1. What are the key features of the New Education Policy (NEP)? What are your thoughts on NEP? Discuss.

Approach:

It expects students to write about - in first part write about features of the New Education Policy - in second part write about significance of NEP - in third part write issues which needs to address related to NEP - in end you can write way forward.

Introduction:

The National Educational Policy has come a long way from its first formulation in 1968 followed by its modified versions of 1986 and 1992, and now the National Educational Policy 2020(the NEP 2020). On 29th July,2020, Union Cabinet had given approval to new education policy for the 21st century. The cabinet had also approved a proposal to rename the Ministry of Human Resource Development as the Ministry of Education.

Body:

Features of NEP:
- School Education:
  - Universalization of education from preschool to secondary level with 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in school education by 2030.
  - To bring 2 crores out of school children back into the mainstream through an open schooling system.
  - The current 10+2 system to be replaced by a new 5+3+3+4 curricular structure corresponding to ages 3-8, 8-11, 11-14, and 14-18 years respectively.
  - It will bring the uncovered age group of 3-6 years under school curriculum, which has been recognized globally as the crucial stage for development of mental faculties of a child.
  - It will also have 12 years of schooling with three years of Anganwadi/ pre schooling.
  - Class 10 and 12 board examinations to be made easier, to test core competencies rather than memorised facts, with all students allowed to take the exam twice.
  - School governance is set to change, with a new accreditation framework and an independent authority to regulate both public and private schools.
  - Emphasis on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, no rigid separation between academic streams, extracurricular, vocational streams in schools.
  - Vocational Education to start from Class 6 with Internships.
  - Teaching up to at least Grade 5 to be in mother tongue/regional language. No language will be imposed on any student.
  - Assessment reforms with 360-degree Holistic Progress Card, tracking Student Progress for achieving Learning Outcomes
  - A new and comprehensive National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) 2021, will be formulated by the National Council for

Teacher Education (NCTE) in consultation with National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).
  ○ By 2030, the minimum degree qualification for teaching will be a 4-year integrated B.Ed. degree.
- Higher Education:
  ○ Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education to be raised to 50% by 2035. Also, 3.5 crore seats to be added in higher education.
  ○ The current Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education is 26.3%.
  ○ Holistic Undergraduate education with a flexible curriculum can be of 3 or 4 years with multiple exit options and appropriate certification within this period.
  ○ M.Phil. courses will be discontinued and all the courses at undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD level will now be interdisciplinary.
  ○ Academic Bank of Credits to be established to facilitate Transfer of Credits.
  ○ Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs), at par with IITs, IIMs, to be set up as models of best multidisciplinary education of global standards in the country.
  ○ The National Research Foundation will be created as an apex body for fostering a strong research culture and building research capacity across higher education.
  ○ Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) will be set up as a single umbrella body for the entire higher education, excluding medical and legal education. Public and private higher education institutions will be governed by the same set of norms for regulation, accreditation and academic standards. Also, HECI will be having four independent verticals namely,
  ○ National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) for regulation,
  ○ General Education Council (GEC) for standard setting,
  ○ Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) for funding,
  ○ National Accreditation Council (NAC) for accreditation.
  ○ Affiliation of colleges is to be phased out in 15 years and a stage-wise mechanism to be established for granting graded autonomy to colleges.
  ○ Over a period of time, every college is expected to develop into either an autonomous degree-granting College, or a constituent college of a university.

Significance of National Education Policy 2020:
- Recognising Importance of Formative years: In adopting a 5+3+3+4 model for school education starting at age 3, the policy recognises the primacy of the formative years from ages 3 to 8 in shaping the child's future.
- Departure from Silos Mentality: Another key aspect of school education in the new policy is the breaking of the strict division of arts, commerce and science streams in high school. This can lay the foundation for a multi-disciplinary approach in high education.
- The Confluence of Education and Skills: Another laudable aspect of the scheme is the introduction of vocational courses with an internship. This may nudge the vulnerable sections of society to send their children to school. Also, it would help in realisation of the goal of Skill India Mission.

- Making Education More Inclusive: The NEP proposes the extension of the Right to Education (RTE) to all children up to the age of 18. Further, the policy seeks to leverage the huge potential of online pedagogy and learning methodologies for increasing gross enrolment in higher education.
- Light but Tight Oversight: According to the policy, in spite of periodic inspection, transparency, maintaining quality standards and a favourable public perception will become a 24X7 pursuit for the institutions, leading to all-round improvement in their standard. The policy also seeks to establish a super-regulator for education which will be responsible for standards-setting, funding, accreditation and regulation of higher education India.
- Allowing Foreign Universities: The document states universities from among the top 100 in the world will be able to set up campuses in India. This will lead to an infusion of international perspective and innovation, which will make the Indian education system more efficient and competitive.
- Ending Hindi vs English Debate: Most crucially, NEP, once and for all, buries the strident Hindi versus English language debate; instead, it emphasises on making mother tongue, local language or the regional language the medium of instruction at least till Grade 5, which is considered the best medium of teaching.

However, there are few issues which needs to address related to NEP 2020:

- Knowledge-Jobs Mismatch: There is a persistent mismatch between the knowledge & skills imparted and the jobs available. This has been one of the main challenges that have affected the Indian education system since Independence. NEP 2020 failed to check this, as it is silent on education related to emerging technological fields like artificial intelligence, cyberspace, nanotech, etc.
- The Requirement of Enormous Resources. An ambitious target of public spending at 6% of GDP has been set. Mobilising financial resources will be a big challenge, given the low tax-to-GDP ratio and competing claims on the national exchequer of healthcare, national security and other key sectors.

Way forward:

- Need for Cooperative Federalism: Since education is a concurrent subject (both the Centre and the state governments can make laws on it), the reforms proposed can only be implemented collaboratively by the Centre and the states. Thus, the Centre has the giant task of building a consensus on the many ambitious plans.
- Strive Towards Universalisation of Education: There is a need for the creation of 'inclusion funds' to help socially and educationally disadvantaged children pursue education. Also, there is a need to set up a regulatory process that can check profiteering from education in the form of unaccounted donations.
- Bridging Digital Divide: If technology is a force-multiplier, with unequal access it can also expand the gap between the haves and have nots. Thus, the state needs to address the striking disparities in access to digital tools for universalization of education.
- Inter-ministerial Coordination: There is an emphasis on vocational training, but to make it effective, there has to be close coordination between the education, skills and labour ministry.

Conclusion:

A New Education Policy aims to facilitate an inclusive, participatory and holistic approach, which takes into consideration field experiences, empirical research, stakeholder feedback, as well as lessons learned from best practices. It is a progressive shift towards a more scientific approach to education. The prescribed structure will help to cater the ability of the child – stages of cognitive development as well as social and physical awareness. If implemented in its true vision, the new structure can bring India at par with the leading countries of the world.

2. What are the factors contributing to India's below par performance on addressing hunger and malnutrition despite having adequate food stocks? Examine.

Approach:
As the directive here is examine, it is necessary to cover various angles of the issue and there by provide a solution in brief. In the introduction you can start by showing India's performance in Global Hunger Index, thereby showing its below par performance. In the main body part it is necessary to show how much adequate food stock India has and then explain factors contributing to India's below par performance on addressing hunger and malnutrition. In the next part give government initiatives and way forward in brief.

Introduction:
India has been ranked 94 on the 2020 Global Hunger Index (GHI), lower than neighbours like Bangladesh and Pakistan. India falls in the 'serious' category on the Index, with a total score of 27.2. India's poor score comes almost entirely from the child stunting and wasting parameters.

Body:
Adequate food stock in India:
- Although India has overall food security with record levels of foodgrain production. In recent years, access to healthy food is still difficult for poor households.
- Food Corporation of India(FCI), has grain stocks of about 91-92 mmt, against a buffer stock norm of 41.12 mmt, that are required for public distriction systems and some strategic reserves. Hence, FCI has "excess stock" of nearly 50 mmt.

Factors contributing to India's below par performance on addressing hunger and malnutrition:
- Although foodgrain production has increased fivefold since Independence, it has not sufficiently addressed the issue of hunger and malnutrition due to long time focus on increasing one specific crop i.e. monoculture. For instance, in the regions around Punjab mostly wheat production took place. Which led to surplus production of one specific variety of crops.
- Lax implementation: Providing nutritious food to the country's children is more a matter of political will and effective policy implementation at the grassroots level. For instance, sever levels of Hunger and malnutrition in the Melghat region of Maharashtra shows lax policy implementation.
- Food consumption patterns have changed substantially in India over the past few decades, which has resulted in the disappearance of many nutritious local foods like millets.
- Besides, flaws in the implementation of Integrated child development scheme (ICDS), Mid day meal scheme, also resulted aggravating the problem of malnutrition in India. For instance, In a recent incidence in Uttar Pradesh, through mid day meal scheme students were provided salt with chapatis.

- Lack of storage: Due to inadequate number of godowns for storage, a part of procured grains is maintained as outdoor stacks ('Cover-and-Plinth' system), which face high risk of rain damage and pilferage.
- Poor quality of food grains & high wastage: Due to insect infestation, microbiological contamination, physiological changes due to sprouting and ripening etc., the shelf life of food grains remain poor. Lack of irradiation facilities also impedes long term storage.
- FCI delivers food grains to State Govt./ State Agencies from its base depots for distribution by the latter through Fair Price Shops. However, damage and loss during transmission or corruption in the transport process creates impediments delivery of essential food grains.
- For instance, despite receiving the required number of stock for a month if a PDS shopkeeper sells the food grains through black market. It creates the inaccessibility to required food grains for the poor.
- Poor sanitation, leading to diarrhoea, is another major cause of child wasting and stunting thereby aggravating hunger and malnutrition. At the time of the last NFHS, almost 40% of households were still practising open defecation. Only 36% of households disposed of children's stools in a safe manner.
- Along with it, prevalent structural inequities such as caste inequities have also aggravated the issue of hunger and malnutrition in India.

Steps to address the issue and Government Initiative:

- Expansion of government schemes by increasing access to maternal and child health care, as well as education on healthy diets and child feeding practices.
- An all inclusive policy making approach needs to be adopted. For instance, inclusion of all stakeholders while making the policy. The stakeholders include, government, NGO's, child rights organisations, women rights organisations.
- Finding out the flaws in governments schemes and addressing them is necessary. For instance, POSHAN ABHIYAAN, Mission Indradhanush, Mid day meal scheme, ICDS etc.
- The National Food Security Act, (NFSA) 2013 legally entitled up to 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population to receive subsidized food grains under the Targeted Public Distribution System. Strict implementation of PDS while strategising to achieve the targets is necessary.
- Universalisation of PDS to avoid undercoverage, Inclusion and Exclusion Errors and in preventing the leakage in the delivery system, for all the problems are related to including only a section of society under the scheme. Implementing the recommendation of the Shanta kumar committee for reforms in the public distribution system can be a good step in the efficient functioning of PDS.

Conclusion:

National Nutrition Mission (POSHAN Abhiyaan) seeks to ensure a "malnutrition free India" by 2022. However, there is no single solution, as the issue of India's below par performance on addressing hunger and nutrition is multifaceted. Indian needs an all inclusive, multi-pronged approach to address the issue of malnutrition and hunger in

India. Which will help India to contribute to achieve SDG 2's target to end all forms of hunger and malnutrition by 2030.

3. Examine the factors that ail the primary healthcare system in India. Why is there a wide variance in the performance of states? Analyse.

Approach:

It expects students to write about factors ailing the primary health sector and highlight about wide variations in the performance of states.

Introduction

Primary health care is a whole-of-society approach to health and well-being centred on the needs and preferences of individuals, families and communities. It addresses the broader determinants of health and focuses on the comprehensive and interrelated aspects of physical, mental and social health and wellbeing. Primary health care is rooted in a commitment to social justice and equity and in the recognition of the fundamental right to the highest attainable standard of health.

Body

Factors behind ailing primary health care system in India:

- Limited services: Although Primary Health Care system exists in India but its scope is limited to pregnancy care, limited childcare and certain services related to national health programmes. Massive shortages in the supply of services (human resources, hospitals and diagnostic centres in the private/public sector) which are made worse by grossly inequitable availability between and within States. E.g. Even a well-placed State such as Tamil Nadu has an over 30% shortage of medical and non-medical professionals in government facilities.
- Funding: Funding for overall health care is very low, leaving insufficient amount that requires to be spend on Primary Health Care. The health budget has neither increased nor is there any policy to strengthen the public/private sector in deficit areas. While the Ayushman Bharat provides portability, one must not forget that it will take time for hospitals to be established in deficit areas.
- Staff shortage: PHCs are also suffering from inadequate skilled and trained manpower. There is a shortfall of about 9,000 doctors in about 25,000 PHCs in the country. There is a massive shortage of medical staff, infrastructure and last mile connectivity in rural areas. Eg: Doctor: Population 1:1800 and 78% doctors cater to urban India (population of 30%).
- Healthcare without holistic approach: There are a lot of determinants for better health like improved drinking water supply and sanitation; better nutritional outcomes, health and education for women and girls; improved air quality and safer roads in rural areas which are outside the purview of the Health Ministry.
- Crumbling primary health care infrastructure: Given the country's crumbling public healthcare infrastructure, most patients are forced to go to private

clinics and hospitals. There is a shortage of PHCs (22%) and sub-health centres (20%), while only 7% sub-health centres and 12% primary health centres meet Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS) norms.

- Social Inequality: The growth of health facilities has been highly imbalanced in India. Rural, hilly and remote areas of the country are under served while in urban areas and cities, health facility is well developed. The SC/ST and the poor people are far away from modern health service.
- Training and manpower problems: PHCs are suffering from poor management skills, lack of appropriate training and supportive supervision for health workers.
- Poor facilities: Primary level facilities need complete building reconstruction, as they operate out of rented apartments and thatched accommodations, and lack basic facilities such as toilets, drinking water and electricity.
- Overburdened PHCs: India has a large network of primary health centres (PHCs), each supposed to serve a population of 25,000. But in states such as Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand, however, a PHC covers as many as 45,000, 49,000 and 76,000 people.

Wide variations in performance of different states:

- Decentralised health care and community level engagement: The synergy generated by integrating state government plans and programmes with the local governments, the co-operatives, women neighbourhood groups and civil society organisations for example Kudambashree and Vigilance wing by Kerala.
- Expenditure by states: Prevalence of considerable inequity favouring high income group of States in terms of healthcare resources, for instance, it indicates that the high income States hold a superior position in terms of per capita government expenditure on medical and public health, total number of hospitals and dispensaries, per capita availability of beds in hospitals and dispensaries and health manpower in rural and urban areas.
- Poor governance: The most important factor that influences health care is the quality of governance. States that have moved forward have had the spell of good governance for most of the periods are good performing states.
- Difference in female literacy: Woman's low health literacy affects not only her own health knowledge, preventive behaviour, and ability to navigate the health care system but also her ability to care for her children.
- Geographical factor: Difficult terrain surrounded by hills, rivers, and dense forests leads to increase in the cost of health care, cost of health projects.

Conclusion

Pandemics such as Covid-19 starkly remind us that public health systems are core social institutions in any society. The government has made several efforts to address the shortfall in the public health system through the schemes. However, the need of the hour is an adequate investment, for creating a health system that can withstand any kind of public health emergencies, incentivise good performing states, deliver universal health coverage and meet the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Q 4. India suffers from the twin challenges of unemployment and skill gap. Do you agree? Examine the recent initiatives taken by the government to address those.

Approach:

It expects students to write about Unemployment and skill gap and recent government initiatives to address it.

Introduction

A skills gap is the difference between skills that employers want or need, and skills their workforce offer. Skill and employability go hand on hand. Skill gap is the real cause of high unemployable population. The skill gap is not only leading to unemployment but several other social economic challenges in the country. India still has age old tradition of learning on job through informal networks and training.

Body

India suffering from twin challenges of unemployment and skill gap due to:
- Employability: As of now, only 5 per cent of the workforce have undergone any kind of vocational training, but even many of those are not employable, since the skills acquired have limited market application as per NASSCOM. According to NASSCOM, almost 40 per cent of the skilled workforce is not employable because the acquired education and training are of substandard quality.
- Education system: Furthermore, India's education system is primarily of a generalist nature and is not connected to the labour market. Academic and industrial requirements are not well synchronised.
- Skills Mismatch: India has a lopsided skills stock, it has caused problems due to the unregulated growth of technical institutions in the private sector and a lack of guidance for youth in choosing areas of training. As a result, an imbalance in the Indian labour market has created a surplus in some skills and shortages in others.
- Women Security and Social Restrictions: Women full engagement, however, remains restricted due to problems of personal security, biased attitudes of co-workers and social customs. Faced with ineffective protection, young female workers either select jobs for security considerations or prolong their education. Various studies have indicated marriage as a major cause of women workers withdrawing from the labour market and staying away from acquisition and upgrading skill.
- Job market changing with technology: Automation, machine learning and artificial intelligence, is drastically reducing the number of available jobs in the near future. New technology are rapidly evolving technology spaces where the comfort levels in using them needs to keep pace to stay professionally relevant which is lacking in Indian labour market.

- Shortage of Jobs: India's economic growth was more due to productivity than employment. In the wake of the limited creation of additional jobs, workers especially youth found themselves without jobs. The prevailing situation forced them either to opt for unskilled or casual work in the informal sector or to enrol for further studies.

Recently, there has been increased activity in the acquiring of skills. Young people are attending various technical institutes in large numbers due to various government initiatives such as:

- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY): PMKVY is the flagship outcome-based skill training scheme of MSDE. Till 26 October 2018, 1.94 lakh candidates got a certificate and out of them, only 55% got employed across different sectors. This shows the low employability level under PMKVY. Participation from more and more industries should be sought for placement of the candidates trained under the scheme.

- National Apprentice Promotion Scheme: Scheme promote apprenticeship training and increase the engagement of apprentices from present 2.3 lakh to 50 lakh cumulatively by 2020. Training is considered to be most efficient ways to develop skilled manpower. It is providing the industry led practiced oriented model of formal training. In future it's expected to become a effective skill delivery mechanism of India.

- USSTAD scheme: The Scheme aims at upgrading Skills and Training of minority communities by preservation of traditional ancestral Arts and Crafts. Many training center under scheme not started yet and knowledge partner does not belong to minority community.

- Skill Development Initiative Scheme: Scheme aims to providing skill training to early school leavers & existing workers. The certifications provided under this scheme are nationally and internationally recognised. The enrolment in skill institutes remains low as compared to their enrolment capacity. This is due to low awareness level among youths about the skill development programmes.

- National career services: It was launched for establishing quick and efficient career related services across the country by revamping the existing nation-wide set-up of Employment Exchanges into IT-enabled Career Centres. Posting of vacancies on the portal continues to stay sluggish, even though the number of job seekers is rising.

- Seekho aur Kamao: The scheme aims at upgrading the skills of minority youth in various modern/traditional skills depending upon their qualification, present economic trends and market potential, which can earn them suitable employment or make them suitably skilled to go for self-employment.

- Hunar se Rozgar: The Govt. of India, Ministry of Tourism has launched a Training Programme, christened Hunar Se Rozgar Tak, to create employable skills in the interested youth who are in the age group of 18-25 years and who are minimum 8th pass.

- Himayat Scheme: It is a training-cum-placement programme for unemployed youth in Jammu and Kashmir. Youth will be provided short-term training for at least 3 months, in a range of skills for which there is good demand.

Other different measures need to take by government to tackle twin challenges of skill gaps and unemployment:

- Raising national standards of education.
- Offering accreditation to more educational institutions for national and global recognition.
- Skill survey.
- Partnering with developed nation to raise countries skill standards.
- Allowing various skill upgrading apps and online sites for certification.
- Offering industry specific online courses for existing workforce.
- Promoting the adoption for different technologies such as blockchain technology, AI etc.

Conclusion

The ever-increasing size of the youth workforce, both skilled and unskilled, in an environment of job scarcity means more young people are faced with limited employment opportunities, causing them to be either underemployed or unemployed. Taking cognisance of the importance of skill development for our national development and global competitiveness government has taken appropriate national skilling agenda. However realisation of this agenda requires active involvement and vigorous partnership among all the stake holders viz., government, suppliers of educational services, industry and civil society.
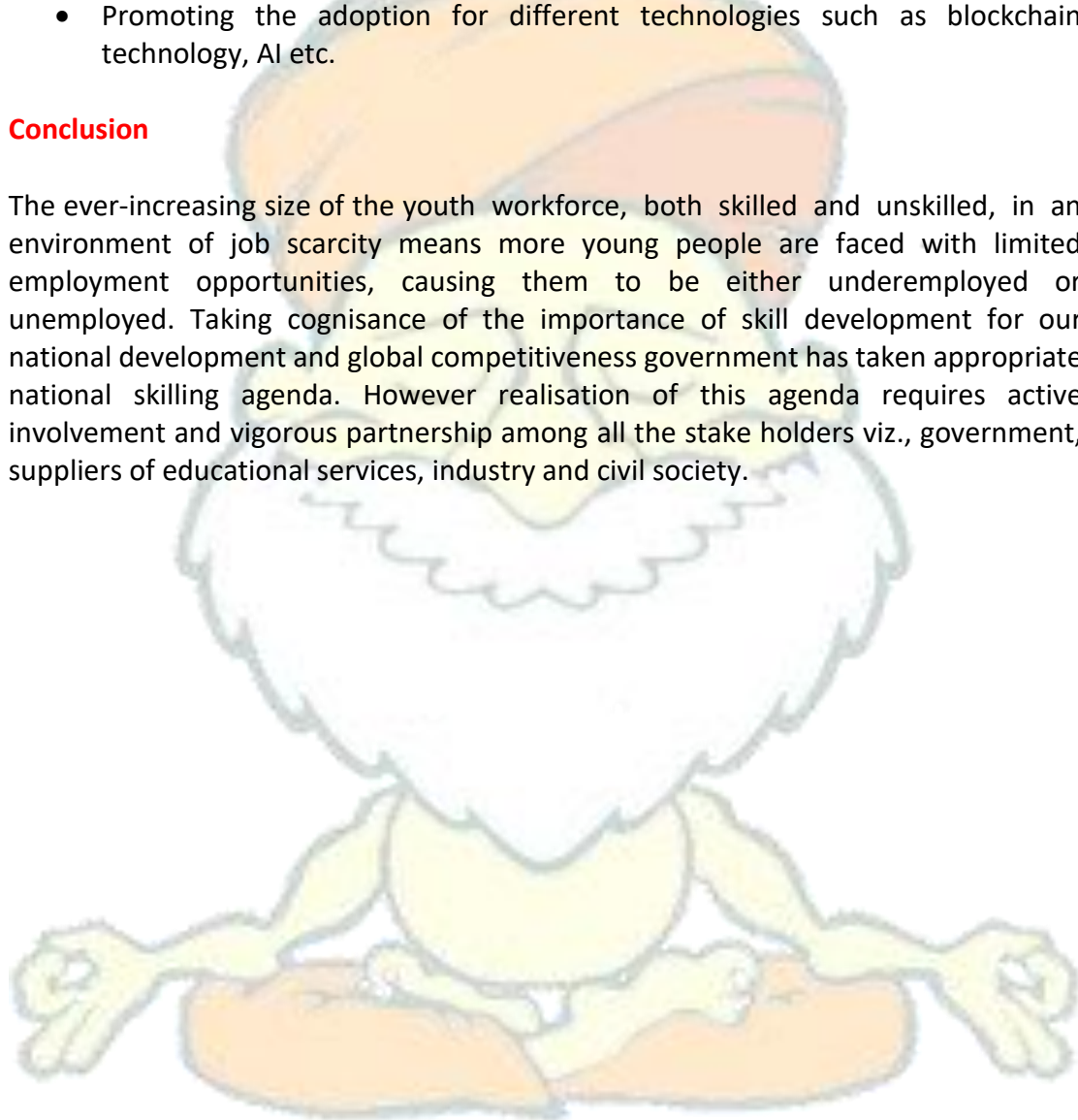
Q 5. India's social security infrastructure has created some wonderful frameworks. Do you agree? Substantiate your views.

Approach:

It expects students to write - in first part write about how social security infrastructure - while in second part mention about lacuna in India's social security infrastructure.

Introduction:

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Social Security is a comprehensive approach designed to prevent deprivation, give assurance to the individual of a basic minimum income for himself and his dependents and to protect the individual from any uncertainties.

Body:

Performance of India's social security infrastructure:
- Food security:
  - under NFSA, MDM, ICDS and Antodya Aan Yojana, food security is provided to every vulnerable category and age group according to statistics of world's food reports.
  - But weak beneficiary selection criteria, age old storage infrastructure, ineffective implementation and wide scale corruption mars the very notion of this scheme.
- Health security:
  - like AABY, govt. recently attached various insurance schemes for unorganized sector and entrepreneurs to Aadhar linked bank account. Further, govt. decision to increase FDI in insurance sector raised expectation to improve health insurance in country. Similarly, NHM is directed to provide health care facilities in locality.
  - Lack of staff, weak supporting infrastructure and lack of private sector's interest towards these schemes are affecting its final output.
- Livelihood security:
  - MGREGA is provided as legal right to unskilled workers to guaranteed work of 100 days per year. This scheme was hailed as most innovative scheme of developing world.
  - But problems like inability of states to provide required day of work, manipulation in payrolls and delayed payments, scheme's failure to improve skilled capacity of workers and highly discriminatory and politicized panchayats, as main executive authority, towards worker selections are some roadblocks in this scheme's effective implementation and workings.
- Economic security:
  - PMJDY and allied schemes under financial inclusion programme aimed to provide savings instrument and infrastructural support for DBT transfers have gained attraction of world financial reporting during last whole year.

- But, unfunded accounts and illiterate consumers unable to operate accounts are problems from consumer side, and weak banking infrastructure in rural hinterlands, unresponsive banking staff and failure to link other financial schemes under PMJDY are govt. side problems.

Conclusion:

India's social protection needs to be reshaped to address increased poverty vulnerability and increased uneven playing field. The declining share of labour in total income and accumulation of capital wealth in the hands of a few have raised concern. We need new ways of scaling up social protection for 80% of working people in India who have no or little access to social protection.