

Distribution of NREGA funds

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Context- The recent concern of the central government is over the programme's "regressive" spending pattern, where poorer States spend less NREGA funds than better-off ones.

Key Highlights

- NREGA is underperforming as its most basic design principles have been forgotten or wilfully ignored.
- The first principle is to address delays in wage payments to restore the faith of workers in the programme.
- In 2016, the Supreme Court of India directed the government to ensure that wages were paid on time, calling the act of making workers wait for wages for months as similar to "forced labour".
- The second principle is to strengthen implementation capacities where expenditure is low instead of curbing expenditure where employment generation is high.
- The third principle is to run the programme like a demand-based law, and not a scheme.
- Intermittent and unpredictable fund releases by the central government are one of the fundamental causes why State governments are unable to ensure the full potential of NREGA.
- As of now, ₹18,191 crore in liabilities is due to 24 States.
- The Kaam Mango Abhiyan was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development in 2013 due to declining demand of work under NREGA, the Union Ministry of Rural Development launched this campaign, which literally means "ask for work" with the

help of civil society organisations in six districts in six States; 53,000 workers demanded work in Katihar district alone and dated receipts were provided.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

- MGNREGA, also known as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) is Indian legislation which was enacted on August 25, 2005.
- The MGNREGA provides a legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at a statutory minimum wage.
- **Eligibility Criteria**
 - Must be Citizen of India in order to seek MGNREGA benefits.
 - Job seekers must have completed 18 years of age at the time of application.
 - The applicant must be part of a local household i.e. application must be made with local Gram Panchayat.
 - Applicants must volunteer for unskilled labour.