Report on Child Care Institutions

Why in news?

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Ministry of Women and Child Development recently released a report titled ‘Mapping and Review Exercise of Child Care Institutions’.

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What is the report on?

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- The drawbacks in the management of child care institutions have been analysed by a Central government committee.
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- The committee studied nearly 9,600 Child Care Institutions and Homes.
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- These are mostly run by NGOs, and come under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (JJ Act).
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- Most of the inmates are orphaned, abandoned, sexually abused, trafficked, victims of disasters and conflict, children in conflict with the law and in need of care and protection.
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What are the key findings?

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- Only 32% of Child Care Institutions or Homes were registered under the JJ Act as of 2016.
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- An equal number were unregistered, and the rest were either empanelled under other schemes or awaiting registration.

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- Only around 46% of the total homes had adequate number of caregivers per child.
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- Also, only around 28% centres were able to tend to inmates showing signs of hunger or illness.
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- 65.9% of homes were able to actively supervise children under trauma.
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- Child care standards were poor in many institutions, lacking proper bedding, food, and nutrition and sanitation.
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- Children often have to live in facilities without proper toilets, and secure compounds.
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- More worse, they do not have the opportunity to vent their grievances as provided for under law.
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- Some States have too few homes, giving authorities little incentive to take up cases of children in distress.
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- A few States do not have even one home of every category, such as child care, observation and adoption.
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- Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Kerala together account for 43.5% of all shelters.
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- The study highlights the disconnect between civil society and the welfare system for children, and the poor engagement of elected representatives.
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What should be done?

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- Emergency measures to address the serious lacunae in these institutions are crucial.
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- Systematic scrutiny by State governments is essential to bring reforms to the childcare system.

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- It must be ensured through special inspection officers that all institutions -
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i. register under the JJ Act
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ii. account for funds received
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iii. enforce mandatory child protection policies during adoption
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- The priority should be to bring about uniformity of standards and procedures.
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- Common norms for infrastructure, human resources, financial practices and external audits should be in place.
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- The findings of the Ministry’s committee should now be turned into a blueprint for action.
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- Credentialed NGOs should take a greater interest in this effort.
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Source: The Hindu

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