**Syllabus subtopic:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections

**Prelims and Mains focus:** about poshan Abhiyan and challenges in its implementation; issue of funds utilization under the scheme

**News:** The State governments and the Union Territories utilised a mere 30% of the funds released under the Poshan Abhiyaan, or the National Nutrition Mission (NNM), since it was launched in 2017.

- Barring Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Himachal Pradesh and Bihar, none of the governments used even half of the sum granted in the past three years, according to an analysis of the data shared in Parliament.

**Background**

The CNNS (Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey), released by the Ministry of Health and Welfare in October, showed that 35% of children under the age of 5 are stunted and in this age group, 17% are wasted (low weight for height) and 33% underweight (low weight for age).

**About Poshan Abhiyan**

- The Poshan Abhiyaan, the Centre’s flagship programme, is aimed at improving nutritional outcomes among pregnant women, lactating mothers and children by reducing the level of stunting, underweight, anaemia and low birth weight by 2022.

- It is meant to benefit more than 10 crore people and was launched after a Cabinet decision on December 1, 2017, with a total budget of Rs. 9,046.17 crore for three years, 50% of which is through budgetary support, which is further divided into 60:40 between the Centre and the States, 90:10 for the northeastern region and the Himalayan States and 100% for the Union Territories without legislature.
The remaining 50% is from the World Bank or other multilateral development banks. As a result, the Centre’s total share will be Rs. 2,849.54 crore.

A grim picture

- With the threeyear period drawing to a close, an analysis of the funds utilised paints a grim picture. According to the information given by Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani in the recent session of Parliament, a total of Rs. 4,283 crore was disbursed by the Centre to different States and Union Territories.

- Of this, Rs. 1,283.89 crore, or only 29.97% of the funds granted, were utilised until October 31, 2019. Figures were not available for 2017 2018 as the scheme was launched at the fag end of the fiscal.

Performance of various states

- The five best performers were Mizoram (65.12%), Lakshadweep (61.08%), Bihar (55.17%), Himachal Pradesh (53.29%) and Meghalaya (48.37%).
- The worst five performers were Punjab (0.45%), Karnataka (0.74%), Kerala (8.75%), Jharkhand (13.94%) and Assam (23.01%).
- During 201920, funds were released for 19 States, though 12 of them had used less than a third of the funds released in the previous two years.

Way ahead

- The programme was conceptualised as one to be implemented in phases. It is, thus, expected that utilisation will increase over years.
- A number of activities had a slow start but are now picking up. These include the Integrated Child Development ServicesCommon Application Software (ICDS-CAS) meant to monitor anganwadis. However, given the stiff targets, translating the activities into outcomes will be critical.