

# Drones to monitor MGNREGA worksites

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**Context-** The Union government allows the use of drones to investigate complaints of corruption or other irregularities and to monitor the progress and quality of assets produced at MGNREGA sites.

## Key Highlights

- According to the Parliamentary Standing Committee report presented to the Lok Sabha in 2022, the factors hindering the MGNREGA scheme include fake job cards, widespread corruption, late uploading of collection lists and huge pending wages and materials etc.
- Complaints of corruption have been made in MGNREGA work ranging from machinery.
- Because they are used instead of workers, many are paid without work or work that exceeds the approved list, etc.
- The Ministry of Rural Development has issued a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and according to the SOP drones are used for four types of surveillance:
  - Mapping of ongoing works;
  - Inspection of finished works;
  - Impact assessment and;
  - Special control for complaints.
- The SOP requires drones to be used by the ombudsman.
- According to MGNREGA, there should be one ombudsman in each district who is responsible for registering suo moto complaints and redressal of them within 30 days.
- This led state governments to provide an option for ombudsmen.

- The ombudsman can use drone technology devices to virtually inspect works to effectively monitor and resolve complaints.

## **No additional funds**

- The Union government is not providing additional funds to the states to deploy these drones and has directed the states to hire specialized drone agencies for this purpose.
- According to the guidelines, the state governments are expected to raise the necessary funds from the executive head, which is approximately 10% of the state MGNREGA budget.