National Policy on Domestic Workers

Why in news?

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The labour and employment ministry is set to formulate a national policy on domestic workers.

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What is the need?

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- India’s domestic workers numbers around 5 million domestic workers of which around 3.5 million are women.
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- They perform tasks that are not recognised as “work”.
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- The absence of legislation in this area led to a thriving industry of illegal private placement agencies.
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- These agencies lure women from rural areas to cities promising them lucrative salary, lifestyle and benefits.
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- Many of the victims are of tribal origin from poor areas and are often subjected to abuses.
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- It includes working around the clock, physical violence, sexual assaults and even threat to their lives.
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What will be the highlights of the policy?

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- The policy proposes legal status to domestic workers.
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- It would facilitate recognition of part-time and full-time domestic help as

“workers”.
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- It would enable them with the right to register with the state labour department.
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- It also plans to ensure minimum wages and equal remuneration to the domestic workers.
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Will a “national policy” help?

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- **Implementation -** There is no shortage of existing legislation in this matter.
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- Unorganized Social Security Act (USSA), 2008, and Sexual Harassment against Women at Work Place (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, are some examples.
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- USSA recognised domestic work as “work” and mandated the formation of a state social security board to recommend, advise, and monitor social welfare schemes for unorganised workers.
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- None of this has been implemented in a large number of states yet.
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- **Complexity -** According to UN, unlike other forms of labour market activity, domestic work takes place in an unconventional place of work, i.e. the household.
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- Implementations of labour laws such as minimum wages and regularised work hours also remain a challenge.
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- Such regulation is complex because the nature of domestic work is unique compared to other forms of work.
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- The sector lacks effective means to regulate working conditions, for example, through streamlined job descriptions which could be offered through standard contracts.
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Source: Business Standard

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