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Youngest Workers Rise in MGNREGA

The proportion of **young workers** under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), **has begun to rise.**

- An analysis of age-wise data of persons employed in MGNREGA indicates that the share of the workforce in the **18-30 age bracket began moving up after the financial year 2017-18.**

The ratio of young workers among total MGNREGA workers has been rising to **9.1 % in 2018-19** and **10.06 % in 2019-20** from **7.73% in 2017-18.**

- The **total number of individuals working under MGNREGA has also gone up** in recent years.

For instance, 6.71 crores in 2014-15, 7.21 crore in 2015-16, 7.65 crores in 2016-17 and 7.76 crores in 2018-19.

- The rising trend of the young workforce among MGNREGA workers could be a reflection of the following events:
 - **Demonetisation**
 - Approximately, **1.5 million jobs were lost** after demonetization. Alongside this loss of jobs, there has been a **decline in the Labour Force Participation Rate (LPR)**.
 - As a result of job loss, many workers opted for MGNREGA for livelihood.
 - For a developing economy like India, a drop in the labour participation rate is a **sign of an economic slowdown**.
 - **The rollout of Goods and Service Tax (GST)**
 - The implementation of GST improved economic efficiency but the complexities of the new tax regime have driven **many small enterprises out of business forcing unemployment**.
 - Uniform tax regime through GST has also pushed many small and medium enterprises in **debt**.
 - Both these events caused **disruptions in the economy** resulting in a **surge of workers opting jobs** under MGNREGA.
- MGNREGA has helped to **reduce rural poverty** to a greater extent, in turn, it has also been described as a "**stellar example of rural development**" by **World Development Report 2014**.

- But, still, it is facing few challenges like:
 - **Low Wage Rates:**
 - Currently, MGNREGA wage rates of 17 states are less than the corresponding state minimum wages.
 - The low wage rates have resulted in a lack of interest among workers in working for MGNREGA schemes, making way for contractors and middlemen to take control, locally.
 - **Insufficient budget allocation:**
 - Almost every year, more than 80% of funds get exhausted within the first six months.
 - Thus, the fund allocation is insufficient to ensure proper implementation on the ground.
 - **Regular payment delays:**

Despite the order of the Supreme Court, no provision has yet been worked out for calculation of full wage delays and payment of compensation for the same.
 - **Too much centralisation weakening local governance:**
 - A real-time MIS-based implementation and a centralised payment system has further left the representatives of the Panchayati Raj Institutions with literally diminished its role in implementation, monitoring and grievance redress of MGNREGA schemes.
 - It has hardly have any power to resolve issues or make payments.
- Though there are issues with MGNREGA, the government is trying to improve the scope of the scheme through diversified aspects.

The central government is working on an initiative to **include skill and training** as a part of MGNREGA to make it not only a job creator but also **to increase skilled labours** across the country.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005

- The Act aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing hundred days of wage employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members (at least 18 years of age) volunteer to do unskilled work.
- The central government bears the full cost of unskilled labour, and 75% of the cost of material (the rest is borne by the states).
- It is a demand-driven, social security and labour law that aims to enforce the 'right to work'.
- Ministry of Rural Development (MRD), Government of India in association with state governments, monitors the implementation of the scheme.
- Agriculture and allied activities constitute more than 65% of the works taken up under the programme.

Crime in India: NCRB

The **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** has recently released its annual '**Crime in India**' report for the year **2017**.

- However, data of death due to mob lynching, murder by influential people, killing ordered by khap panchayat and murder committed for religious reason have not been published.
- The new report has largely followed the pattern of the 2016 edition, barring **additions** in the category of **cyber crimes** and **offences against the state**.

Key Findings

- **Crime Registration and Rate:**
 - In 2017, there was an **increase of 3.6% in registration of cases** over 2016.
 - **Delhi** witnessed the **highest** crime rate in the country with **1,050** Indian Penal Code (IPC) crime incidents per lakh of the city's population.
 - This was over four times the **national average of 238**.
- **Offences against the State:**
 - There has been a **30% rise** in incidents of offences against the state as compared to 2016.
 - This category includes offences such as **sedition, waging war against the country** and **damage to public property** among others.
 - The **maximum** number of such offences were reported from **Haryana followed by UP**. The act of damage to public property was the leading reason.
 - Maximum offences were **committed by** the **Left Wing Extremist (LWE)** operatives, followed by **North East insurgents** and **Terrorists** (Jihadi and other elements).
- **Crime Against Women:**
 - The number of crimes committed against women **increased by 6%** over the year 2016.
 - Majority cases were registered under 'Cruelty by Husband or His Relatives' followed by 'Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty'.
 - The **maximum cases** were registered in **Uttar Pradesh (UP)** followed by Maharashtra and West Bengal.
- **Cyber Crimes:**
 - **Bengaluru topped the list** among metropolitan cities across the country in terms of number of cyber crimes registered.
 - Bengaluru was **followed by Mumbai and Jaipur**.

- **Riots:**
 - Out of the total 58,880 incidents of rioting reported, communal and sectarian riots accounted for 723 and 183 incidents respectively.
 - There were **805 riots due to caste conflict** and **1909 riots due to political reasons**.
 - **Maximum** incidents were reported from **Bihar**, followed by Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.
- **Crime Against SC/STs:**
 - The incidents registered under the **Scheduled Caste Prevention of Atrocities Act** saw an **increase** from 5,082 incidents reported in 2016 to 5,775 in 2017.
 - Incidents of **crime related to Scheduled Tribes dipped** from 844 in 2016 to 720 in 2017.

National Crime Record Bureau

- NCRB, **headquartered in New Delhi, was set-up in 1986** under the **Ministry of Home Affairs** to function as a repository of information on crime and criminals so as to assist the investigators in linking crime to the perpetrators.
- It was set up based on the recommendations of the National Police Commission (1977-1981) and the MHA's Task Force (1985).
- NCRB brings out the annual comprehensive statistics of crime across the country (**'Crime in India' report**).
Being **published since 1953**, the report serves as a crucial tool in understanding the law and order situation across the country.

Source: IE

Jiyo Parsi Scheme

- The **Ministry of Minority Affairs** initiated the Jiyo Parsi Scheme in **2013** to check the declining Parsi population.
- The **main objective** of the scheme was to arrest the declining trend of the Parsi population by adopting a scientific protocol and structured interventions, in order to stabilize their population and thereby increasing the population of Parsis in India.
- The scheme comprises of **three components**:
 - **Advocacy Component** that includes workshops, advertisement campaigns to create awareness, etc.,
 - **Health of the Community Component** which covers Childcare and Creche support, assistance to elderly, etc.
 - **Medical Component** includes financial assistance for the detection and treatment of infertility, fertility treatment, etc.

- The scheme also offers cash assistance to encourage Parsi couples to have children. The scheme is applicable to all couples, irrespective of their financial status.
 - This has resulted in 214 births over the last five years through **assisted reproductive techniques** (ART).
 - This is a 100% **Central Sector Scheme**.

Parsi Community

- Parsi community follow **Zoroastrianism**, which is one of the world's oldest **monotheistic religions**. It was founded by the **Prophet Zoroaster (or Zarathustra)** in ancient Iran around the 6th-7th century.
- Zoroastrians believe in one God called **Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord)** who created the world. Their holy scripture is called the **Avesta**.
- Zoroastrians worship communally in a Fire Temple or Agiary. Zoroastrians are not fire-worshippers but believe that the elements are pure and that fire represents God's light or wisdom.
- March 21, **Nowruz (also spelled as Navroz), the Iranian New Year** is celebrated in India by the Parsi community.
- Zoroastrians are split into two groups: **the Iranians and the Parsis**.
- The followers of the religion who exiled from Iran in the 7th century AD arrived in **Gujarat region of India**.
- According to the Union Ministry of Minority Affairs, the population of Parsis has declined from about 114,000 in 1941 to 57,264 in 2011.
 - While India's population more than tripled in over 60 years, the number of Parsi has reduced by almost 50% (Census 2011).
 - **Maharashtra has the highest Parsi population** in the country followed by Gujarat.
- **Infertility and late marriages** are among the main reasons for the rapid decline in the Parsi population.

According to the foundation, 30% of the Parsi population has never married.
- Zoroastrians (Parsis) are among the **six religious communities notified as minority** communities by the Union Government. The other five are: Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains.

Source: HT

China's Commercial Carrier Rockets

- China has recently unveiled its **new generation of commercial carrier rockets** which could carry up to 1.5-tonne of payload.

- The new rocket series comprises of small space rockets:
 - **Solid-fuelled** rockets codenamed as the **Smart Dragon (SD)** family (The SD rocket family is made up of the SD-1, 2, and 3 launch vehicles), and
 - **Tenglong-** the **liquid-propellant** rocket (which will make its first flight in 2021).
- This move can be seen in the backdrop of the fact that China gears up to compete with India to attract the lucrative global space launch market.
 - According to an article published in 2017 in the Global Times, 'China's space industry is lagging behind that of India in the commercial space industry.'
 - The Chinese rockets will have to create a niche for themselves in the satellite market where the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** has already gained a foothold.
 - To provide impetus to the space sector, India has recently established **New Space India Limited (NSIL)** whose mandate is to use research and development carried out by ISRO over the years for commercial purposes through Indian industry partners.
 - ISRO's tried and trusted **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)** has till now launched **297 foreign satellites** and has various variants, which are meant for carrying different-size payloads and to different orbits.
 - According to a new market intelligence report by BIS Research, the global small satellite market generated a revenue of \$513.6 million in 2018 and is expected to reach \$2.9 billion by 2030.
- Another path-breaking revolution that is underway is the **small satellite revolution**.
 - Globally, 17,000 small satellites are expected to be launched between 2019 till 2030.
 - ISRO is developing a **Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV)** that is expected to be ready in 2019.
 - It is a prime candidate, along with the proven PSLV, to be farmed out to the private sector.
 - Besides the PSLV and upcoming SSLV, ISRO has also started using the **fourth stage of the rocket** for carrying nanosatellite or experimental modules of private parties for experimental purposes.
 - **Antrix-** ISRO's **commercial arm**, had generated revenue of over ₹ 2,000 crore in 2017-18, which is likely to double in five years.
 - Developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and big data analytics has led to the emergence of **'New Space'**.

Way Forward

- India's achievements are largely driven by its **low-price advantage** which primarily is a weak point for China's commercial space sector.

- Keeping that in mind, these new set of China's rockets are expected to meet the requirements of the overwhelming majority of launch missions for domestic and foreign commercial satellites.
- So with increasing competition, complexity and demand for space-related activities, there is a growing realization that national legislation is needed to ensure the overall growth of the space sector. A New Space law for India should aim at facilitating growing India's share of the global space economy in the coming decade.

Source: ET

TechSagar

The **National Cyber Security Coordinator's** office in partnership with the **Data Security Council of India** (DSCI) has launched '**TechSagar**', an online portal of India's technological capability.

- It provides actionable insights about capabilities of the Indian Industry, academia and research across 25 technology areas like **Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI)**, etc.
 - It currently features over 4,000 entities.
 - It will be frequently updated with new entities and information to maintain its relevance and usefulness.
- **Agenda:**
 - The losses due to cyber crime globally on an average is 2.5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
 - Thus, India's dream of growing to \$5 trillion economy by 2025 is being seriously threatened by the losses due to **cyber crimes**.
 - TechSagar will facilitate new opportunities for businesses and academia to collaborate, connect and innovate in the future.

National Cyber Security Coordinator

- In **2014**, the Prime Minister's Office created the position of the National Cyber Security Coordinator.
- The NCSC office **coordinates with different agencies** at the national level **for cyber security matters**.

Data Security Council of India

- DSCI is a **not-for-profit** premier **industry body on data protection** in India, **setup by NASSCOM**, committed to making cyberspace safe, secure and trusted by establishing best practices, standards and initiatives in cyber security and privacy.
 - **NASSCOM** is a not-for-profit trade body and chamber of commerce of the Tech industry in India and comprises over 2800 member companies including both Indian and multinational organisations that have a presence in India.
- Its Registered Office is located in **New Delhi**.

Source: IE

Siachen Area Opens for Tourism

Recently, the Siachen Glacier area of Ladakh has been **declared open for tourists** by the



Government of India.

- Siachen, the **world's highest battlefield** was closed 35 years ago for civilians.
- The announcement came while the inauguration of '**Col Chewang Rinchen Setu**'.
 - **Col Chewang Rinchen Setu** is built over **River Shyok**, which connects **Durbuk and Daulat Beg Oldie** in **Eastern Ladakh**.
 - The location of the bridge is **sandwiched between strategic Karakoram and Chang Chenmo ranges**.
 - The 'Col Chewang Rinchen Setu' is a **430-metre** bridge built at an **altitude of about 15,000 feet** using **Micro Piling Technology**.
 - Micropiles are a deep foundation element constructed using high-strength, small-diameter steel casing and/or threaded bar.
 - The bridge is built by **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)**.

Siachen

- The entire Siachen Glacier, with all major passes, is currently under the administration of India since 1984.

- The Siachen Glacier is located in the **Eastern Karakoram range** in the Himalayas, just **northeast of Point NJ9842** where the Line of Control between India and Pakistan ends.
- It is the **second-longest glacier** in the **world's non-polar areas**.
- The Siachen Glacier lies immediately south of the great drainage divide that separates the Eurasian Plate from the Indian subcontinent in the extensively glaciated portion of the Karakoram sometimes called the "**Third Pole**".

Source:PIB

BHIM 2.0

The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** has launched a new version of of Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) app **i.e. BHIM 2.0**.

- **BHIM app**, that was developed by the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**, was launched in December, 2016.
- It is a **Unified Payment Interface (UPI)** that allows real time fund transfer.
- The new version of BHIM supports **three additional languages** -- Konkani, Bhojpuri and Haryanvi -- over and above the existing 13.
- Under BHIM 2.0, the **existing cap of Rs. 20,000 has been increased to Rs. 1,00,000, from verified merchants**.
- Other features include a 'donation' gateway, linking multiple bank accounts, option of applying in Initial Public Offering (IPO), gifting money, etc.

Source: Mint
