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## Employment Scheme for Urban Poor: Jharkhand

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### Why in News

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Jharkhand is set to launch a 100-day employment scheme for **urban unskilled workers** similar to the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme** (MGNREGS) amid the **coronavirus pandemic** and **increasing unemployment**.

- Recently the Government of India has launched a **rural public works** scheme '**Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan**' to provide livelihood opportunities to the returnee migrant workers and **rural citizens**.
- Even Jharkhand launched **three employment schemes** earlier to create wage employment for **workers in rural areas**. In this context, an **employment guarantee scheme for urban poor** is unique and timely intervention.

### Key Points

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- **Name of the Scheme:** The scheme will be known as **Mukhyamantri SHRAMIK (Shahri Rozgar Manjuri For Kamgar) Yojana**.
- **Objective:** Enhancing livelihood security for **urban poor**. They will be given priority in the existing schemes. If they could not be accommodated in existing schemes, exclusive schemes for the purpose will be created and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) would be given separate funds for this.
- **Basic Provisions:**
  - The workers will be able demand work either in writing or orally for a **minimum of seven days and a maximum of 100 days**.
  - If a worker has a child of five years or less, then a female worker will need to be employed—to take care of the child—and paid the minimum wage. All **basic amenities, medical facilities, registration as well as a social security** will be provided.
- **Demand based Work:** The work will be demand based and divided into various categories like cleanliness, water harvesting, tree plantation, public works construction or repair and managing shelter homes, among others.

- **Minimum Wage:** Workers will be paid the minimum wage as notified by the state government.
- **Decent Wage:** The wages under the proposed Yojana are likely to be at least 40% higher than that provided under the MGNREGA programme in the state.
- **Swift Transfer of Wages:** The amount will be credited to the bank account of workers, either after work or within seven days of the completion of work. In any situation, the payment has to be made within 15 days of the completion of work.
- **Unemployment Allowance:** Like MGNREGA, the scheme will also have a provision for unemployment allowance where a person who has asked for work does not get it within 15 days will be liable to be paid **one-fourth of the minimum wage** as allowance for the **first month**, **half the wage** in the **second month**, and the **full minimum wage** amount in the **third month of no work**.
- **Job Cards & Dedicated Website:** Urban workers will also be registered and they would be provided job cards. A special website is also being designed, similar to the website functions in MGNREGS.
- **Implementation:** The scheme will be implemented by the urban development and housing department through the state urban livelihood mission. Municipal commissioners, executive offices or special officers of municipal bodies will be the nodal officer of the scheme.

## Background

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- **Large Number of Casual Labours:** There are about 13-14 lakh households in urban areas of Jharkhand, of which around 15% are employed as casual labourers. An estimated 25% households in urban areas have been adversely affected by the extended lockdown.
- **Influx of Migrants:** There was a need for a scheme like this because of the huge influx of migrant workers to the state. This will help the migrant workers who returned to urban Jharkhand after the coronavirus outbreak.
- **Skill Mapping of Migrants:** Skill mapping of 2.5 lakh workers has revealed that 30% of workers who returned from different states are unskilled labourers.
- **Addressing Urban Poor:** Till now there was a notion that poor means rural people. So, a lot of poor alleviation schemes were launched for rural areas. However, there is also a chunk of urban poor and they also need job guarantee like in rural areas.

- **Examples from Other States:**

- Recently, **the Odisha** government announced a **Rs 100-crore Urban Wage Employment Initiative**.
- Kerala also runs **Ayyankali Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme (AUEGS)**.

AUEGS aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in urban areas by guaranteeing **hundred days of wage-employment** in a financial year to an **urban household** whose adult members **volunteer to do unskilled manual work**.

- "**Yuva Swabhiman Yojana**" of **Madhya Pradesh** provides employment for both skilled and unskilled workers among **urban youth**.

## **Way Forward**

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- These types of interventions by the States are a welcome step which give urban residents the right to work and thereby ensure the **right to life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution**.
- Programmes like the **Smart Cities Mission** and **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)** have disproportionately focussed on development of bigger towns and cities. Hence, it is important to re-focus our attention to improving the livelihoods and ecology of urban areas beyond India's major cities.
- An urban employment guarantee programme not only improves **incomes of workers but also has multiplier effects on the economy**. It will **boost local demand** in small towns, **improve public infrastructure and services, spur entrepreneurship, build skills of workers and create a shared sense of public goods**. Hence, the time is ripe for an employment guarantee programme in urban India.

**Source: IE**