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MGNREGS Praised By the Standing Committee on Labour

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Why in News

Recently, the **Parliamentary Standing Committee** on Labour in its report “**Social Security and Welfare Measures for Inter-State Migrant Workers**” praised **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)** for providing **sustainable livelihood** to the **unskilled workers** including the inter-state **migrant labourers**.

Key Points

- **Standing Committees Observation:**
 - **MGNREGS:**
 - The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 provides for a **specific and significant welfare provision, constitutive of the very idea of citizenship.**
 - There is no “**better scheme**” to provide “**sustainable livelihood**” to unskilled workers.
 - Over 7 crore households (10.43 crore individuals) have already availed of the scheme and 330 crore person days have been created till February 2021 during the current **financial year**. This is the **highest for any year since inception of the scheme in 2006.**
 - **Migrant Workers:**
 - **1.08 crore migrant workers returned to their home states during the pandemic.**
 - The **absence of reliable and authentic data/information** on the numbers of migrant workforce and their movement back to their home States following the outbreak of the **Pandemic** has apparently **impacted the relief and rehabilitation measures.**
 - There were a number of appreciable initiatives launched by the Government (eg: **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana**), which are aimed at benefiting the Migrant Labour.
 - **However, no guidelines were issued** nor enforced for distribution of relief material to stranded Migrant Labourers.
 - **No element of Social Audit** prescribed.
- **Standing Committees Suggestions:**
 - **Instant and Immediate Relief:**

Covid-19 Pandemic and the resultant challenges and lacunae observed in the system must be addressed so as to **strengthen the preparedness to effectively deal with any such emergent situations.**
 - **Credible Database to be Prepared:**

Credible databases of unorganized workers especially that of migrant labourers be put in place to **ensure seamless delivery of relief packages to them at the time of distress.**

Earlier in december 2020, the Government has decided to **create a database of migrant workers, including workers in the informal economy.**

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)

- **About:** It is one of the largest work guarantee programmes in the world.

- **Launch:**
 - It was launched on 2nd February 2006
 - The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was passed on 23rd August 2005.
- **Objective:**

The primary objective of the scheme is **to guarantee 100 days of employment** in every financial year to **adult members of any rural household** willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work.
- **Legal Right to Work:**
 - Unlike earlier employment guarantee schemes, the act **aims at addressing the causes of chronic poverty through a rights-based framework.**
 - At least **one-third of beneficiaries have to be women.**
 - Wages must be paid according to the statutory minimum wages specified for agricultural labourers in the state under the **Minimum Wages Act, 1948.**
- **Demand-Driven Scheme:**
 - The most important part of MGNREGA's design is **its legally-backed guarantee for any rural adult to get work within 15 days** of demanding it, failing which an 'unemployment allowance' must be given.
 - This demand-driven scheme enables the self-selection of workers.
- **Decentralised planning:**
 - There is an emphasis on strengthening the process of decentralisation by giving a significant role in **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)** in planning and implementing these works.
 - The act mandates **Gram sabhas to recommend the works** that are to be undertaken and at least 50% of the works must be executed by them.



Way Forward

- The pandemic has demonstrated the **importance of decentralised governance**. **Gram panchayats need to be provided with adequate resources, powers, and responsibilities** to sanction works, provide work on demand, and authorise wage payments to ensure there are no delays in payments.
- **Social Auditing** creates accountability of performance, especially towards immediate stakeholders. Hence, there is a **need to create awareness regarding government policies and measures in rural areas**.

Source:IE