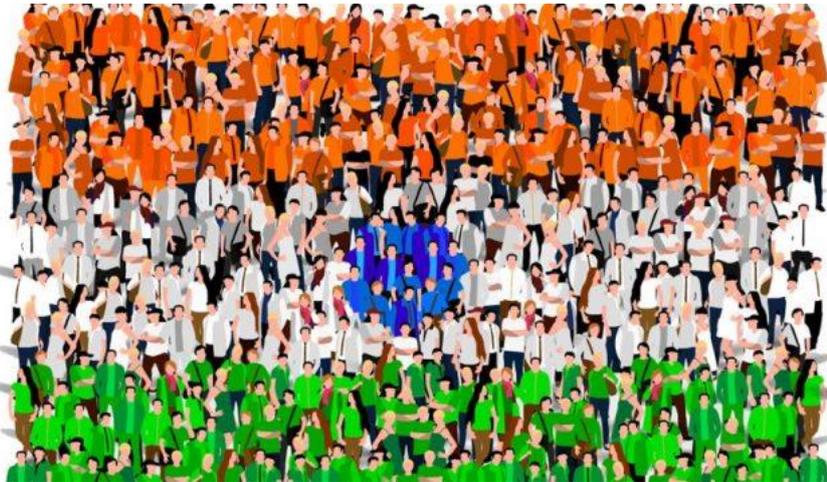




Empower the youth first

Context:

- It is argued that if India wants to achieve the goal of self-reliance we have to start with empowering the youth.



What is the status of youth in India?

- The 2014 National Youth Policy (NYP) defined youth as persons between 15 and 29 years.
- This segment of the society accounted for 27.5% of the population as per NYP, 2014.
- According to the NYP report, the Central government spends about ₹2,710 per youth on education, skill development, employment, healthcare and food subsidies.
- The total amount of Union government expenditure is pegged at more than ₹90,000 crore. Assuming that States spend an equal amount, the total investment in our youth would be under 1% of the GDP.
- A World Bank report pegged the projected cost (read: loss) of not investing in children and youth at 4% of the GDP every year. Of this, the costs of unemployment account for 0.6%
- As of 2017-18, youth participation in India's labour force was 38.3%.
- Drawing from the 2018 State of Working India Report, the youth unemployment rate is pegged to be at least 18.3% (3.47 crore youths).
- About 30% of youth fall under the 'neither in employment nor in education' category and 33% of India's skilled youth are unemployed
- Around 50 lakh youth are expected to be entering the workforce annually.
- India has just a decade's time to seize the opportunity and realise this youth demographic dividend, else it will turn into demographic disaster with high unemployment rate & underutilized potential.



Way forward:

- **Indian Youth Guarantee (IYG) programme:** It is similar to the European Union Youth Guarantee (EU-YG) but tuned to India's context.
- EU-YG emerged in 2010 at a time when youth unemployment rates were soaring above 20%.
- EU-Youth Guarantee is a commitment by all its Member States to ensure that all **young people under the age of 25** years, within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education, receive a good quality offer of
 - employment
 - continued education
 - apprenticeship
 - traineeship
- An IYG initiative, with statutory backing, can function as a facilitatory framework for ensuring gainful and productive engagement of youth.
- **Youth Component Plan:** Such a plan earmarks a specific percentage of funds under a separate head on the lines of the Special Component Plan for the Scheduled Castes and the Tribal Sub-Plan.
- Objective of Youth Component Plan is to channelise flow of outlays and benefits proportional to the percentage of youth population based on sub-regional requirements.
- Existing youth schemes and skilling infrastructure need to be dovetailed and streamlined while leveraging industry to enable an **in situ empowerment of youth**.
- Rural youth employment can be instituted alongside MGNREGA as only about 4% of youth in the labour force have been impacted by MGNREGA.

Conclusion:

- A focus on our youth is the first step towards self-reliance. It is time we summon the political will to guarantee our youth a viable future.