

Prelim Bits 09-02-2024 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

MGNREG Scheme

Recently, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development reported that, low budgetary allocation cripples MGNREGA Scheme.

- **MGNREGA** - Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.
- **Launched in** - **2005**
- **Implementing agency** - Rural Development
- **Objectives** - Providing *at least 100 days of unskilled* manual work in a financial year to every household in rural areas.
- Strengthening the livelihood resource base of the poor and proactively ensuring social inclusion.
- **Beneficiaries** - Every *adult members of rural* household who volunteer to do work.
- **Decentralised planning** - *Panchayat Raj Institutions* plays a vital role in planning and implementing these works.
- *Gram Sabha* to recommend works to be undertaken and at least 50% of the works must be executed by them.
- **Demand driven** - It must provide *work within 15 days* of demanding it, failing which *unemployment allowance* be given.
- **Empowers women** - At least one-third beneficiaries be women.
- **Empowers vulnerable** - In some cases, it can allow *additional 50 days* of wage employment (beyond the stipulated 100 days).
 - For instance, every *Scheduled Tribe* household in a forest area is entitled to get 150 days' work.
 - In such rural areas where *drought or any natural calamity* (as per Ministry of Home Affairs) has been notified.
- **Wages** - It shall be according to Minimum Wages Act.

The range of wages vary from as little as Rs 221 in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh to Rs 354 in the 3 gram panchayats of Sikkim.

- **Ensures accountability** - It has mandated *social audit* of all works undertaken
- **Challenges** - *Lower budgetary allocation, lower wages* than market rates and there is *delay in dispensing* the wages, which is supposed to be compensated by a delay allowance.

Delay allowance are at the rate of 0.05% of the unpaid wages per day of delay beyond the 16th day after the closure of the muster roll.

References

1. [The Hindu| Issues relevant to MGNREGA](#)
2. [Vikaspedia| MGNREGA](#)

World Trade Organisation (WTO)

India holds its stance to object any negotiations on non-trade issues in the upcoming 13th Ministerial conference of WTO that will be held at Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates in Feb, 2024.

- **Formation** - Established in **1995**, after Uruguay round of negotiations under the **Marrakesh Agreement**, replacing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).
- **Headquarters** - Geneva, Switzerland.

World Trade Organisation (WTO) is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations.

- **Objective** - To ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible.
- **Eligibility** - A government has to bring its economic and trade policies in line with WTO rules and negotiate its terms of entry.
- Over 20 countries are seeking to join the WTO.
- **Membership** - It has **over 160 members** representing 98% of world trade, India is a founding member.
- **Organisation structure** - The General Council is the top day-to-day decision-making body, meets many times a year in Geneva.
- Ministerial conferences usually take place every two years.
- **Decision making** - All major decisions are made by the WTO's member governments.
- **Budget** - Most of the income is from contributions by its members.
- **Functions** - Administering WTO trade agreements
 - Forum for trade negotiations
 - Handling trade disputes
 - Monitoring national trade policies
 - Technical assistance and training for developing countries
 - Cooperation with other international organizations
- **Report** - It is provided annually, a comprehensive overview of WTO activities over the past year.

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is the 7th Director-General of the WTO, becoming the 1st woman and the 1st African to serve as Director-General. Her term of office will expire in 2025.

References

1. [The Indian Express| India's stance on non-trade issues in WTO](#)
2. [WTO| World Trade Organisation](#)

Kaladan Project

A senior official from Myanmar said that, the Kaladan Project has “almost died” after the rebel Arakan Army (AA) captured the Paletwa township near Mizoram border in January, 2024.

- **KMTTP** - Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, was launched under
- **Framework agreement in - 2008**, between Ministry of External Affairs, India and the Government of Myanmar.
- **Aim** - To provide *connectivity between India and Myanmar*.
- To connect the port of *Kolkata with the port of Sittwe* in Rakhine which would then be connected to Mizoram by road and the Kaladan River which flows by Paletwa.
- **Budget** - Estimated around 500 million USD.
- **Project Development Consultant (PDC)** - Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI).



- **Progress** - *Sittwe Port was inaugurated* in May 2023 and has been operationalised.
- **Advantages** - The transportation of goods from Kolkata to Aizawl and Agartala will incur at least *50% lesser cost and time*.
- Marine transport will considerably bring down environmental cost of transport with *drop in fossil fuel carbon emission*.
- **Challenges** - *Funding has been delayed* for multiple reasons, including the Rohingya crisis and recent *tripartite conflict* between the Junta's forces, the Arakan Army and the rebels of Chin state.

References

1. [The Hindu| Rebel crisis in Myanmar affects Kaladan Project](#)
2. [MDONER| Kaladan Project](#)

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-MKSSY)

Recently, the Union Cabinet approved a new scheme 'Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-MKSSY)' to improve the fisheries sector.

- A sub scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana.

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana is designed to address critical gaps in fish production and productivity, quality, post-harvest infrastructure, modernisation and strengthening of value chain.

- **Objective** - To gradually formalise the fisheries sector and supporting fisheries micro and small enterprises with access to institutional credit.
- To facilitate growth of businesses, creation of jobs and creation of business opportunities.
- **Implementation** - **4 years** from 2023-24 to 2026-27, across all the States and union territories.
- **Budget** - **Rs. 6,000 crore**.
 - 50% public finance, including the World Bank and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) external financing.
 - 50% is anticipated from the private sector leverage.
- **Beneficiaries** - Fishers, aquaculture farmers, fish workers and fish vendors.
- **Benefits** - Creation of National Fisheries Digital Platform to provide 40 lakh small and micro-enterprises work based identities.
- It will support 6.4 lakh micro-enterprises and 5,500 fisheries cooperatives, providing access to institutional credit.
- It is projected to create 1.7 lakh new jobs, with a special emphasis on employing 75,000 women.
- Gradual shift from conventional subsidies to performance based incentives in fisheries.
- Address issues of aquaculture crop losses due to disease through insurance coverage.
- Improves quality of fish and fishery products in domestic market.
- Enhance export competitiveness through value addition, value realisation and value creation.

References

1. [The Hindu| Launch of PM-MKSSY scheme](#)
2. [PMIndia| PM Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana](#)

Save Wetlands Campaign (SWC)

- It is a people's movement to celebrate, revive, and rejuvenate wetlands.
- **Launched by** - Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).

- It was launched on the occasion of [World Wetlands Day \(WWD\) 2023](#) (2nd February) and structured on a “whole of society” approach for wetlands conservation.

India’s wetlands are roughly equalling to 4.8% of its geographical area.

- It is in line with the [Mission Lifestyle for Environment \(LiFE\)](#) and following the philosophy of [Mission Sahbhagita](#).
- The campaign was implemented at a Pan-India level, across all districts.
- The network of Ramsar Sites served as model sites or anchors for their respective States/UTs.

Quick Facts	
Mission Sahbhagita	Wetland City Accreditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) in 2022. • It aims to have a healthy and effectively managed network of wetlands of national and international significance. • It enables a <i>society ownership approach</i> for participatory conservation and wise use of Wetlands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was recognized under Ramsar Convention during COP12 held in 2015 as a voluntary Wetland City Accreditation system. • It recognizes cities (urban and peri-urban) which have taken exceptional steps to safeguard their urban wetlands. • To be formally accredited, a candidate should satisfy the standards used to implement each of the 6 international criteria mentioned in the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

Reference

[PIB | Save Wetlands Campaign](#)

Other Important Topics
<h3>Dharavi redevelopment project</h3> <p><i>The state cabinet of Maharashtra has recently given its nod for a proposal to seek Mumbai’s salt pan land from the Union government for the Dharavi Redevelopment Project.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP) is a project with the purpose of building a rental housing scheme for ineligible slum dwellers from Dharavi. • The land will be used by the DRP to rehabilitate the Dharavi residents in Kanjurmarg, Bhandup and Mulund in Mumbai. • Dharavi residents who are ineligible for rehabilitation will be given accommodation in rental housing projects.
<h3>Krishi Rakshak Portal</h3>

Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare launched the centralized Kisan Rakshak Helpline 14447 and Portal recently.

- The Krishi Rakshak Portal is a digital portal that allows farmers to lodge their grievances, concerns, and queries.
- The KRPH also acts as a facilitator, bridging the gap between insured farmers and various stakeholders, including insurance companies, bankers, Common Service Centres (CSCs), and governments.
- The KRPH was created to reinforce the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana's (PMFBY) grievance redressal mechanism.

DigiReady Certification Portal (DRC)

- The ***Quality Council of India (QCI) and Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)*** launched the DigiReady Certification (DRC) portal recently.
- DRC is an online platform that evaluates and certifies the digital readiness of small businesses and retailers in India.
- The portal aims to streamline the seller journey, empower MSME entities to seamlessly transition into sellers on the ONDC platform, and enhance their digital capabilities.

Kalingarayan Anicut

- Kalingarayan Anicut is ***13th century barrage on the Bhavani River*** in Erode, Tamil Nadu, one of the oldest water diversion projects in the world.
- It is recognised as a ***World Heritage Irrigation Structure*** by the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) in 2021.
- It was built by Kalingarayan, then king of Poondurai Nadu, one of the subdivisions in Kongu Nadu.
- In 1240, he joined the ***Madurai Pandyas*** as a soldier and in 1265, ***Sadayavarman Sundara Pandyan*** bestowed the title, 'Kalingarayan' and appointed him to rule Poondurai Nadu.

Pantanal wetland

- The Pantanal wetland is the ***world's largest freshwater wetland*** and one of the world's most productive habitats.
- It is located mostly in ***Brazil***, but also extends in parts of Bolivia and Paraguay.
- It is fed through the ***Paraguay River and tributaries***.



Thirumayam Fort

- Thirumayam Fort is situated in the town of Thirumayam, Pudukkottai District in **Tamil Nadu**, also called 'Oomaiyan fort', after the brother of Veerapandiya Kattabomman.
- The fort was built by **Vijaya Raghunatha Sethupathi, the Raja of Ramnad, in 1687.**
- The fort stands as a testimony to the bond between 2 dynasties, the **Sethupathis and the Thondaimans.**
- The fort also held secrets within its outer boundary walls that date not only before the **Keezhadi civilization** but also much earlier than the **Indus Valley Civilisation.**

Southernmost mobile phone base station

- Norway's Telenor recently opened the world's southernmost mobile phone base station in Antarctica.
- It will be bringing regular cell phone services to a corner of the frozen continent for the first time.
- The new 4G service covering the remote Troll research station and its surroundings.
- It will boost security for scientists and staff and enable the use of internet-of-things devices that collect and upload real-time information.

Pure for Sure Initiative

- Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) recently announces the launch of "Pure for Sure".
- The initiative is set to provide Quality & Quantity assurance in LPG cylinders directly at the customer's doorstep, a first-of-its-kind service in the nation.

Gemini

- Google has announced recently that it will be rebranding its AI chatbot **Bard as Gemini**, releases Advanced tier and launches Gemini app.
- Earlier in December, when Google had released the older versions of Gemini, called Pro and Nano, the largest and most capable model was called **Gemini Ultra.**
- The AI model was supposed to power the updated chatbot to be called **Bard Advanced.**
- Gemini Advanced is available in more than 150 countries and territories in English which will expand eventually to other languages.



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