

The Himachal Pradesh Sukhashraya Act, 2023

April 10, 2023

In news– Himachal Pradesh has passed a Bill for the welfare of orphans and persons with special needs recently.

What does the bill say?

- The Himachal Pradesh Sukhashraya (Care, Protection, and Self-Reliance of Children of the State) Act, 2023 states that **orphans and persons with special needs will become 'children of the state'**.
- The State government will provide **financial and institutional benefits between the age of 18-27 years**.
- The Act facilitates that such children and adults will be provided with **vocational training, skill development, and coaching to become active members of the mainstream of society**.
- The Act has **defined orphans as those who are currently without biological parents or whose parents have been medically proven to be incapacitated of taking care**.
- The ambit is **also extended to children relinquished by guardians or parents** for social, emotional, and physical factors.
- **The benefits of the Act will also be given to 'children in need of care and protection'** such as those found who are without a home or working in contravention of labour laws.
- **Children forced to beg or whose guardians have threatened, abused,** or intended physical and emotional harm, **will also be taken care of by the state government**.
- **Children at risk of marriage before the legal age, impacted by a crime, or vulnerable to drug abuse** will also be under the scope of the Act.

- As per initial estimates, more than **6,000 such persons have been identified.**
- The beneficiaries **will be given Rs 5,000 in summer and a similar amount in winter to buy clothes.** A sum of Rs 500 will be given to the children to celebrate major festivals.
- **The orphans will be allowed to take a vacation within the state and the government will sponsor train tickets and accommodation for 10 days in a 3-star hotel.**
- **On attaining the age of majority, the government will provide them Rs 4,000 monthly allowance for daily expenses in college.**
- In institutions like ITI and other government colleges, the hostel fees of the beneficiaries will also be taken care of.
- Orphans who wish to establish their **own start-ups will be given a token corpus to incentivize entrepreneurial pursuits.**
- **The allowance will be given to Ph.D. students too** and a fixed amount of money will also be given at the time of marriage.
- The beneficiaries will also be given **three biswas of land in order to build their own homes.**
- The government has formed a **Mukhya Mantri Sukhashraya Sahayata Kosh (fund) of Rs 101 crore to which all MLAs have contributed Rs 1 lakh.**

Other safeguards mentioned in the Act-

- The state government shall **make arrangements for ex-residents of child care institutions till the age of 21 years** and in exceptional cases as may be prescribed up to the age of 23 years; and for orphans, by providing for their education, giving them employable skills and placement as well as providing them places for a stay in After Care Institutions.
- **Recurring deposit accounts shall be opened for each**

child and orphan. The state government shall make contributions to these accounts as per prevalent rates.

- **A child welfare committee will be established in each district** which will look into the demands of children in need.
- The committee will overlook the admissions in aftercare institutions and carry out surveys to identify orphans.