Tackling the problem of Malnutrition

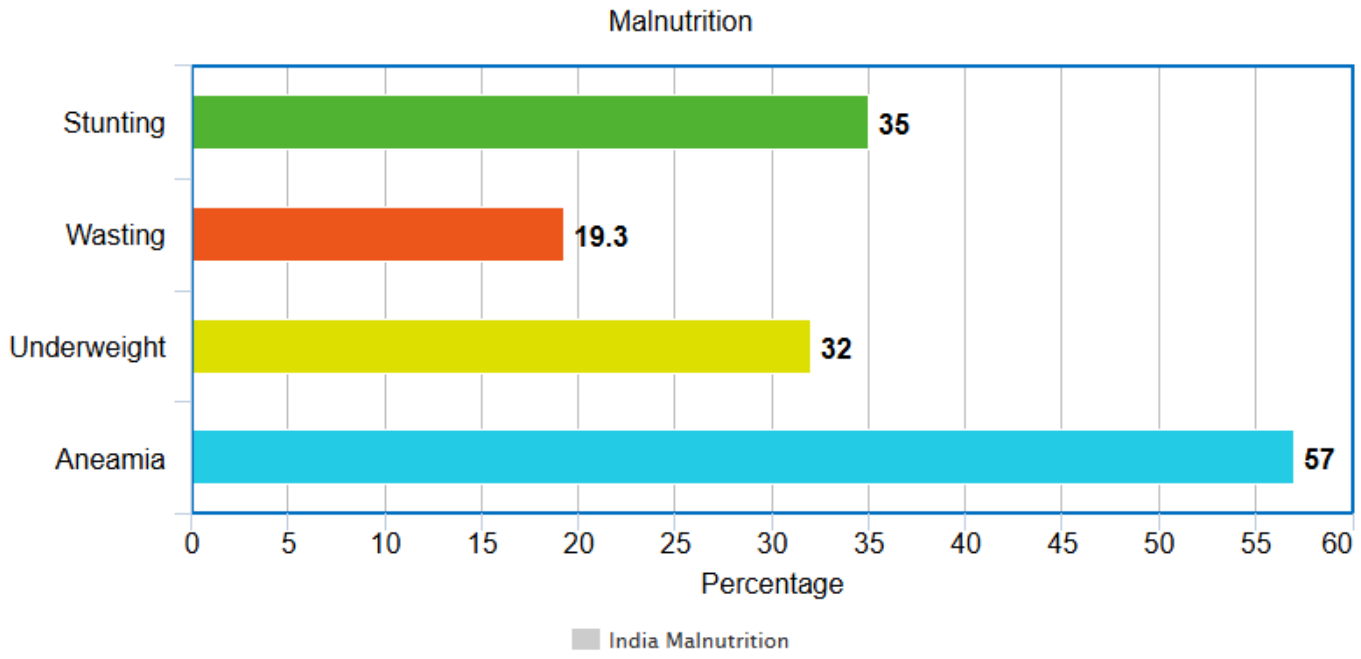
Why in news?

The article discusses India's nutrition challenges and government initiatives like **Saksham Anganwadi** and **Poshan 2.0** in Budget 2025.

What is the status of malnutrition in India?

- **Malnutrition in Women and Children** - India has one of the world's highest share of malnourished children and anaemic women.

  Stunted growth refers to children who are too short for their age, wasted refers to the children who are too thin for their height, and underweight children have low weight for their age, indicating both stunting and wasting.



What are challenges in addressing malnutrition in India?

- **Complex factor** - Nutrition in India is shaped by our culture, caste, gender and many diversities present.
- **Exclusion** – Inadequate focus on other target groups like women out of reproductive age, men and senior citizens.
- **Lifestyle disorders** - Diseases like diabetes, hypertension, non-communicable

diseases and nutrition deficiency are highly linked with nutrition.

- **Poverty and Inequality** - Many families lack the financial resources to afford a diverse and nutritious diet.
- Rural areas, tribal communities, and urban slums often suffer from higher rates of malnutrition due to systemic inequalities.
- **Lack of Awareness** - Limited knowledge about proper nutrition, especially among mothers and caregivers, leads to poor dietary practices.
- **Healthcare Access** - Inadequate healthcare services in rural and underserved areas hinder early identification and treatment of malnutrition.
- **Agricultural and Food Systems** - India relies heavily on staple crops like rice and wheat, which are calorie-rich but not always nutrient-rich.
- **Gender Disparities** - Women and girls often eat last and least in households, leading to chronic undernutrition.

What are the government measures in addressing malnutrition?

- **National Food Security Act , 2013** – It ensures food security by providing subsidized food grains to 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population.
- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)** – It provides supplementary nutrition, immunization, pre-school education, health checkups, and health referrals for children under 6 and pregnant and lactating mothers.
- **Mid-Day Meal Scheme** – It offers free, nutritious meals to school children to enhance their nutritional intake and encourage school attendance.
- **POSHAN Abhiyaan** – National Nutrition Mission was launched in 2018 to achieve improvement in nutritional status of Children under 6 years, Adolescent Girls, Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)** - Offers cash incentives to pregnant and lactating women for their first live birth, helping them access better healthcare and nutrition.
- **Anemia Mukt Bharat (AMB)** - Focuses on combating anemia, particularly among children, adolescents, and women, through iron and folic acid supplementation and deworming.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission** - Aims to improve sanitation and eliminate open defecation, which indirectly helps prevent malnutrition by reducing infections and diseases.
- **Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0** – It is an Integrated Nutrition Support Programme to address malnutrition through a strategic shift in nutrition content and delivery.

What lies ahead?

- Nutrition needs to be identified as a public health issue that impacts all people among different social stratification.
- Clear identification of nutrition needs beyond the reproductive and child health.
- A set of solutions suited especially according to our local food systems.
- Identification of locally-embedded facilities to deliver nutritional services.
- Systematically expand the nutrition-focused activities to other segments of the population and involve health and wellness centres (HWCs) and Anganwadi centres

(AWCs).

Reference

- The Hindu |Tackling the problem of Malnutrition

