

**04– 08 – 2022**

**News:** Four States in south top in misuse of MGNREGS

- Four southern States — Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Telangana — have reported the highest number of cases of financial misappropriation in the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

## **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act Scheme (MGNREGS)**

- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) of 2005 was enacted to give form to the **Article 41** of Indian Constitution. Article 41 of Directive Principles of the State Policy states that **State should strive to secure the right to work and to public assistance in cases of unemployment.**
- Mahatma Gandhi Employment Guarantee Act 2005 is an Indian labor law and social security measure that aims to guarantee the 'right to work'. This act was passed in September 2005.

- It aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.
- Any rural household willing to do manual work is eligible under the Act.
- NREGA was scoped up to cover all the districts of India from 1 April 2008. The statute is hailed by the government as "the largest and most ambitious social security and public works program in the world". In its World Development Report 2014, the World Bank termed it a "stellar example of rural development".
- Recently, Central government updated that; MGNREGA will be updated with inflation index CPI- Rural, instead of older CPI- Agricultural Labourers. The base wage will be set as previous year's national daily wages (179 in Rural).
- The revised wages are applicable from 1<sup>st</sup> April ever year.
- CPI–Rural (CPIR) calculation involves more non-food items such as healthcare and education compared to CPI–Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL) involves more food items in consumption market.
- The Union Ministry of Rural Development's rules on Social Audit of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) state that the State Government shall facilitate conduct of social audit of the works taken up

under the Act in every Gram Panchayat **at least once in six months** in the manner prescribed under these rules.

- Social audit is an accounting tool which **measures, evaluates, identifies gaps in service delivery and elicits promises to rectify these gaps with the direct participation of intended beneficiaries**. In its essence, it empowers citizens to **gauge the effectiveness of a scheme by looking at its overall impact**. A realisation of what one is entitled to by law and the empowerment that comes along with demanding this rightful entitlement is a by-product of a social audit.
- **A summary of findings of such social audits conducted during a financial year shall be submitted by the State Government to the Comptroller and Auditor General of India**. A Social Audit Unit will be set up by the State Government to facilitate conduct of social audit by Gram Sabha.
- In 2017, **Meghalaya became the first State to pass and roll out a social audit law to cover all departments**.
- **Employment is to be provided within 5 km of an applicant's residence, and minimum wages are to be paid. If work is not provided within 15 days of applying, applicants are entitled to an unemployment allowance**. That is, if the government fails to provide employment, it has to provide certain unemployment allowances to those people. **Thus, employment under MGNREGA is a legal entitlement**.

- MGNREGA is to be implemented mainly by gram panchayats (GPs). The involvement of contractors is banned.
- Apart from providing economic security and creating rural assets, NREGA can help in protecting the environment, empowering rural women, reducing rural-urban migration and fostering social equity, among others.
- Priority shall be given to women in such a way that at least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested for work under this Act.
- More than 50% of workforce under MGNREGA is women, says the Economic Survey. For the past 4 years since 2017 – 18, women are the majority beneficiaries of MGNREGA, although the percentage of women in MGNREGA has decline from 54.5 in 2019–20 to 52.4 in 2020–21.

**News:** Wildlife Protection Bill gets LS nod

- The Lok Sabha passed the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Bill, with no significant modifications to the version of the Bill presented in the House for discussion.
- The key thrust of the Bill is to make Indian law compatible with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

# Convention on International Trade in Endangered species of Wild flora and fauna (CITES)

- CITES Convention, also known as **Washington Convention**, is a result of a resolution adopted in 1963 at a meeting of members of the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**.
- It is administered by **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**.
- Headquarters of CITES is located in **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- CITES is in force **since 1<sup>st</sup> July 1975** when 10 countries ratified the agreement.
- Aim of the convention is to **control or prevent international commercial trade in endangered species or products derived from them**.
- India became a party to the convention in 1976.
- Although CITES is **legally binding** on state parties to the convention it is not self-executing. Parties are **obliged to adopt their own domestic legislation** to implement its goals.
- Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) along with World Customs Organisation; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); Interpol; and World Bank form the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC).

- It classifies plants and animals according to three categories, or appendices, based on how threatened. They are:

### **Appendix I species**

- Appendix I list species that are in **danger of extinction**. It **prohibits commercial trade of these plants and animals except in extraordinary situations** for scientific or educational reasons.

### **Appendix II species**

- They are those **that are not threatened with extinction but that might suffer a serious decline in number if the trade is not restricted**. Their trade is regulated by permit.

### **Appendix III species**

- They are **protected in at least one country that is a CITES member state** and that has petitioned others for help in controlling international trade in that species.
- Conference of Parties (CoP) to CITES is **done once in every 3 years**
- Most recent CoP was held in **2019 at Geneva** and the **next CoP is scheduled to be held at Panama by 2022 November**.

- In the most recent CoP (2019), India proposed the changes in listing of Smooth-coated otter, small-clawed otter, Indian star tortoise, Tokay gecko, wedgefish from Appendix II to Appendix I & removal of Indian rosewood.