School Registration Portal Launched

Why in News?

The **Maharashtra government** launched a portal for private pre-schools to register, aiming to build a **unified database of all pre-schools in the state.**

Key Points

- **About the Portal:**
    - The State government has made pre-school registration voluntary for the time being.
        - A **dedicated Act to regulate pre-primary education** is currently in progress.
    - Until now, **formal education in Maharashtra began at Class 1**, after children turned 6.
        - **Pre-schools** (nursery to senior kindergarten, for ages 3–6) **were not part** of the mainstream system.
- **ECCE under NEP 2020:**
    - The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** includes **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)** in formal schooling.
        - With Maharashtra implementing NEP in schools, **pre-schools will also be brought into the mainstream.**
    - The school education department has data on government-run **anganwadis** and **balwadis** (under Women and Child Development Department).
        - However, there is **no formal data on the large number of privately run pre-schools.**

National Education Policy 2020

- **About:**
    - The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** aims to address India's evolving development needs by overhauling the education system to meet 21st century goals and **Sustainable Development Goal 4** (SDG4), while preserving India's cultural heritage.
    - It replaced the **National Policy on Education, 1986,** which was modified in 1992.
- **Salient Features:**
    - **Universal Access:** Focuses on providing access to education from pre-school through secondary levels.
    - **Early Childhood Education:** Transitions from the 10+2 to a 5+3+3+4 system, including children aged 3-6 in the school curriculum with an emphasis on **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).**
    - **Multilingualism:** Promotes using mother tongues or regional languages as the medium of instruction up to Grade 5, with options for Sanskrit and other languages. **Indian Sign Language (ISL)** will be standardised.
    - **Inclusive Education:** Emphasises support for **Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs)**, children with disabilities, and the establishment of **"Bal Bhavans."**
    - **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) Enhancement:** Aim to raise the **Gross Enrolment**

Ratio from 26.3% to 50% by 2035, adding 3.5 crore new seats.

- **Research Focus:** Establishes the **National Research Foundation** to enhance research culture and capacity.
- **Language Preservation:** Supports Indian languages through the **Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI)** and strengthens language departments.
- **Internationalisation:** Encourages international collaborations and the entry of top-ranked foreign universities.
    - For example, in 2023 **UGC** released regulations to facilitate foreign universities to set up campuses in India.
- **Funding:** Targets increasing public investment in education to **6% of GDP.**
- **PARAKH Assessment Center:** Introduces **PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development)** for competency-based and holistic assessments.
- **Gender Inclusion Fund:** Establishes a fund to promote gender equality in education and support initiatives for disadvantaged groups.
- **Special Education Zones:** Creates **Special Education Zones** to cater to the needs of disadvantaged regions and groups, reinforcing the commitment to equitable access to quality education.

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