

## 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 programs.
- 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**

