Prelim Bits 26-11-2022 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

MGNREGA Review Committee

The Union Rural Development Ministry has formed a panel to revamp the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGA).

- The Central government has constituted a committee to review the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MGNREGA) Scheme.
- The committee is headed by former Rural Development secretary Amarjeet Sinha.
- **Functions of the Sinha Committee** - The committee especially assesses the programme's efficacy as a poverty alleviation tool.
- The committee will study the various factors behind demand for MGNREGA work, expenditure trends and inter-State variations, and the composition of work.
- It will suggest changes in focus and governance structures to make MGNREGA more effective.
- **Criticism on MGNREGS -** The scheme lacks in creation of tangible asset and optimal utilization.
- Poorer sates like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar haven't been able to utilise the scheme optimally to alleviate poverty, while economically better-off States like Kerala use it as an asset creation tool.
- **Importance of MGNREGS** - MGNREGSS acted as a crucial safety net during the COVID pandemic.
- As emerging from the pandemic, MGNREGS was in high demand in rural areas, amid soaring inflation and limited non-farm job opportunities.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
• The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was passed in 2005 and the MGNREGS was launched under this. • The demand-driven scheme guarantees 100 days of unskilled work per year for every rural household that wants it. • Currently 15.51 crore active workers are enrolled under the scheme.

References

1. The Hindu - Panel to look into MGNREGA's efficacy
2. Deccan Herald - Centre forms panel to revamp MGNREGA

Kutia Kondh Tribe

Millets are largely propelled by a movement built around the Burlang Yatra, a traditional festival of the Kutia Kondh tribe.

- The Kutia-Kondh is one of the primitive sections of Kondh tribe who lives in hill top and valleys.
- **Population** - The Kutia Kondhs are a particularly vulnerable tribal groups found in Kalahandi and Khandhamal districts in Odisha.
- **Belief** - The Kondhs worship nature like many other tribal groups in the country.
- **Agriculture** - They are mostly dependent on shifting cultivation or slash-and-burn agriculture which the Kondhs call *dongar chaas* or *podu chaas*.
- The major crops cultivated in the shifting cultivation system are minor millets like ragi (finger millet), kosala, kangu with arhar as an intercrop.
- **Settlement** - The usual Kutia Kondh settlement have two rows of houses, across a rectangular space facing each other.

NIRMAN (an NGO) and Millet Network of India (MINI - a forum for promotion of millet), started celebrating the Burlang Yatra on a large scale for revival of millets.

Burlang Yatra

- **The Burlang Yatra is a traditional annual festival of the Kutia Kondh tribe in Khandhamal district.**
- During this festival, the community, especially the women, worship and exchange seeds through a celebratory mode of songs and dances at the village level.
- This event brings together millet farmers to share knowledge and practices, including exchange of Indigenous heirloom seeds.
- The large scale festival increase the awareness about millets and get rid of the inferiority complex prevailing among young tribals.

*The Odisha Government launched Millet Mission in 2017 and also started celebrating **Mandia Dibas** (Millet Day) on November 10 to popularise the crop.*

References

1. The Hindu - Burlang Yatra, a festival of the Kutia Kondh tribe
2. Indian Culture - Kutia Kondh

Nuclear-powered Icebreakers

Russia dock launched two nuclear-powered icebreakers Yakutia that will ensure year-round navigation in the Western Arctic.

- Russia is the only country in the world that builds and operates nuclear-powered icebreakers.
- The icebreakers enables service and maintain the passage of large tankers and container vessels through the Northern Sea Route that enables a shorter route between Northern Europe and the Far East.
- **Project 22220** - Russia under its 'Project 22220' plans to build 6 nuclear-powered icebreakers.
- Yakutia nuclear icebreaker which was launched into the water will enter service in 2024 and the Chukotka is scheduled for 2026.
- The 173.3 metre long Yakutia can smash through ice of up to 3 metres.
- Ural icebreaker has completed sea trails and Rossiya icebreaker will be completed by 2027.
- Two other icebreakers in the same series, the Arktika and the Sibir, are already in service.
- **Strategic Significance Of Arctic -** Due to climate change, shrinking ice cap opens up new sea lanes.
- The shorter route will fully unlock Russia's export potential and establish efficient logistics routes, including to Southeast Asia.
- Vast oil and gas resources lie in Russia's Arctic regions, including a LNG plant on the Yamal Peninsula.

Yamal Peninsula is an Arctic lowland region in north-western Siberia. It is bounded by the Kara Sea, Baydarata Bay and the Gulf of Ob.

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1. The Hindu - Russia's 'Arctic power'
2. Hindustan Express – Russia's nuke icebreakers

Ambition on Melting Ice

18 countries join group bringing special attention to the role of cryosphere loss in global sea-level rise.

- At COP-27, a broad coalition of 18 governments joined together to create a new high-level group 'Ambition on Melting Ice on Sea-level Rise and Mountain Water Resources'.
- The 18 member countries include those in the mountains as well as low-lying areas.
- The coalition is led by the two polar and mountain nations of Chile and Iceland.
- **Members** -

- **Objective** - The melting of the cryosphere due to climate change, is a global threat whose impact will not be restricted to mountain and polar countries.
- The AMI group aims to ensure impacts of cryosphere loss are understood by political leaders and the public.

- **AMI Declaration** - The AMI group signed the Ambition on Melting Ice **(**AMI) Declaration at the 27th Conference of Parties (COP27) to the UNFCCC concluded in Egypt.
- The declaration of the group focuses on the role of cryosphere loss in particular in causing sea-level rise that threatens coastal communities, island nations and low-lying regions.

Melting cryosphere and thermal expansion of sea-water due to global warming are major contributors to sea-level rise.

Cryosphere

- The Cryosphere ('cryosphere' means 'ice globe') is a term for the regions of our globe which are covered in ice and snow, either seasonally or year-round.
- Currently Cryosphere includes around 15% of Earth's surface, which includes ice sheets, glaciers and snow, permafrost (frozen ground), sea ice, ice shelves, and the two great polar oceans (the Arctic Ocean and Southern Ocean).
- Climate change is happening in the cryosphere faster and more dramatically than anywhere else on earth.

References

1. Down To Earth - 18 countries join group on cryosphere loss
2. ICCI – Ambition On Melting Ice

International Electrotechnical Commission

India won the Vice-Presidency of International Electrotechnical Commission during its General Meeting held in San Francisco.

- India has won the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) Vice-Presidency and Strategic Management Board (SMB) chair for the 2023-25 term.
- The Chair of the SMB is the ex officio Vice-President for the duration of his/her term.
- The Vice-President is responsible for the standardization work of the IEC.
- International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), a not-for-profit membership organization was founded in 1906 in London.
- IEC is an international standard setting body that publishes international Standards for all electrical, electronic and related technologies.
- Standardisation Management Board (SMB) is an apex governance body of IEC responsible for technical policy matters.

References

1. Business Standard - India wins vice presidency of IEC
2. Live Mint -India wins IEC Vice Presidency
3. International Electrotechnical Commission



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