**Syllabus subtopic:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

**News:** The Union Cabinet Wednesday approved the *Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (Amendment) Bill, 2019*, and the legislation will soon be tabled in Parliament.

**Prelims and Mains focus:** about the amendments in the bill and its significance

**Key highlights of the Bill:**

- The Bill seeks to remove the Rs 10,000 ceiling prescribed by the *Maintenance of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007*, for maintenance towards the welfare of parents and the amount can now be decided on a case-to-case basis. It further looks at expanding the definition of ‘parents’ and ‘children’ to include son-in-laws, daughter-in-laws as well as stepchildren.

- The 2007 Act makes it a legal obligation for children or heirs to provide a monthly maintenance to parents or senior citizens. A senior citizen who is unable to maintain himself from his earnings or properties is entitled to get relief under this Act. If children or relatives fail to provide maintenance, then the senior citizen can seek the assistance of a Tribunal constituted under this Act to enforce the remedy of maintenance.

- Apart from the definitions of children and senior citizens being expanded, the govt. has included a number of significant changes. For instance, the age of a senior citizen differs from state to state. But according to this Bill, for the purpose of maintenance, we have defined the age of the senior citizen as 65 years.

- Cases pertaining to senior citizens above the age of 80 years will be expedited on a priority basis by the Tribunals.

- While the 2007 Bill provides for the institution of old age homes across the country, the Amendment Bill has for the first time mandated that these homes be registered with the government to ensure minimum standards are maintained.

- The govt has made it mandatory for a nodal officer in each state who will be in charge of
The Bill also has the provision of day care centres which will provide meals and engage senior citizens in activities from morning to evening. The government has also mandated that home care be provided to those who are too old to commute or have a disability through agencies nominated by the state governments.

These agencies, as well as NGOs, government and autonomous bodies — engaged in senior citizen care — are all to be registered.

The registration will further help to keep a count of the number of senior citizens, and those in need of assistance. Special units for senior citizens will also be established at police stations across the country besides a special helpline.