development, protection against abuse and exploitation, and availability of services to improve the quality of their lives.
- **The primary objectives were:**
 - to **encourage individuals** to make provision for their own as well as their **spouse's old age**;
 - to encourage families to take care of their older family members;
 - to enable and support voluntary and non-governmental organizations to supplement the care provided by the family;

- to provide adequate healthcare facility to the elderly;
- to **promote research and training facilities** to train geriatric care givers and organizers of services for the elderly; etc.

National Council for Older Persons (NCOP)

- The **government has reconstituted NCOP** to advise and aid the government on developing policies and programmes for older persons.
- It **provides feedback to the government** on the implementation of the national policy on older persons and the specific initiatives for older persons.
- The **NCOP is the highest body to advise and coordinate with the government** in the formulation and implementation of policy and programmes for the welfare of the aged.
- **Under the Integrated Programme for Older Persons**, financial assistance **upto 90% of the project cost is provided to NGOs** for establishing and maintaining old age homes, day care centres, etc.
- In order to have a definite structure as well as regional representation, the Council has been reconstituted and **renamed as National Council of Senior Citizens (NCSrC) in 2012**.

Drugs and Psychotropic Substances

- The **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985**, was enacted, inter alia, to curb drug abuse.
- The Act provides that the government may, in its discretion, establish as many centres as it thinks fit for identification, treatment, education, after-care, rehabilitation, social reintegration of addicts and for supply, subject to such conditions and in such manner as **may be prescribed, by the concerned government of any narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances to the addicts registered with the government and to others where such supply is a medical necessity**.
- Accordingly, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has been supporting **Integrated Rehabilitation Centre for Addicts (IRCA)**s under the Scheme of Prevention of Alcoholism and Substance (Drugs) Abuse being run by voluntary organizations.

Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Policy

- **The policy aims to:**
 - spell out the policy towards narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances;
 - serve as a guide to various ministries and organisations in the government and to the state governments as well as international organisations, NGOs, etc., and
 - **Re-assert India's commitment** to combat the drug menace in a holistic manner.

Minorities

- The Ministry of Minority Affairs was **established in 2006**.
- It has been **mandated for formulation of policies, schemes and programmes** for welfare and socio-economic development of six notified minority communities namely, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis and Jains. **From October 2016**, the mandate of the Ministry has been expanded to manage Haj Pilgrimage as well.

15-Point Programme for Minorities

- The **objectives** of the programme are:
 - Enhancing opportunities for education,
 - ensuring an **equitable share for minorities in economic activities** and employment, through existing and new schemes, enhanced credit support for self-employment and recruitment to state and central government jobs,
 - improving the **conditions of living of minorities by ensuring an appropriate share** for them in infrastructure development schemes,
 - **prevention and control** of communal disharmony and violence.

- An important aim of the new programme is to ensure that the benefits of various government schemes for the underprivileged reach the disadvantaged sections of the minority communities.
- The programme was **announced in 2006**.

Scholarship Schemes for Minority Students

- The Ministry implements **three scholarship schemes** for minority communities: pre-matric, post-matric, and merit-cum-means based scholarships.
- The schemes are managed through the **National Scholarship Portal (NSP-2.0)** and utilize Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) for fund distribution.
- Details of the schemes:
 - Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme:
 - 57.11 lakh scholarships awarded in **2021-22**.
 - ₹44 crore released during **2022-23 till December 2022**.
 - Post Matric Scholarship Scheme:
 - Launched in **2007**, a Central Sector Scheme.
 - Scholarships for studies in recognized educational institutions.
 - **7.20 lakh** scholarships awarded in 2021-22.
 - **₹28 crore** released during 2022-23 till December 2022.
 - Merit-Cum-Means Based Scholarship Scheme:
 - Launched in **2007**, a Central Sector Scheme.
 - Scholarships for professional and technical courses.
 - **60,000** fresh scholarships proposed annually, with **30% reserved for girls**.
 - **1.32 lakh** scholarships awarded in 2021-22.
 - Eligibility: Admission in recognized technical or professional institutions.

National Commission for Minorities

- The Minorities Commission was set up in **1978** and became a statutory body with the enactment of the National Commission for **Minorities Act, 1992** after which it was renamed as the National Commission for Minorities.
- The **NCM Act, 1992** was amended in **1995** which provided for a **Vice Chairperson** in the Commission.
- With the **1995 amendment**, the Commission's composition was expanded to **7 members (including a Chairperson and a Vice Chairperson)**.
- The provision under the Act stipulates that five members including the Chairpersons shall be from amongst the minority communities.

State Commission for Minorities

- **Eighteen state governments/UT administrations namely**, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Government of NCT of Delhi, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttarakhand, West Bengal and Punjab have set up statutory commissions for minorities.

National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities

Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities (CLM)

- **The Office of the CLM** was established in 1957 in pursuance of the provision of **Article 350-B** of the Constitution which envisages investigation by CLM of all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the linguistic minorities in the country under the Constitution and reporting to the President upon these matters at such intervals as the President may direct.

Constitutional Safeguards for Linguistic Minorities

- **Article 29 and 30** of the Indian Constitution seek to protect the interests of minorities and

recognize their right to conserve their **distinct language, script or culture and to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.**

- **Article 347** makes provision for Presidential direction for official recognition of any language spoken by a substantial proportion to the populations of a state or any part thereof for such purpose as the President may specify.
- **Article 350** gives the right to submit representation for redressal of grievances to any authority of the Union or a state in any of the languages used in the Union/states.
- **Article 360A** provides for instruction in the **mother tongue** at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups.
- **Article 350B** provides for a **Special Officer** designated as Commissioner for **Linguistic Minorities** to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under the Constitution.

Women and Child Development

- The **development of women and children** is of paramount importance and sets the pace for overall development.
- **The Ministry of Women and Child Development** has the main responsibility to advance the rights and concerns of women and children and to promote their survival, protection, development and **participation in a holistic manner.**

Acts relating to Women and Children

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace

- The **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013** aims to create safe working environments for women and promote equality of status and opportunity.
- It **applies to all women, regardless of age** or employment status, and safeguards them from sexual harassment in both organized and unorganized workplaces.
- The Act covers various categories such as students, apprentices, laborers, domestic workers, and even visitors to workplaces.
- The Ministry has developed an online complaint management system called **Sexual Harassment electronic-Box (SHe-Box)** to facilitate the registration of complaints related to sexual harassment at the workplace.
- **SHe-Box provides an online platform** for both organized and unorganized, private or public sector workers to register complaints.
- Additionally, the **Ministry has released a Handbook and Training Module** to aid in understanding and implementing the Act effectively.

Child Marriage

- The Ministry is actively combating child marriage through various measures.
- The **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006**, aims to penalize those involved in promoting, performing, or abetting child marriages.
- **States and Union Territories** are urged to ensure effective implementation of the Act.
- The Ministry's efforts include **education on child marriage issues.**
- Awareness campaigns are conducted through press and electronic media advertisements.
- Platforms like **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**, International Women's Day, and National Girl Child Day are utilized to spotlight women's issues, including child marriage.

Domestic Violence

- The Ministry is focused on safeguarding women's rights both inside and outside the home.
- The main legislation addressing domestic violence is the Protection of Women from **Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005.**
- The **PWDVA** aims to **prevent violence and offer immediate relief in cases of domestic violence**, regardless of the woman's relationship with the perpetrator.
- It **acknowledges women's right** to live free from any form of violence within the family.

- The law covers matters related to domestic violence and those incidental to it.

Dowry Prohibition

- The **Dowry Prohibition Act was established in 1961** to tackle the social issue of dowry.
- The **Act provides a definition of dowry and prohibits its exchange, penalizing both the giver and receiver.**
- It includes measures to **prevent and punish the giving, taking, or facilitating of dowry.**
- The Act incorporates Dowry Prohibition Officers to oversee the enforcement of the law.
- These officers are responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of the legislation.

Indecent Representation of Women

- The Indecent Representation of **Women Act, 1986**, was established to prevent the **portrayal of women in a derogatory or indecent manner across various mediums** like advertisements, publications, writings, paintings, figures, or any other form of representation.
- The Act defines "**indecent representation of women**" as any depiction that portrays a woman's figure, form, body, or any part thereof in a manner that is considered indecent, derogatory, or likely to harm public morality.
- It **prohibits the sale, distribution, or circulation of materials** containing such representations, including books, pamphlets, and other forms of media.
- The **primary aim of the Act** is to safeguard the dignity and respect of women in society and to prevent the dissemination of content that could potentially corrupt or harm public morals.

Immoral Traffic Prevention

- The **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (ITPA)** is a Central legislation addressing prostitution in India.
- Prostitution is defined under the Act as **commercial sexual exploitation.**
- The Act penalizes individuals involved in facilitating and abetting commercial sexual exploitation, including clients and those living off the earnings of prostitutes.
- It mandates welfare measures for the rehabilitation of victims, including the **establishment and management** of protective homes by state governments.

Schemes for Women

- The Ministry has initiated '**Mission Shakti**' as an Integrated Women Empowerment Programme during the **15th Finance Commission period from 2021-22 to 2025-26.**
- The program aims to ensure the safety, security, and empowerment of women.
- It operates under a mission mode, emphasizing institutional and convergence mechanisms.
- Mission Shakti aligns with the Government's vision of '**women-led development**' by addressing women's issues throughout their life cycle.
- It **emphasizes women's participation** in nation-building through collaboration across ministries, departments, and governance levels.
- The program encourages the involvement and support of Panchayati Raj Institutions and other local self-governance bodies.
- It also **focuses on Jan Sahabhagita** (public participation) and strengthens digital infrastructure for efficient service delivery tracking.
- Mission Shakti comprises two sub-schemes: "**Sambal**" and "**Samarthva**".

Sambal Sub-scheme (Safety and Security of Women):

- **One Stop Centres (OSCs):**
 - Provide **integrated services** like legal counselling, psycho-social support, information about available facilities, etc.
 - Implementation since **2015** across the country.
 - Facilitate access to **various services including police, medical, legal, and temporary shelter for women affected by violence.**
 - Integration with women **helpline 181** and other services for better support.

- **Women Helpline (181-WHL):**
 - Emergency/non-emergency response system.
 - Toll-free telephonic short code.
 - Integrated with **ERSS (112)** and other helplines/institutions.
 - Operationalized in **34 states/UTs since 2015.**
 - Received more than **84.00 lakh calls till December 2022.**
 - Funded through **Nirbhaya Fund.**
 - Ministry committed to integrating WHLs with other helplines like **ERSS-112.**
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP):**
 - Main initiative for behavioural and **mindset change.**
 - Expanded to cover all districts of the country.
 - **100%** funded by the central government.
- **Nari Adalat:**
 - New **sub-component** providing women with an alternate grievance redressal mechanism.
 - Resolves cases of petty nature such as **harassment, subversion, curtailment of rights, or entitlements.**

'Samarthya' is geared towards the empowerment of women:

- Shakti Sadans serve as **integrated relief and rehabilitation** homes for women victims of trafficking and destitution, merging Swadhar Greh and Ujjawala Homes under the Mission Shakti initiative.
- **Shakti Sadans** aim to provide a **safe and enabling environment** for women in distress to make a fresh start in life.
- Shakti Sadans offer vocational training, banking facilities, and social security benefits, and also accommodate accompanying children.
- **Sakhi Niwas** offers safe **accommodation for working women**, with provision for day care centers.
- **Palna Ghar** provides daycare **facilities for children** of working women, aiming to enhance female labor force participation.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)** compensates for wage loss during pregnancy and childbirth, now covering benefits for the second child if it's a girl, providing a maternity benefit of at least five thousand rupees in two instalments.

The Sakhi Dashboard

- The **Sakhi Dashboard launched in 2019** is an online platform.
- Its purpose is to procure real-time information and manage cases of **violence-affected women.**
- It caters to women approaching **Sakhi One Stop Centres, 181 Women HelpLines, and similar services.**
- The platform aims to streamline processes and improve response times for assisting women in distress.

Child Development

- **Children are considered crucial for the future of the country**, being the cornerstone of its development.
- The well-being of children is vital for national progress, as they represent the future human resource pool.
- India's population includes a **significant portion of children aged 0-6 years, according to the 2011 Census.**
- The **Ministry of Women and Child Development** oversees various initiatives aimed at the growth, safeguarding, and welfare of children.

Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0

- The Government of India has approved **Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0**, aiming for a strategic shift in mission mode **to nurture health, wellness, and immunity against malnutrition.**

- The Anganwadi Services, the **scheme for Adolescent Girls**, and **Poshan Abhiyan** have been realigned under **Poshan 2.0** to enhance nutritional outcomes.
- Components under **Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0** have been reorganized into three primary verticals:
 - Nutrition support for Poshan for **adolescent girls**.
 - Early childhood care and education (**3-6 years**).
 - Anganwadi infrastructure improvement, including modern, upgraded **Saksham Anganwadis**.
- The **Anganwadi Services is a flagship program** of the Government of India and is among the world's largest and unique programs for early childhood care and development.
- Beneficiaries under this scheme include children aged **6 months to 6 years, pregnant women, and lactating mothers**.

Objectives

- **Anganwadi services** are a centrally sponsored scheme managed by states/UTs with several objectives:
 - Improve the nutritional and health status of children aged **6 months to 6 years**.
 - Lay the foundation for proper psychological, physical, and social development of the child.
 - Reduce mortality, morbidity, malnutrition, and school dropouts.
 - **Enhance the mother's capability** to care for the child's health and nutrition through education.
- **The scheme includes six services:**
 - Supplementary Nutrition (SNP)
 - Pre-school non-formal education
 - Nutrition and health education
 - Immunization
 - Health check-up
 - Referral services.

Poshan Abhiyaan

- **Poshan Abhiyaan**, formerly known as **National Nutrition Mission**, aims to achieve the goal of **Suposhit Bharat (Well-nourished India)** in a mission mode.
- It employs technology and behavioral change strategies to improve nutrition.
- The program emphasizes public participation and aims to convert the nutrition improvement agenda into a **Jan Andolan (people's movement)**.
- Specific targets are set across various monitoring parameters to measure progress.
- **Poshan Abhiyaan is implemented nationwide**, covering all states and union territories (UTs).

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights

- The **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** was established in **2007** as a statutory body under the Commission for **Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005**.
- Its primary mandate is to ensure alignment of laws, policies, programs, and administrative mechanisms with the perspective of child rights.
- This **alignment is based on the principles** laid out in the Constitution of India and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

- India acceded to the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1992**.
- As a signatory, India must submit periodic reports on measures taken to implement the Convention, as per **Article 44**.
- Reports follow guidelines from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.
- The Country Report involves various stakeholders: **sectoral Ministries, national level institutes, civil society, community, and children**.
- Consultations are held with central ministries, national level institutions, and civil society (both governmental and non-governmental) for report preparation.

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

- The **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012** was implemented to address child abuse cases.
- It defines a child as anyone **below 18 years old** and is **gender-neutral**.
- The Act safeguards children from sexual assault, harassment, and pornography.
- Offences are considered '**aggravated**' if committed by individuals in positions of trust or authority over the child.
- Special Courts are established for the trial of **POCSO Act** offences with the child's best interest being paramount.
- Child-friendly procedures are incorporated for reporting, recording evidence, investigation, and trial.
- The **POCSO e-Box, initiated in 2016**, facilitates direct online reporting of sexual offences against children.
- Due to rising rates of child crimes, the **POCSO Act was amended in 2019**.
- The amendment includes the introduction of the death penalty for aggravated **penetrative sexual assault cases**.
- **Child pornography is defined**, and appropriate punishments are outlined.
- Provisions are made to protect vulnerable children during natural disasters.
- Punishments for supplying chemical substances to induce early sexual maturity in children are included.

POCSO Rules, 2020

- The **POCSO Rules** underwent review post-amendments in the **POCSO Act, 2012**.
- The **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Rules, 2020**, were officially notified, replacing the previous **POCSO Rules from 2012**.
- Coordination efforts were made with stakeholder ministries, state governments, and UTs administrations to raise awareness about the **POCSO Act, 2012, as amended in 2019**, and to devise effective measures for its implementation.
- The **Ministry engaged in coordination with various ministries and states/UTs** to take appropriate action, aiming for increased awareness, expedited justice, and enhanced services for child victims under **POCSO**.

Pensioners' Welfare

- The **Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare (DPPW)** was established in **1985** under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.
- Its primary role is to formulate policies and coordinate matters concerning retirement benefits for central government employees.
- DPPW **serves as the central authority** for pension-related issues, providing advice on the interpretation of **Pension Rules based on references from other ministries/departments**.
- Responsibilities include the formulation of policies and coordination of retirement benefits, administration of various pension rules such as the Central Civil Services (**Pension**) **Rules, 2021, earlier known as CCF (Pension) rules, 1972, the Central Civil Services (Commutation of Pension) Rules, 1981, and the Central Civil Services (Extraordinary Pension) Rules, 1939**.
- The department also handles matters concerning amendments to or relaxation of pension rules and coordinates policies related to the welfare of central government pensioners.

National Pension System

- A new pension scheme called the **National Pension System (NPS)** is managed by the Ministry of Finance's Department of Financial Services.
- Since **January 1, 2004**, it has become mandatory for all new recruits to the central government service (excluding the armed forces) to be enrolled in the NPS.
- **In 2020**, the Department of Pension and **Pensioners' Welfare issued instructions** stating that candidates declared successful in recruitment results declared before **January 2004** for vacancies

occurring on or before **December 2003** are eligible for coverage under the **Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, 1972**.

- Government servants declared successful in recruitment results before December 2003 against vacancies **before January 2004**, and who joined service **after 2004** under the National Pension System, have the option for a one-time switch to the **Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, 1972**.

Schemes of Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare

Centralised Pension Grievance Redress and Monitoring System

- **Centralised Pension Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPENGRAMS) initiated in 2007.**
- Aimed at ensuring prompt resolution and efficient monitoring of **pension-related grievances**.
- Operates as a centralized **web-enabled platform**.
- Allows for registration of pension grievances.
- Facilitates online disposal of grievances by the concerned authority.
- Designed to **streamline the pension grievance redressal process** and **enhance transparency**.

Development of North Eastern Region

- The **Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DONER)** oversees planning, execution, and monitoring of development schemes in the North Eastern Region.
- DONER's vision aims to **accelerate socio-economic development** in the region to achieve growth parity with the rest of the country.
- Responsibilities of DONER include:
 - **Planning, execution, and monitoring** of developmental schemes and projects in sectors like power, irrigation, roads, and communications.
 - Implementation of the **Hill Area Development Programme** in the region.
 - Management of non-lapsable funds dedicated to the region's development.
 - Establishment and management of **North East Development Finance Institution**.
 - Oversight of road works financed by the central government either wholly or partially.

North Eastern Council

- The **North Eastern Council (NEC)** was established in **1971** by the North Eastern Council Act.
- Initially, it served as an advisory body aimed at ensuring balanced and coordinated development among seven states in the **northeastern region**.
- **In 2002, the NEC Act was amended to include Sikkim as the eighth member state.**
- Following this amendment, the **NEC's role** expanded to function as a statutory regional planning body for the entire northeastern region.
- The **primary objectives of the NEC** include facilitating effective coordination among member states and promoting comprehensive development in the region.
- The inclusion of Sikkim broadened the scope of the **NEC's authority** and influence in **addressing regional development challenges**.

Various Schemes

Non Lapsable Central Pool of Resources

- The **Non Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR)** Scheme was initiated in **1998** by the Planning Commission and later transferred to the Department of North Eastern Region (**DoNER**) in **2001**.
- It aimed to sanction projects across various sectors to develop the region based on guidelines set and periodically revised.
- The primary objective of NLCPR is to **address the infrastructure gap** in the region by prioritising projects identified by state governments.

- In **2016**, the scheme underwent revisions after a comprehensive review conducted during **2015-16**.
- The revised guidelines aimed to enhance transparency and participation in the process by **empowering state governments**.
- Additionally, the revisions aimed to **discourage the accumulation of funds and expedite the process from project conceptualization to completion**.

Gross Budgetary Support

- **Gross Budgetary Support (GBS)** involves **allocating 10%** of Annual Plan Budgets by Central Ministries for the **Northeastern Region (NER)**.
- Initiated by the government to address the development deficit of the region.
- Since **1998-99**, **10%** of the Annual Plan Budget of **52** ministries has been earmarked annually for the **NER**.
- Despite the NER comprising **7.9%** of India's land mass and **3.76%** of the population (**as per Census 2011**), this allocation persists.
- All ministries/departments, except a few exemptions, have been allocating at least **10%** of their annual budget for expenditure in the NER **since 1998-99**.
- This allocation excludes funds for externally aided schemes and local or event-specific projects.

Prime Minister's Development Initiative

- A new initiative called **Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North-East Region (PM-DevINE)** was introduced in the Union Budget of **2022-23**.
- The initiative aims at **facilitating rapid and comprehensive development** in the North-East region by financing infrastructure and social development projects.
- Projects under PM-DevINE will be determined **based on the identified needs** of the states in the region.
- It is emphasized that PM-DevINE will complement existing central and state schemes rather than replacing them.
- **The objectives of PM-DevINE include:**
 - Convergent funding of infrastructure projects, aligned with the **PM GatiShakti initiative**.
 - Supporting social development projects that cater to the specific requirements of the North-East.
 - Facilitating livelihood opportunities for **youth and women**.
 - Addressing developmental gaps across various sectors in the region.

DONER and AKAM

- The Ministry of DoNER organized the North East Festival as part of **Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM)** across all eight states of the region.
- The festival aims to celebrate India's **75 years of Independence**, showcasing its history, culture, and achievements during AKAM.
- The focus of the festival was to highlight the beauty and achievements of the North Eastern Region across various fields.
- It served as a platform to showcase the rich diversity, culture, and potential of the North East.