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Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development

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Why in News

The Centre government must **increase the amount of pensions** provided for **poor senior citizens, widows and disabled people**, said the **Parliamentary Standing Committee** on Rural Development.

Key Points

Issues Pointed Out by the Parliamentary Standing Committee:

- The panel pointed out that it had **previously proposed the increase of the miniscule pensions** in its reports and slammed the government's "laxity in raising the amount".
- Also, criticised the implementation of **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)** in reaching out to the poor and downtrodden section of the society.
 - Pointed out the meagre amount of assistance ranging from **Rs. 200 to Rs. 500 per month** under the different components of this Scheme.
- Noted **the callous approach of the State Governments** in the proper implementation of the provision of unemployment allowance.
- Pulled up the **Department of Rural Development (DoRD)** for issues in implementation of the flagship **MGNREGA scheme**.

Little support | The National Social Assistance Programme is applicable to elders, widows and the physically challenged. **Here is a low-down:**

Pension: ₹200-₹500 a month for senior citizens BPL households

Widow Pension Scheme: ₹300-₹500 a month for widows aged over 40 in BPL households

Disability pension: ₹300 per month for persons aged **18-79** with severe or multiple disabilities in BPL households



Family benefit: ₹20,000 upon the death of a breadwinner aged 18-59 in BPL households

Annapurna Scheme: 10kg of food grains per month for senior citizens who are not receiving any pension

• **Issues in the MGNREGA Scheme Observed by the Committee:**

- **Lack of Work Supply:** That too when there was an **increase in the demand** for work under MGNREGA due to economic distress caused by **Covid-19 pandemic**.
- **Delay in the Release of Funds:** It is a huge discouraging aspect and does not go in consonance with the underlying spirit of the scheme.
- **Disparity in Wages in Different States:** The committee noted how it is possible that a single scheme having the provision of **hundred days of guaranteed work** to willing people from the rural settings can have different yardstick when it comes to the payment modalities across the length and breadth of the country.

It is against the Constitutional provision of **equal pay for equal work**.

- **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP):**

- The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) is a welfare programme being administered by the **Ministry of Rural Development**.
- This programme is being implemented in **rural as well as urban areas**.
- The programme was first **launched on 15th August 1995** as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**. It was brought within the umbrella of ‘**Core of Core**’ **schemes** of the Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) in 2016.
- Currently, it has **five components** namely:
 - **Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)** - since inception of NSAP in 1995.
 - **National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS)** - 1995.
 - **Annapurna Scheme** - launched in 2000.
 - **Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS)** - launched in 2009.
 - **Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme** - launched in 2009.
- The **National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS)** was part of NSAP and was subsequently transferred from the Ministry of Rural development to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Source:TH