Participation of women – Mining sector

Why in news?

The Labour Ministry recently allowed for increased participation of women in underground mining.

What is the status of women participation in mining sector?

- Mining is a sector which has the potential to be a key driver of economic growth, development and job creation in many developing countries.
- Mining has been traditionally male-dominated across the world.
- A 2013 report by Women in Mining (UK) and PricewaterhouseCoopers stated that the mining industry has the lowest number of women on company boards of any industry group worldwide.
- India, on its part, had laws that placed several restrictions on women working in the sector.
- The Mines Act 1952 expressly forbade the employment of women in underground mines, and allowed them to work in above-ground mines only between 6 am and 7 pm.
- When minerals and deposits are found close to the surface and spread across a large distance, the best way to mine is to use the open cast mining method.
- Underground Mining is generally used for areas where the mineral seam is too far underground for open cut mining to be of use.
- The labour ministry has recently amended the rules to allow women to work in underground mines during the day time and in opencast mines round the clock.

What is the significance?

- Despite the amendment, the discriminatory labour laws still prevail with women in underground mining can only occupy technical, supervisory and managerial positions.
- The IIT-Indian School of Mines recently allowed female students into the mining engineering problems.
- Thus, with a start being made, the likelihood of further change to allow women miners has gone up.
- Worker Population Ratio (WPR) is defined as the number of persons employed per 1000 persons.

- As per the last round of the Annual Employment-Unemployment Survey (EUS) (in the year FY16), the worker population ratio (WPR) for females aged 15 years and above was 21.7% as compared to the male WPR of 72.1%.
- Thus, the recent amendment to allow women to work in the mining sector bodes will curb gender disparity and boost equal opportunities for women in the long run.

Source: Financial Express

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