Syllabus subtopic: Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

Prelims and Mains focus: about the move and reasons for it; about the ICDS scheme and its objectives

News: Urban areas are likely to receive a renewed focus under the government’s ICDS programme, which provides for anganwadis or daycare centres across the country for delivery of nutrition and preschool education.

About the move

- The government’s think tank, the NITI Aayog, has prepared a draft working paper, which once approved would be circulated to different ministries for consultations.

- These include the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Ministry of Urban Housing and Affairs and the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.

What are the challenges in the urban areas?

- The first-ever pan-India survey on the nutrition status of children, highlighted that malnutrition among children in urban India is characterised by relatively poor levels of breastfeeding as mothers have to travel long distances for work.

- It also found a higher prevalence of obesity because of relative prosperity and lifestyle patterns, along with iron and Vitamin D deficiency.

Why a new model for urban areas?

- According to government data from 2018, of the 14 lakh anganwadis across the country there are only 1.38 lakh anganwadis in urban areas.

- Health and ICDS models that work in rural areas may not work in urban areas because of higher population density, transportation challenges.
and migration.

- Because of these issues it may not be possible for a community worker to keep in contact with the beneficiaries, which she is able to achieve in rural settings.

**Way ahead**

- Improving infrastructure in urban areas would be key as the government embarks on improving service delivery under the ICDS programme.

- One thing which will be crucial for anganwadi services in urban areas is strengthening safety and infrastructure.

**About the ICDS scheme**

- Children in the age group 0-6 years constitute around 158 million of the population of India (2011 census). These Children are the future human resource of the country. Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing various schemes for welfare, development and protection of children.

- **Launched on 2nd October, 1975**, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme is one of the flagship programmes of the Government of India and represents one of the world’s largest and unique programmes for early childhood care and development. It is the foremost symbol of country’s commitment to its children and nursing mothers, as a response to the challenge of providing pre-school non-formal education on one hand and breaking the vicious cycle of malnutrition, morbidity, reduced learning capacity and mortality on the other.

- The **beneficiaries under the Scheme** are children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

**Objectives of the Scheme are:**
• to improve the nutritional and health status of children in the age-group 0-6 years;

• to lay the foundation for proper psychological, physical and social development of the child;

• to reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school dropout;

• to achieve effective co-ordination of policy and implementation amongst the various departments to promote child development; and

• to enhance the capability of the mother to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education.

**Services under ICDS**

The ICDS Scheme offers a package of six services, viz.

1. Supplementary Nutrition
2. Pre-school non-formal education
3. Nutrition & health education
4. Immunization
5. Health check-up and
6. Referral services

• The last three services are related to health and are provided by Ministry/Department of Health and Family Welfare through NRHM & Health system. The perception of providing a package of services is based primarily on the consideration that the overall impact will be much larger if the different services develop in an integrated manner as the efficacy of a particular service depends upon the support it receives from the related services.

• For better governance in the delivery of the Scheme, convergence is, therefore, one of the key features of the ICDS Scheme. This convergence is in-built in the Scheme which provides a platform in the form of Anganwadi
Centres for providing all services under the Scheme.