



CURRENT AFFAIRS



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OVER 5 CR MGNREGS WORKERS' NAMES DELETED IN 2022-23

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)". The topic "Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)" has relevance in the "Governance" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), its aims, objectives, implementing agencies

For Mains:

GS2: Welfare Schemes for vulnerable sections and their performance

Why in the news?

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha on July 25, Rural Development Minister stated that over 5 crore workers have been removed from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in the financial year 2022-23.

Reasons for deletion:

The Ministry has described these deletions as a routine procedure carried out by State governments. They have provided a comprehensive list of five reasons for such deletions, which include instances such as

- fake job cards,
- duplicate job cards,
- individuals unwilling to work,
- families permanently relocating from the gram panchayat area,
- cases where a job card is issued to a single person who has passed away.

The number of job card deletions is increasing due to the government's emphasis on linking MGNREGS job cards with Aadhaar cards and making wage payments through the Aadhaar-Based Payments System (ABPS).

Issues with Aadhaar-Based Payments System (ABPS) for MGNREGS

- Payments may get credited to wrong or multiple bank accounts linked to Aadhaar numbers
- Payments may get rejected due to inactive Aadhaar or other technical errors
- Aadhaar does not help in corruption control or grievance redressal
- Aadhaar linking is not justified for MGNREGA payments which are not subsidies or benefits but wages for work done.

About MGNREGS:

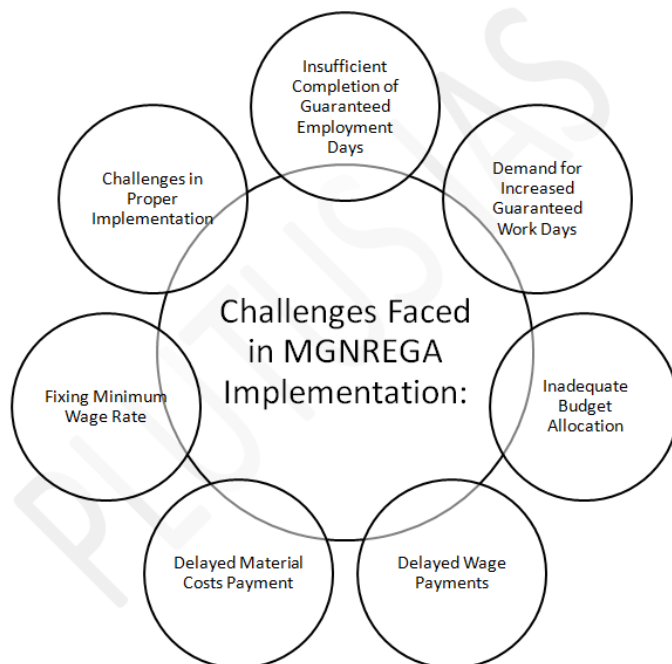
- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was enacted in 2005 to improve the livelihood security of rural households.
- It is a **demand-driven program that guarantees 100 days of unskilled labor per year to every rural household** that requests it, covering all districts in the country except those with a 100% urban population.
- It mandates that **at least one-third of the beneficiaries must be women**, and wages are set according to the rates specified for agricultural labourers in the state, as per the Minimum Wages Act, 1948.
- The MGNREGA wage rates are fixed according to changes in the **CPI-AL (Consumer Price Index-Agriculture Labour)**, which reflects the increase in the inflation in rural areas.
- The responsibility for planning, execution, and monitoring of the undertaken works primarily lies with Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).
- Gram Sabhas are entrusted with recommending the works to be undertaken, and at least 50 percent of these projects must be executed by them.
- Funding for MGNREGS is shared between the Central and State Governments.
 - The Central Government bears the entire cost of unskilled labour, 75 percent of semi-skilled and skilled labour costs, 75 percent of material costs, and 6 percent of administrative expenses.
- The ideal wage and material cost ratio is set at 60:40 at the panchayat level.
- The scheme mandates that workers be given a daily unemployment allowance if they are not provided with work within 15 days of requesting it. Additionally, unskilled workers must be paid their wages within 15 days, and the Centre must compensate them if there is a delay.

Significance of MGNREGS:

- MGNREGS holds paramount importance as a social security scheme aimed at generating employment opportunities for the rural poor, thus ensuring livelihoods in rural areas.
- It empowers women and other traditionally marginalized sections of society by providing them with the Right to Work.
- Furthermore, the program plays a pivotal role in bolstering the rural economy through the creation of essential infrastructure assets.
- Additionally, MGNREGS contributes significantly to sustainable development, particularly evident in its emphasis on water conservation efforts.
- The program also fosters decentralised, participatory planning and strengthens Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), promoting democracy at the grassroots level.
- It additionally encourages transparency and accountability in governance, contributing to the overall welfare of the nation.

Challenges to the Implementation of MGNREGA

- **Insufficient Completion of Guaranteed Employment Days:**
 - Since 2016-17, less than 10% of households



have completed the guaranteed 100 days of wage employment per year.

- The average days of employment provided per household have been declining, reaching a five-year low, with just 42 days in the current financial year.
- **Demand for Increased Guaranteed Work Days:**
- Activist groups and the Parliament Committee have strongly recommended increasing the guaranteed work days from 100 to 150 per household.
- This is to provide rural populations with a safety net for a longer period in the year.
- **Inadequate Budget Allocation:**
- Peoples' Action for Employment Guarantee (PAEG) and NREGA Sangarsh Morcha demand a minimum budget of ₹2.72 lakh crore for the upcoming financial year to fulfill the legally guaranteed 100 days of work per household.
- **Delayed Wage Payments:**
- The scheme has faced issues of delayed wage payments to workers.
- As of December 14, 2022, the Centre owed ₹4,700 crore in MGNREGA wages to 18 States, despite the financial year nearing its end.
- Delayed wage payments have been criticized as equivalent to “forced labour” by the Supreme Court.
- **Delayed Material Costs Payment:**
- The government also owed ₹5,450 crore worth of material costs (for MGNREGA projects) to 19 States as of December 14.
- This delay in material costs impacts the supply chain and hinders timely completion of MGNREGA projects.
- **Fixing Minimum Wage Rate:**
- The method of fixing the minimum wage rate under MGNREGA based on the Consumer Price Index-Agricultural Labourers has been questioned.
- The type of work performed by agricultural laborers and MGNREGA workers is different, and some suggest using the Consumer Price Index-Rural for a more accurate and higher wage rate that considers education and medical care expenses.
- **Challenges in Proper Implementation:**
- Fake job cards and widespread corruption have affected the proper implementation of the scheme.
- Late uploading of muster rolls and inconsistent payment of unemployment allowance have been reported, further hindering the program's effectiveness.

MGNREGS remains a crucial lifeline for millions of rural workers, and its continued success depends on the government's commitment to addressing the identified challenges and implementing measures that ensure its equitable and effective implementation for the betterment of rural livelihoods and sustainable development.

Sources:

Parliament proceedings | Names of 5 crore MGNREGS workers deleted in 2022-23, Minister informs Lok Sabha – The Hindu

Q1. With reference Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), consider the following statements:

1. MGNREGS guarantees 100 days of employment per household per year.
2. The responsibility for planning, execution, and monitoring of MGNREGS works lies primarily with the Central Government.
3. The minimum wage rate under MGNREGS is fixed on the basis of the Consumer Price Index-Rural.

4. The government's emphasis on linking MGNREGS job cards with Aadhaar cards has resulted in a decrease in the number of job card deletions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 4 only

Answer: (a)

Q2. Consider the following:

1. The average days of employment provided per household under MGNREGS increased in the financial year 2022-23 compared to the previous years.
2. The Supreme Court of India has mandated the use of Aadhaar-Based Payments System (ABPS) for MGNREGS wage payments.
3. The government's efforts to link MGNREGS job cards with Aadhaar cards have effectively eliminated fake job cards and corruption from the scheme.

How many of the abovementioned statement/s is/are correct ?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) None

Answer: (d)

Q3. Examine the challenges faced in the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in recent years.

Gaurav Nikumbh

INDIA VIETNAM RELATIONS

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "INDIA VIETNAM RELATIONS". The topic "INDIA VIETNAM RELATIONS" has relevance in the International Relations section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

About INS Kirpan?

Facts About Vietnam?

For Mains:

GS 2: International Relations

Areas of Cooperation Between India and Vietnam?

Challenges in India-Vietnam Relations?

Why in the news?

The Navy has decommissioned INS Kirpan and handed it over to Vietnam People's Navy, Reflecting the growing defence ties and strategic partnership between New Delhi and Hanoi.

About INS Kirpan

INS Kirpan is a warship belonging to the Indian Navy. It is classified as a Khukri class missile corvette. The Khukri class corvettes are a group of naval vessels equipped with various capabilities to fulfill multiple roles, including coastal and offshore patrol, surface warfare, coastal security, anti-piracy operations

key features of INS Kirpan:

- **Commissioning:** INS Kirpan was commissioned into the Indian Navy on January 12, 1991. It became an active part of the Indian Navy's fleet to fulfill its designated roles and responsibilities.
- **Propulsion:** The corvette is powered by Diesel Engines assembled in India under license by Kirloskar Group. This use of indigenous engines showcases India's efforts in self-reliance and the growth of its defense capabilities.
- **Indigenous Content:** Approximately 65% of the ship's components and systems are indigenous, further highlighting India's commitment to domestic defense production and technological advancements.
- **Speed and Maneuverability:** INS Kirpan is capable of achieving a speed of more than 25 knots, which allows it to operate effectively in various maritime environments and execute its missions efficiently.
- **Armaments:** The missile corvette is equipped with a range of armaments, including missile systems, guns, and other offensive and defensive weaponry. These armaments enable it to engage threats effectively and protect vital sea lanes.
- **Versatility:** INS Kirpan's design and capabilities make it a versatile naval asset, capable of carrying out various tasks in different scenarios. From safeguarding coastal regions to conducting combat operations, it contributes significantly to India's maritime security.



Facts About Vietnam:

- **Location:** Southeast Asia, bordered by China, Laos, Cambodia, and the South China Sea.
- **Capital:** Hanoi
- **Largest Rivers:** The Mekong in the south and the Red in the north, ending at the South China Sea.
- **Currency:** Vietnamese Dong (VND)
- **Independence:** September 2, 1945, from France.

- **Historical Events:** Vietnam War (1955-1975) involving the US and North and South Vietnam, followed by reunification in 1976.

Areas of Cooperation Between India and Vietnam:

Historical and Diplomatic Relations:

- In 1956, India took a significant step in strengthening bilateral ties by establishing the Consul General's office in Hanoi, Vietnam's capital city.
- India supported Vietnam in opposing US intervention during the Vietnam War, which contributed to strengthening bilateral ties.

Strategic Partnership: In July 2007, India and Vietnam elevated their relations to a "Strategic Partnership," signifying a deeper engagement in various fields.

Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: In 2016, the bilateral relations were further elevated to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," indicating a comprehensive and multifaceted cooperation.

Economic Cooperation:

Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC): Both countries are members of MGC, working towards enhancing ties between India and Southeast Asian nations and promoting development cooperation.

Bilateral Trade: In the financial year 2021-22, bilateral trade between India and Vietnam reached USD 14.14 billion, with a 27% growth rate.

Capacity Building: India provides training programs and scholarships under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) to Vietnam, contributing to Vietnam's socio-economic development.

Political Backing:

- Both countries support each other in various international forums and organizations, exemplifying their commitment to global cooperation.
- Vietnam has supported India's bid to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and join the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

Defense Cooperation:

- India extended a Line of Credit (LoC) of USD 100 million in September 2014 for the procurement of 12 high-speed patrol boats for the Vietnamese border guard force.
- In 2016, an additional USD 500 million defense LoC was extended to Vietnam.
- A Joint Vision Statement on India-Vietnam defense partnership towards 2030 was signed in June 2022.
- The countries conduct joint army exercises, like the Vietnam-India Bilateral Army Exercise (Ex VINBAX).

Maritime Security and Cooperation:

- Both countries firmly support freedom of navigation, overflight, and lawful commerce in national waters, in accordance with international laws, particularly UNCLOS.
- India and Vietnam emphasize that the South China Sea Code of Conduct should be consistent with relevant UN conventions and respect the legitimate rights and interests of nations not participating in the discussions.

Challenges in India-Vietnam Relations:

- **Regional Geopolitical Complexities:** Both countries navigate complex regional dynamics, particularly concerning the South China Sea, which may impact their bilateral cooperation.
- **Economic Imbalances:** While trade has grown, addressing trade imbalances and promoting more balanced economic ties remains a challenge.
- **Connectivity:** Improving physical and digital connectivity between India and Vietnam to enhance trade and people-to-people exchanges.

- **Competition for Influence:** Amidst growing engagement, both nations face competition from other major powers seeking to expand their influence in Southeast Asia.
- **Non-Tariff Barriers:** Addressing non-tariff barriers and ensuring a conducive business environment for investments and trade.
- **Defense Coordination:** Enhancing coordination in defense cooperation and joint military exercises to address regional security concerns.

SOURCE:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/in-latest-move-towards-growing-ties-india-hands-over-missile-corvette-ins-kirpan-to-vietnam-8856051/>

Q.1 In the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, an initiative of six countries, which of the following is/are not a participant/ participants?

1. Bangladesh
2. Cambodia
3. China
4. Myanmar
5. Thailand

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2, 3 and 4
- (c) 1 and 3
- (d) 1, 2 and 5

Answer: (c)

Q.2 Consider the following pairs:

	River	Flows into
1.	Mekong	Andaman Sea
2.	Thames	Irish Sea
3.	Volga	Caspian Sea
4.	Zambezi	Indian Ocean

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 3 only
- (c) 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 4 only

Answer: (c)

Q.3 Discuss the evolving dynamics of India-Vietnam relations and the challenges faced in deepening their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Also, analyze the potential areas of cooperation and the role of regional geopolitics in shaping their bilateral ties.