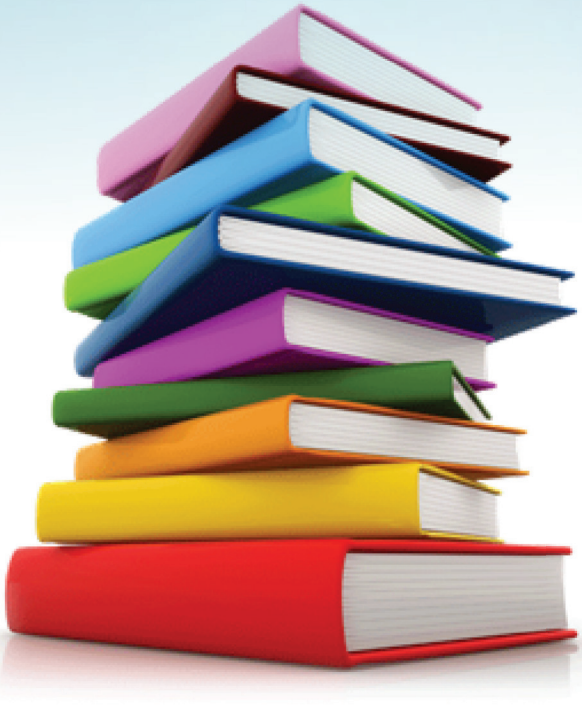
PLUTUS IAS

Weekly CURRENT AFFAIRS



PLUTUS IAS WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS 13-3-2023 to 19-3-2023

Corporate Office :

706 1st Floor Dr. Mukherjee Nagar Near Batra Cinema Delhi – 110009

17A/41, 1st Floor, WEA Karol Bagh, New Delhi 110005

Basement 8 , Apsara Arcade, Karolbagh metro station Gate no. – 6, New Delhi 110005

C 59 Noida Sector 2 , Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201301

Phone: 08448440231 **Email:** info@plutusias.com **Web:** http://plutusias.com/

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CURRENT AFFAIRS
MARCH 2023

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and details the ongoing proceedings in the Supreme Court of India regarding the legalization of same-sex marriage. The government has filed an affidavit stating its non-supportive stance.

SAME SEX MARRIAGE

FOR PRELIMS:

- Supreme Court cases related to LGBTQ rights.
- Abolition of Section 377 of IPC.
- Transgender Rights Act.

FOR MAINS:

- GS 1 – Indian Society.
- The debate between societal and individual interests.
- Institution of Marriage

WHY IN NEWS:

In an affidavit presented to the Supreme Court, the Centre expressed disapproval of same-sex marriage and cited the commonly held belief in India that a marriage between a biological man and woman is a sacred union, a sacrament, and a Zanskar.

> The institution of marriage has a sanctity attached to it, and in major parts of the country, it is regarded as a sacrament, a holy union, and a sanskar

> In our country, despite statutory recognition of the relationship of marriage between a biological man and a biological woman, marriage necessarily depends upon age-old customs, rituals, practices, cultural ethos and societal values
>
> UNION GOVERNMENT AFFIDAVIT

THE RATIONALE BEHIND THE STANCE OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT

The Government has adopted a conservative approach not reflecting modern values. It has based its argument considering the institution of marriage as a sacrament, a holy union, and a Zanskar. Invoking a religious spiritual basis also resonated with a large section of the society that considers same-sex marriage an "unnatural act". It further stated that the act of marriage derives its origin from age-old customs, rituals, practices, cultural ethos, and societal values, To caution the SC not to interfere in such matters it further stated that any kind of "deviation" from this "statutorily, religiously and socially" accepted norm in "human relationship" can only happen through the legislature and not the Supreme Court.

SHOULD SC INTERFERE IN SENSITIVE ISSUES OF PUBLIC CONCERN?

- The government's cautionary note to the SC to let the legislature decide on such issues is party right. The elected representatives are legitimate voices of the people and any decision taken by them after debates and deliberation have a chance of better acceptability and legitimacy. The actions of SC in the Sabarimala case led to wide protests creating a social crisis.
- But, on the other hand, it has been seen that the governments are reluctant to take up sensitive issues that are against the majoritarian-held views. They fear the wrath of the public and their vote bank and sacrifice individual rights.

- The Supreme Court which is the protector of individual freedom has intervened on many occasions to uphold the fundamental rights of people. It has delivered such judgments which would not have been taken by governments. It has upheld that tradition and costumes will be tested on the altar of "Constitutional morality"

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF MARRIAGE IN INDIA?

The marriage tradition is a social process where couples in the presence of people come into a union. There is no explicit requirement to get legal sanction. The willing couple can solemnize their marriage legally, commonly called a "court marriage". The Special Marriage Act, of 1954 has provision for marriage for the people of India and all Indian nationals in foreign countries, irrespective of religion or faith followed by either party. The LGBTQ community is demanding their inclusion in the Act so that they can marry and gain legal recognition.

ISSUES INVOLVED IN SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

- Open discrimination: The nonrecognition of a homosexual relationship is a discriminatory act by the State. A person irrespective of their choices is free to choose whom to love and marry. The SC in its previous judgment in Puttaswamy held that privacy is a fundamental right.
- Violation of fundamental rights: The Indian Constitution grants the citizens a certain set of inviolable and inalienable rights. These rights cannot be infringed by the State on account of one's choices.
- Natural and Unnatural relationship: The argument given by governments across the world against homosexual relationships is that these are 'unnatural' unions. It must be noted that with evolution the definition of natural and unnatural has changed with more emphasis on individual rights.
- Legal issues related to the progeny: A homosexual couple faces issues of legal recognition when they surrogate or adopt a baby. The lack of a legal framework also infringes on the right of the child to have legal safety of possession.
- Social morality vs Constitutional morality: There is a conflict between social and constitutional values. Indian Constitution and judiciary's interpretation has been more liberal and individual focussed than the larger social ethics. A lot of societal ills have been curbed when tested on the altar of constitutional values. The previous case of Sabarimala ending discrimination on a gender basis was heavily opposed by society.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE LEGAL RECOGNITION OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE?

There is a need to amend SMA and legalize unions of the same genders lawfully. The

legal framework can make LGBTQ a separate category like religion, faith, etc. It can also add provisions for the child adopted by the couple.

Way Forward

- Raise Societal awareness and destigmatize homosexual individuals: The awareness campaigns must be made to understand the issues related to homosexuals. The wide societal support generated can remove the negative stereotypes attached to these people.
- Encouragement of role models: There are individuals with influencing positions in society who are open about their sexuality. They must step forward and share their experiences and stories.
- Anti-discriminatory legal framework: The law must be amended in keeping pace with the changing times. There is a need to amend property, adoption, and inheritance related to laws to provide a seamless antidiscrimination framework.

Source:

Indian Express

MISSION FOR INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT OF HORTICULTURE (MIDH)

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details the Mission for integrated development of the horticulture scheme.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- The cultivation area of Kamalam (Dragon Fruit) is expected to expand to 50,000 hectares in five years under the MIDH scheme from the present 3,000 ha.
- Under MIDH, the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has approved a Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Kamalam Fruit to be established by the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR), Bengaluru to focus on production, post-harvest and value addition of Kamalam.

FOR PRELIMS:

- Features of the scheme
- Target beneficiaries of the scheme
- Ministry implementing the scheme

FOR MAINS:

GS 2, Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

- Aims and Objectives behind the launch of the initiative
- Issues related to the implementation of the scheme.
- Solutions for successful implementation of the scheme.

WHAT IS THE MISSION FOR THE INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT OF HORTICULTURE?

The Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) is a centrally sponsored scheme implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India.

AIM OF THE MISSION MIDH

The mission aims to promote holistic growth and development of the horticulture sector by providing support for the production, post-harvest management, and marketing of fruits, vegetables, and other horticulture crops.

Horticulture

OBJECTIVES OF HORTICULTURE MISSION

The key objectives of the MIDH are:

- To enhance horticulture production and productivity through the adoption of improved technology and best practices.
- To create and strengthen infrastructure facilities for post-harvest management, storage, and processing of horticulture crops.
- To promote the development of horticulture clusters and value chains to ensure remunerative prices for farmers.
- To provide assistance for the development of market intelligence and marketing infrastructure for horticulture crops.
- To promote the establishment of plant health clinics and diagnostic services to address pest and disease problems in horticulture crops.
- To create awareness among farmers about good agricultural practices, post-harvest management, and marketing of horticulture crops.

SCHEMES UNDER THE MISSION

Some of the key schemes under the MIDH include:

- National Horticulture Mission (NHM)
- Horticulture Cluster Development Programme (HCDP)
- Technology Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture in North Eastern States, Sikkim, and Jammu & Kashmir
- National Bamboo Mission
- Coconut Development Board
- Mission for Integrated Development of Medicinal Plants (MIDMP)

HOW DOES THE MISSION WORK?

- Financial Assistance: Financial assistance is provided to farmers, growers, and entrepreneurs for various activities such as setting up orchards, purchase of inputs, establishing post-harvest infrastructure, and marketing horticulture crops.
- Promotion of Research and Development activities: The mission also supports research and development activities to promote the adoption of new and improved varieties of horticulture crops.

ISSUES RELATED TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HORTICULTURE SCHEME

There are several issues that need to be addressed to ensure its effective implementation. Some of the key issues with the MIDH scheme include

- Inadequate funding: The MIDH scheme has been facing funding constraints, which

have led to delays in the implementation of projects and limited outreach to farmers.

- Lack of coordination: The implementation of the MIDH scheme involves multiple stakeholders, including the central government, state governments, and various implementing agencies. However, there is often a lack of coordination among these stakeholders, leading to inefficiencies and delays in implementation.
- Limited focus on small and marginal farmers: While the MIDH scheme aims to benefit farmers across the horticulture sector, there is a limited focus on small and marginal farmers who often lack the resources to adopt new technologies and practices.
- Inadequate marketing support: The MIDH scheme provides support for the production and post-harvest management of horticulture crops, but there is a lack of focus on marketing support.
- Inefficient monitoring and evaluation: The MIDH scheme lacks a robust monitoring and evaluation mechanism, making it difficult to track the progress of projects and assess their impact. This can hinder the identification of issues and the implementation of corrective measures.

SOLUTIONS TO RESOLVE THE UNDERLYING ISSUES

- Adequate Funding: It is required for the timely and successful implementation of the projects. It will also make the coverage of the project wider with more inclusion of farmers etc.
- Streamlining of organization: There is a need to streamline and align the stakeholders to improve efficiency and reduce delays.
- Focus on small and marginal farmers: There is a need for a greater focus on resource-deprived farmers included in the mission.
- Promotion of new marketing techniques: The issue of not finding prospective sales channels arises due to the lack of marketing facilities. There is a need to promote marketing activities through training, organization of fairs, networking meets, etc.
- Raising awareness: There is a need to raise awareness of the mission so that the benefits of the mission reach the potential beneficiaries.
- Monitoring and Evaluation: There is a need for regular monitoring to avoid any kind of discrepancies in the mission. It is also needed to weed out any kind of inefficiencies lying in the system.
- Overall, addressing these issues can help ensure the effective implementation of the MIDH scheme and enable it to achieve its objectives of promoting the growth and development of the horticulture sector in India.

Way Forward

Overall, the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture is a significant

initiative aimed at promoting the growth and development of the horticulture sector in India, which has the potential to generate employment and income opportunities for farmers and contribute to the country's food security.

Sources:

PIB

midh.gov.in

SAUDI ARABIA-IRAN RECONCILIATION

This article covers "Daily current events "and the topic is about 'Saudi Arabia-Iran reconciliation' which is in news, it covers "International Relations" In GS-2, the following content has relevance for UPSC.

For Prelims: Saudi Arabia and Iran
For Mains: GS-2, International Relations

Why in news:

The Saudi Arabia-Iran reconciliation, mediated by China, shows the new reality that Beijing is gradually playing a more significant role at a time when the US is engaged with other concerns.

HISTORICAL REFERENCE TO SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN'S RELATIONSHIP

- Saudi Arabia and Iran's conflict is based on Islamic sectarianism.
- While Iran is the world's leading Shia state, Saudi Arabia is regarded as the spiritual home of Sunni Islam.
- This sectarian strife has evolved into a struggle for regional hegemony in modern times.
- In both the Yemen and Syria wars, Iran and Saudi Arabia are on opposite sides of the conflict.
- Iran is very critical of Saudi Arabia's relationship with the United States.
- Through its sanctions policy, the United States has damaged the Iranian economy for decades.
- Saudi Arabia is concerned about Iran's massive network of armed militias across West Asia, which it sees as a danger to its sovereignty as well as the regional balance of power.

ABOUT THE SAUDI ARABIA-IRAN RECONCILIATION

Iran and Saudi Arabia will bridge a seven-year rift by renewing a security cooperation pact, reopening embassies in each other's countries, and restarting economic, investment, and cultural ties.

Saudi Arabia-Iran reconciliation

THE TIMING OF THE SAUDI ARABIA-IRAN RECONCILIATION IS CRUCIAL

Saudi Arabia's Perspective

Regional peace will be critical to transforming Saudi Arabia into the global hub that Vision 2030 envisions.

- As a result, Saudi Arabia has made aggressive efforts to resolve long-standing disagreements with regional countries, with the Iran deal being the most recent example.
- Further, it has led to Saudi Arabia gradually shifting away from the United States stranglehold on foreign policy.
- While the United States remains Saudi Arabia's largest military supplier, the desert kingdom has courted different powers in recent years, including Russia, China, and now Iran.
- Iran's Perspective
- The pact comes as Iran intensifies its nuclear program following two years of failed US efforts to resurrect a 2015 agreement that aimed to prevent Tehran from developing a nuclear weapon.
- So far, Iran's efforts have been hampered by harsh sanctions and internal divisions.
- Seeking regional allies is critical for Iran when the Khomeini regime is at its weakest since the revolution.

ROLE OF CHINA IN SAUDI ARABIA-IRAN RECONCILIATION

China's role as a peace broker is yet another indication of the region's paradigm shifts.

China has long maintained relations with both countries, and the latest agreement demonstrates Beijing's rising political and economic weight in the region.

CONCERNS FOR THE US

- For a long time, the United States exercised considerable influence in West Asia.
- It has been the leading global force with influence over geopolitics in the conflict-torn region.
- Most importantly, this agreement, as mediated by China, does not bode well for the United States.

Concerns for India

- Impact on Energy Security: Any improvement in Iran-Saudi relations could influence India's energy security.
- India is significantly reliant on oil imports from both countries, and any conflict or friction between them could result in oil supply disruptions and price increases.
- The rise of China's influence in the Middle East: The role of China in mediating the agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia demonstrates the country's rising political capital in the region, which may have ramifications for India's strategic interests.
- India has long had friendly connections with both Iran and Saudi Arabia, and any shift in the regional balance of power could influence India's interests.
- Impact on Chabahar port project: India has made significant investments in the construction of Iran's Chabahar port as a gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia.
- Any improvement in relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia could have an influence on India's port plans, which could have ramifications for India's regional strategic objectives.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE SAUDI ARABIA-IRAN RECONCILIATION ON WEST ASIA STAKEHOLDERS

- Israel: The move has sparked concern in Israel, which has no formal diplomatic connections with either country.
- Israeli leaders regard Iran as an enemy and a threat to their existence, whereas they see Saudi Arabia as a potential partner.
- Yemen: Riyadh engaged in Yemen against the Houthi movement after the Iran-aligned organization deposed the internationally recognized government.
- Improved ties between Riyadh and Iran could allow negotiations between Saudi and the Houthis.

- Syria: Iran has offered President Bashar al-Assad military, economic, and diplomatic backing since his crackdown on protesters in 2011 left him isolated.
- The Saudi-Iranian agreement is a step towards Syria's re-admission to the Arab League.
- Lebanon: For years, Lebanese politics has been divided between a pro-Iran coalition led by the powerful military group Hezbollah and a pro-Saudi coalition.
- The agreement reached by Tehran and Riyadh raises the prospect of an end to the standoff.
- Iraq: With Saddam Hussein's demise, Iran increased its political, security, and economic dominance in Iraq, which alarmed Saudi Arabia.
- Iraqis hope for a general regional truce that will allow them to reconstruct their country.

Way forward

- India must now deal with the new reality in which China has been able to transfer its economic clout in West Asia into diplomatic clout.
- The agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia may have a good impact on regional stability, but India will need to closely observe the emerging dynamics and determine how it may leverage its relationships with Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other regional players to ensure its strategic interests.

Source:

The Hindu

AUKUS

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details the AUKUS grouping. The grouping led by Australia, UK, and US is seen as a counter to Chinese growing aggression in the Indo-Pacific. It is dubbed as a military pact that aims to act as a deterrent and thereby dissuade Chinese behavior.

For Prelims:

- About participating countries
- Details of the grouping.
- Details of Indo-Pacific.

For Mains:

- GS 2: International Relations
- India's role in AUKUS formation

Why in the news?

Recently, it has been announced that under the AUKUS grouping Australia will receive up to five Virginia class submarines and a nuclear-powered submarine, SSN-AUKUS, being trilaterally developed by the countries.

WHAT IS AUKUS?

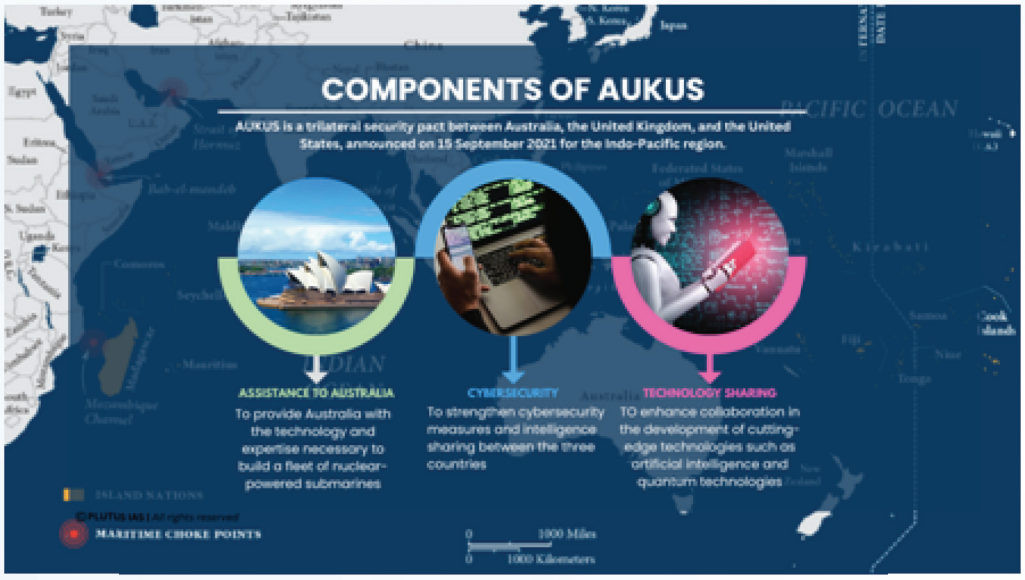
AUKUS is the acronym for a trilateral security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It is focused on enhancing cooperation in the areas of security, technology, and defense.

The partnership is primarily focused on sharing advanced military technologies, including nuclear submarine technology, in order to counter the strategic influence of China in the Indo-Pacific region.

AUKUS Alliance

WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF AUKUS?

- Assistance to Australia: Under the AUKUS agreement, the United States and the United Kingdom have agreed to provide Australia with the technology and expertise necessary to build a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines.
    - Nuclear submarines are considered quieter than conventional submarines. They can be deployed for longer periods without the need to come on the surface regularly.
- Cybersecurity: The partnership aims to strengthen cybersecurity measures and intelligence sharing between the three countries, with a focus on protecting critical infrastructure and national security interests.
- Artificial intelligence and quantum technologies: The partnership aims to enhance collaboration in the development of cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence and quantum technologies.



Component of the AUKUS

WHAT IS THE NEED FOR AUKUS?

The AUKUS aims to target a range of strategic challenges and threats faced by the three countries in the Indo-Pacific region. Some of the key reasons why this agreement was established include

- Chinese Military Aggression and economic might: China has been rapidly expanding its military and economic power in the Indo-Pacific region which has raised concerns among the group members. AUKUS is seen as a way to counterbalance China's influence and maintain stability in the region.

- North Korea's nuclear weapons program: North Korea has continued to develop its nuclear weapons program. AUKUS aims to strengthen the partners' ability to deter and respond to nuclear threats.
- Terrorism and other non-state threats: Owing to its strategic importance the Indo-Pacific region is home to a range of non-state threats, including terrorism, cyber-attacks, and transnational crimes. It aims to enhance cooperation in these areas to ensure the safety and security of the three countries.
- Changing global power dynamics: Geopolitics is in a state of flux. AUKUS aims to help the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia strengthen their positions as major powers in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES WITH THIS AGREEMENT?

- Perception of anti-China alliance: This agreement has been viewed by some as a way to contain or counterbalance China's growing influence in the region, which has the potential to escalate tensions and contribute to a new arms race in the Indo-Pacific.
- Exclusion of France: The announcement of the AUKUS partnership has angered France. France is a key player in the Indo-Pacific with key territories in the region. It was also having an existing contract to supply conventional submarines to Australia.
- Nuclear proliferation concerns: The decision to provide Australia with nuclear-powered submarine technology, has raised concerns about nuclear proliferation in the Indo-Pacific region.

WHAT IS INDIA'S ROLE IN AUKUS FORMATION?

India has a strategic interest in the Indo-Pacific region and has been working to enhance its own security and economic interests in the region. It has strategic partnerships with other countries in the region, including Japan, Australia, and the United States, as part of its broader efforts to promote regional stability and balance against the rise of China.

India is not a part of the AUKUS partnership, however, India has been closely monitoring the development of AUKUS and has been involved in discussions with the grouping members about the implications of the partnership for regional security. It has been cautious in exploring strategic and defense aspects in the Quad, and the AUKUS partnership provides a welcomed relief in the Indo-Pacific military landscape.

WAY FORWARD FOR INDIA

India must take measures to prevent the AUKUS announcement from further polarising the already tense divide between US-led alliances and the Russia-China coalition. Any kind of sharpened differences will be a cause of instability in the region. The partnership

should be seen as a deterrent for potential conflicts, rather than as a catalyst for global escalation.

Sources:

IndianExpress
Wikipedia
Mint

PROTECTION OF DOMESTIC WORKERS IN INDIA

This article covers "Daily current events "and the topic is about 'Protection of Domestic Workers in India' which is in news, it covers "Social Justice" in GS-2, and the following content has relevance for UPSC.

For Prelims: *Protection of Domestic Workers in India*

For Mains: *GS-2, Social Justice*

Why Protection of Domestic Workers in India in the news

- Recently, social workers rescued a 14-year-old girl from a Gurugram home where she was working as a domestic worker.
- The incident has brought to light the poor quality of paid domestic employment in metropolitan India, where worker faces abuse and exploitation in an unregulated industry.

ABOUT DOMESTIC WORKERS

- Domestic workers, according to the International Labour Organization, are individuals who work in or for a private household or household. Such as sweeping, cleaning utensils, washing clothes, cooking, child care, and other remunerated labour performed for an employer.
- They provide direct and indirect care services and play an essential role in the care economy.

Domestic Workers

STATUS OF A DOMESTIC WORKER IN INDIA

- Domestic workers employed 39 lakh persons in 2012, at least 26 lacks of whom were women.
- According to a 2016 Bengaluru-based research, 75% of them were Scheduled Castes, 15% were OBCs, and 8% were Scheduled Tribes.
- Also, 25% of minor domestic employees were under the age of 14.

ISSUES FACED BY THE WORKER

- It is informal.
- Underpaid and unpaid
- There is no legal contract.
- Work hours that are not specified.
- Faced with discrimination and violence, as well as sexual harassment and exploitation.
- Encounter discrimination from placement agencies (companies that hire these workers) and/or traffickers.
- The domestic worker has been subjected to violence.
- Uncertainty about their data.

THE INTERNATIONAL MEASURES TO PROTECT DOMESTIC WORKERS

- Domestic Worker Convention (No. 189) – The International Labour Organization (ILO) approved the Domestic Worker Convention (No. 189) in 2011 to safeguard domestic worker.
- June 16th is World Domestic Worker Day, commemorating the adoption of International Labor Organization Convention 189 for Decent Employment for Domestic Worker in 2011.
- Your Work Is Important – The ILO has started a public awareness campaign called "Your Work Is Important."

MEASURES WERE TAKEN BY THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT TO PROTECT DOMESTIC WORKER

- There is no specific regulation or policy in place to control those who operate in the domestic work sector.
- Unorganized Sector Social Security Act of 2008 – The Act established the first legislative framework to give social protection to the worker, including domestic servants.
- Social Security Code, 2020 – The code, which superseded the Unorganized Sector Social Security Act of 2008, is still in effect.

- Child Work Act, 1986 – The Indian government barred children from undertaking domestic housekeeping in 2006, identifying it as a sort of "hazardous child labour".
- They are included as a defined category of ecotone workers in the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act of 2013, with the house as a recognised workplace.
- Only Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Tripura have included them in the schedule of the Minimum Wages Act.
- The National Commission of Women introduced the Domestic Worker (Registration, Social Security, and Welfare) Bill in 2008.
- Domestic Workers' Welfare Bill 2016 – Recognised a private residence as a workplace, and broadened the meaning of "wages".
- Both the 2008 and 2016 bills have yet to be passed.
- The Labour Ministry proposed a National Domestic Worker Policy in 2019 to regulate placement agencies and incorporate domestic workers under existing regulations.
- India has signed the ILO's 189th convention, known as the Convention on Domestic Worker, but has not yet ratified it.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE FOR THE BETTERMENT OF DOMESTIC WORKER

- Placement agencies must be controlled.
- The government must collaborate with social workers to defend the domestic.
- Domestic employees must be protected by legislation.
- Genuine data for domestic employees is required.

SOURCE:

The Hindu