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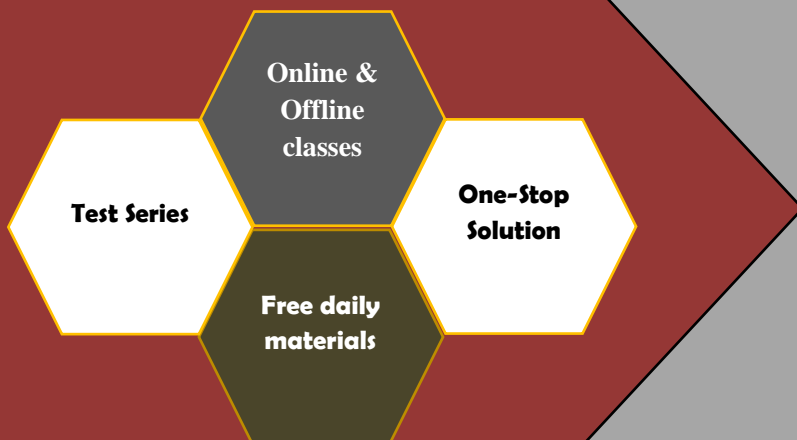
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MGNREGA History

Notes for civil services preparation



UPSC

General Studies

MGNREGA History

In 1991, the P.V Narashima Rao government proposed a pilot scheme for generating employment in rural areas with the following goals:

- Employment Generation for agricultural labour during the lean season.
- Infrastructure Development
- Enhanced Food Security

This scheme was called the Employment Assurance Scheme which later evolved into the MGNREGA after the merger with the Food for Work Programme in the early 2000s.

Objectives of MGNREGA:

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has the following objectives:

- Provide 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to rural unskilled labour
- Increase economic security
- Decrease migration of labour from rural to urban areas

MGNREGA differentiates itself from earlier welfare schemes by taking a grassroots-driven approach to employment generation. The programs under the act are demand-driven and provide legal provisions for appeal in the case, work is not provided or payments are delayed. The scheme is funded by the central government which bears the full cost of unskilled labour and 75% of the cost of material for works undertaken under this law. The central and state governments audit the works undertaken under this act through annual reports prepared by CEGC (Central Employment Guarantee Council) and the SEGC (State Employment Guarantee Councils). These reports have to be presented by the incumbent government in the legislature.

A few salient features of the scheme are:

- It gives a significant amount of control to the Gram Panchayats for managing public works, strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions. Gram Sabhas are free to accept or reject recommendations from Intermediate and District Panchayats.
- It incorporates accountability in its operational guidelines and ensures compliance and transparency at all levels.

Ever since the scheme was implemented, the number of jobs has increased by 240% in the past 10 years. The scheme has been successful in enhancing economic empowerment in rural India and helping overcome the exploitation of labour. The scheme has also diminished wage volatility and the gender pay gap in labour. This can be substantiated by the following data available at the official site of MGNREGA:

1. 14.88 crores MGNREGA job cards have been issued (Active Job Cards – 9.3crores)
2. 28.83 crores workers who gained employed under MGNREGA (2020-21) out of which active workers are 14.49 crores.

Role of State Governments in MGNREGS

The important roles of the state government in executing the MGNREGA scheme are:

1. It frames rules charting out state's responsibility under the act.
2. It sets up the State Employment Guarantee Council.
3. State Employment Guarantee Fund (SEGF) is established by state governments.
4. It makes sure to dedicate Employment Guarantee Assistant (Gram Rozgar Sahayak), the PO and the staff at State, district, cluster and Gram Panchayat level; for the execution of the scheme.

MGNREGA – State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC)

The State Employment Guarantee Council is responsible to advise state government for the implementation of the MGNREG scheme. Some important functions of SEGC under MNREGS are:

1. The suggestion of improvements in the execution of the scheme.
2. Evaluation and monitoring of the scheme.
3. To recommend proposals of the works to the central government.
4. To aware the districts about the scheme and its features.
5. To prepare an annual report to be submitted by the state government before the state legislature.

This law and the employment guarantee schemes which are part of its provisions are important from the IAS exam point of view. UPSC aspirants should read about this government scheme in detail as questions related to this topic are asked in the Prelims exam and in General Studies paper II. The questions for government schemes like MGNREGA are classified under Welfare schemes, and the topic has a significant overlap with topics like human development, poverty, and hunger.