



**PAREEKSHA BAAZ**  
Institute for CSE Examination

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## Deletion of MGNREGA Job Cards

Why in News?

The recent surge in the **deletion of workers from job cards** under the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA)** has raised serious concerns about the right to work and transparency in implementation.

- In **2022-23** alone, **over 5.53 crore workers** were removed, marking a **247% increase from 2021-22**.

What are the Key Provisions For Deletion of MGNREGA Job Cards?

- **Grounds for Deletion:** As per **Schedule II, Paragraph 23** of the MGNREGA Act, 2005, a job card can only be **deleted under specific**, well-defined conditions:
  - **Permanent Migration:** If a household **permanently relocates** from the concerned **Gram Panchayat**.
  - **Duplicate Job Cards:** If a job card is found to be a **duplicate**.
  - **Forged Documents:** If a job card was issued based on **forged documents**.
  - **Reclassification of Area:** If a Gram Panchayat is reclassified as a **Municipal Corporation**, all associated **job cards** are deleted.
  - **Other Valid Reasons:** The MGNREGA **Management Information System (MIS)** lists reasons like "**Duplicate Applicant**," "**Fake Applicant**," and "**Not Willing to Work**."
- **Role of ABPS:** The surge in **MGNREGA job card deletions** during **2022-23** coincided with the implementation of mandatory **Aadhaar-based payment systems (ABPS)** which required workers to link their Aadhaar numbers to their job cards.
  - Workers with **non-linked or improperly linked** Aadhaar led to job card deletions.
- **Due Process for Deletion:** Workers proposed for deletion **must be heard** with two independent persons present, **reasons for deletion independently verified**, actions **documented**, and reports **shared** with the **Gram Sabha or Ward Sabha** for transparency.

**Note:** ABPS is a payment system that uses **Aadhaar numbers** to electronically send **government subsidies and benefits** to the **Aadhaar-linked bank accounts** of beneficiaries.

What are the Implications of Deletion of MGNREGA Job Cards?

- **Violation of the Right to Work:** Deleting workers' names from job cards on grounds of "not willing to work", denies the worker his **legal right to work**.
  - Many workers labeled as "Not willing to work" **actually worked or requested work** in the same financial year of their deletion.

- **Inconsistent Procedure:** The official reason of “**Village becomes urban,**” used for deleting job cards of **only some workers** contradicts the Act's stipulation that **all job cards** in an **urbanized area** must be deleted.
  - Deletions often **bypass Gram Sabha** approval, violating the Act, and many workers face **wrongful deletions without their knowledge.**
- **Absence of Verification:** Many workers were victims of **wrongful deletions** when deletion was done **without any verification or analysis** to assess the validity of reasons for deletion.
  - While deletions are **recorded in the MIS**, the Ministry of Rural Development has **not conducted any verification and analysis** of deletion reasons, including the ‘Not willing to work’ reason.
- **Impact on Vulnerable Populations:** Deleting workers for reasons such as “**not willing to work**”, especially in light of **high rural unemployment rates**, directly undermines their livelihood opportunities.
- **Data-Driven Concerns:** The data indicates that the surge in deletions **aligns** with the increased focus on **ABPS**, suggesting that deletions may have been driven by **compliance incentives** rather than genuine reasons.

What is MGNREGA Scheme?

- **About: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005** passed in September 2005 to provide a **legal guarantee for wage employment** under the **MGNREGA Scheme.**
- **Objective:** To enhance livelihood security in rural areas by offering **100 days of wage employment per financial year** to **adult members** of **rural households willing to do unskilled manual labor.**
- **Eligibility:**
  - **Target Group:** All rural households in need of employment and willing to do **manual, unskilled work.**
  - **Registration:** Applicants submit their requests to the **Gram Panchayat**, which registers households and issues job cards after verification.
  - **Priority:** At least **one-third** of the wage seekers should be **women.**
  - **Employment Conditions:** Employment should last at **least 14 consecutive** days, with no more than six workdays per week.
- **Employment Provision:**
  - **Employment Timeline:** The **Gram Panchayat or Block Programme Officer** must provide work within **15 days of application**, ideally **within 5 kilometers** of the applicant’s village.
    - Work beyond this requires an **extra 10% wage for transportation** and living costs.



- **Unemployment Allowance:** If employment is **not** provided **within 15 days**, an **unemployment allowance** is given which is **one-fourth of the wage rate** for the **first 30 days** and at least half for the rest.
- **Permissible Works:**
  - **Water and Land Development:** Conservation and harvesting.
  - **Afforestation and Drought Proofing:** Tree plantation.
  - **Irrigation and Farm Infrastructure:** Canals, ponds, and irrigation.
  - **Rural Connectivity:** Roads and culverts.
  - **Sanitation and Hygiene:** Latrines and waste management.
  - **Rural Infrastructure:** Community centers and storage.
  - **Employment-Linked Projects:** Composting, livestock shelters, fisheries.
- **Restrictions:** The use of contractors and **labor-displacing machines** is **prohibited**.
- **MGNREGA and SDGs:**



### Way Forward

- **Verification Processes:** Ensuring **deletions follow the MGNREGA Act, 2005 and Master Circular protocols** is essential to minimize arbitrary deletions and protect workers' rights.



- **Audit and Oversight:** Set up **independent bodies or third-party agencies** to periodically audit deletion records and reasons for job card removals to ensure consistency and transparency.
- **Grievance Redressal:** Create or strengthen systems to provide workers with a **clear and efficient process** for filing complaints and **seeking redress** for wrongful deletions.
- **Empowering Gram Sabhas:** Ensuring that all deletions are reviewed and approved by the **Gram Sabha** as mandated by the MGNREGA Act, 2005.
- **Upgrade MIS:** Enhance the MIS to accurately **track and record job card deletions**, with real-time notifications and strong reporting features for better oversight.
  - Use data analytics to detect trends and **irregularities in job card deletions for timely intervention** and corrective action.





## SASCI Development of Iconic Tourist Centres to Global Scale

Why in News?

The Union Government has allocated Rs 3,295 crore for the development of **40 tourism projects across 23 states** under the **Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) - Development of Iconic Tourist Centres to Global Scale**.

- While SASCI has been active since 2020-21, this is the first time funds have been specifically earmarked for tourism.

What is the SASCI Development of Iconic Tourist Centres to Global Scale?

- **About:** The Development of Iconic Tourist Centres to Global Scale component under the SASCI scheme focuses on developing tourism infrastructure in India, promoting less-visited sites like **Bateshwar (Uttar Pradesh), Ponda (Goa), and Gandikota (Andhra Pradesh)** to diversify tourism.
- **Objective:** The scheme provides **interest-free loans for 50 years to States** for developing iconic tourist centers, branding, and global marketing.
  - It aims to **boost local economies, create jobs, promote sustainable tourism** and strengthen the entire tourist value chain (includes Transportation, Accommodation, Activities, and Services) through challenge-mode projects.
- **Salient Features of the Scheme:** Funding is provided only for shortlisted proposals submitted by the State that meet the scheme's guidelines and objectives.
  - The **Ministry of Tourism** will evaluate proposals based on criteria such as **connectivity, existing tourism ecosystem, site capacity, utilities availability, project impact, financial viability, and sustainability**.
  - Proposals must follow the **challenge mode development process**.
    - The challenge mode development process selects the best proposals through **competitive evaluation based on set criteria**, ensuring high-quality, innovative projects.
  - States must provide **encumbrance-free land at no cost**. Projects must be sustainable, with long-term operation and maintenance.
  - Completion time for projects is capped **at two years**, with funds available until 31st March 2026.
  - The State Government is **solely responsible for the project's operations** and maintenance, potentially through **Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode**.
  - States may offer incentives to attract private players for world-class tourist development.

- **Pattern of Assistance:** States can submit multiple projects, with a **maximum funding of Rs. 100 crores per project**.
  - For exceptional projects, the Ministry of Tourism may propose higher funding, subject to approval by the **Department of Expenditure (DoE)**.
  - The Government of India will provide **100% of the project cost**, while States must contribute to peripheral infrastructure, safety, connectivity, and capacity building.
    - **No State will receive more than Rs. 250 crores**, with funds allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.
- **Implementation and Monitoring:** States are responsible for the implementation of projects, while the Ministry of Tourism will oversee their progress.

What is SASCI Scheme?

- **About:** The '**Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Expenditure**' was launched in 2020-21 due to the **Covid-19** pandemic. It was then implemented as the '**Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment**' in 2022-23 and 2023-24.
- **Objective:** Provides financial assistance to states in the form of 50-year interest-free loans.
- **Structure of the Scheme:** The scheme focuses on key development areas, including vehicle scrappage incentives, urban planning reforms, housing for police personnel, and promotion of national integration through Unity Mall projects.
  - It also supports the establishment of libraries with digital infrastructure at Panchayat and Ward levels to enhance educational access.
- **Objectives of the Scheme:** The scheme aims to boost the economy by stimulating demand and creating jobs, while accelerating key projects like the **Jal Jeevan Mission** and **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana** through state funding.
  - It also encourages reforms in urban planning and finance to enhance quality of life and governance in cities.

Capital Expenditure

- **Capital Expenditure (Capex)** refers to government funds for acquiring or improving physical assets like infrastructure and machinery, enhancing economic productivity and employment.
- In the Union Budget 2024-25, Rs 11.11 lakh crore (or 3.4 % of **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**) have been allocated for capital expenditure.

India's Initiatives to Enhance Tourism Sector

- **Swadesh Darshan Scheme**





- **Draft National Tourism Policy 2022**
- **Dekho Apna Desh Initiative**
- **Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat**
- **Incredible India Tourist Facilitator Certification Programme**
- **E-Visa**
- **Regional Connectivity Scheme - Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik (RCS - UDAN)**
- **National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD)**
- **Assistance to Central Agencies for Tourism Infrastructure Development Scheme:** Financial assistance for developing tourism infrastructure and cultural tourism.
- **Domestic Promotion & Publicity including Hospitality (DPPH) scheme:** Supports States/UTs in organizing tourism events, fairs, and festivals.



## Australia Passes World-first Law Banning Under-16s From Social Media

### In News

- The Australian Senate passed a law that imposes fines on platforms like TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Reddit, X, and Instagram if they fail to prevent users under the age of 16 from creating accounts.

### About the Legislation

- **Objective:** To protect young people from the potential harms of online platforms, such as cyberbullying, addiction, and exposure to harmful content.
- **Strict Enforcement:** Social media platforms will be held accountable for enforcing age restrictions and could face significant fines for non-compliance.

### Challenges in Banning Social Media

- **Privacy Concerns:** The law raises concerns about privacy, as platforms may require users to verify their age using government-issued identification.
- **Challenge of age verification:** One of the biggest challenges in implementing these bans is age verification.
- **Potential for Circumvention:** Experts argue that the ban could lead to increased use of anonymous platforms and VPNs, making it difficult to monitor online activity.
- **Exposure to harmful sites:** It could inadvertently push young people towards more dangerous online spaces, such as the Dark Web. This further creates more challenges like cybercrimes.

### Impact of Social Media Addiction on Children

- **Psychological Impacts:** Excessive social media use has been linked to increased rates of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.
  - Children can be exposed to cyberbullying, which can have severe emotional and psychological consequences like low self esteem.
- **Physical Impacts:** Excessive screen time can lead to a sedentary lifestyle, contributing to obesity and other health problems like eye strain and poor posture.
- **Social and Emotional Impacts:** FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and can hinder the development of face-to-face communication, erosion of real-life relationships and social skills.

### Way Ahead

- **Stricter Age Verification:** Social media platforms should implement robust age verification systems to ensure that only users who meet the minimum age requirements can access their services.
- **Parental Consent:** Platforms could require parental consent for users below a certain age.

- **Digital Literacy Education:** Schools should incorporate digital literacy into their curriculum to teach young people about the responsible use of technology.
- **Platform-Based Interventions like Time Limits:** Social media platforms can implement features that limit screen time, especially for younger users.
  - Platforms can use AI-powered tools to filter harmful content and promote positive content.
- **Government Regulations:** Strong data privacy laws can protect users' personal information and prevent data breaches.
  - Governments can work with social media platforms to develop and enforce stricter content moderation standards.
- **Digital Detox Camps:** Organizing camps to encourage digital detox and promote offline activities.



## The Worker Population Ratio for Women has Increased

### Context

- As per the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), The Worker Population Ratio for women has increased from 22% in 2017-18 to 40.3% in 2023-24.

### About

- **The Labour Force Participation Rate for women** has risen from 23.3% in 2017-18 to 41.7% in 2023-24.
- It indicates that **39.6% of women with post-graduate education** and above are employed in 2023-24, up from 34.5% in 2017-18.
- **23.9% of women with a higher secondary education** are part of the workforce in 2023-24, compared to 11.4 per cent in 2017-18.

### Recent Trends as per the State of Working India Report 2023

- **Older women** with lower levels of education are **exiting** the workforce and younger women with higher levels of education are entering it.
- The number of women in **salaried employment is increasing**, while women in informal wage work are decreasing.
- The share of women working in agriculture is decreasing. The proportion of women entering the services sector is increasing.
- **Impact:**
  - As the number of women in salaried employment increases, it has a **positive impact on the gender gap** in earnings, which decreases with more women leaving casual wage work.
  - These shifts in the female workforce imply a **longer-term impact on women's economic participation in the country.**

### Significance of Women Participation

- India is seeking to **harness its demographic dividend**, with the largest working-age population in the world—expected to touch nearly 70 percent by 2030.
- India is poised to become the **biggest contributor to global growth.**
- A recent report has forecast that the next five years are crucial for the country to achieve a **GDP growth rate of 8 percent.**
- To ensure that growth, **women must account for more than half** of the **new workforce** which will be created by 2030.

### Challenges

- **Pay Gap:** Despite entering the workforce in larger numbers, women often face a significant gender pay gap.
- **Sexual Harassment:** Women in the workplace, particularly in male-dominated sectors, face a high risk of sexual harassment.
- **Unpaid Domestic Work:** Even though women are increasingly participating in the workforce, they still bear the primary responsibility for unpaid domestic labor, such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare.
- **Lack of Supportive Infrastructure:** There is insufficient support infrastructure such as childcare facilities, flexible working hours, and work-from-home options that could ease the burden of balancing work and family duties.
- **Resistance from Family:** Families often resist the idea of women working, especially in rural areas or conservative households.

#### **Government Initiatives to Increase women Participation in Labour Force**

- **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY):** Under PMMY, women can avail of micro-credit loans without collateral to set up small enterprises, helping women overcome barriers related to accessing capital.
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme:** The scheme works to prevent gender-based discrimination and violence, focusing on changing societal attitudes towards girls.
  - It promotes education, health, and empowerment, which indirectly increases women's participation in the labor force.
- **Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017:** The Act extended the maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks for women working in establishments with more than 10 employees.
- **Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) by NITI Aayog:** The platform offers mentorship, networking, funding, and skill development opportunities for women in business.
- **Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM):** The NRLM, through its SHG component, encourages women in rural areas to form collectives that can access credit, entrepreneurship training, and marketing opportunities.
- **National Creche Scheme:** This scheme supports working mothers, especially those in the unorganized sector, by setting up daycares in nearby locations where they can leave their children while they work.
- **Mission Shakti** is a women empowerment programme launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) for the period 2021-2025.

- It aims to strengthen interventions for women's welfare, safety, and empowerment, making women equal partners in nation-building.
- **The Women in Science and Engineering-KIRAN (WISE KIRAN) program** has supported nearly 1,962 women scientists from 2018 to 2023.

#### **Way Ahead**

- Women-led development remains at the core of announcements made by the Finance Minister (FM) in this year's Budget.
  - There has been a remarkable **218.8 percent rise in the budget allocation** for women's welfare from **FY14 to FY25**.
- **Shifting societal norms about women's roles** through awareness campaigns can encourage more women to join the workforce.
- **Encouraging women's entrepreneurship** through easier access to credit, business training, and financial support will foster economic independence.
- **Ensuring safe work environments**, addressing workplace harassment, and offering flexible work options will help women balance work and family responsibilities.





## Dark Tourism

### In News

- Ukraine is experiencing an influx of Western visitors engaging in “**dark tourism**” amid the ongoing war.

### Dark tourism

- It refers to visiting locations associated with death, tragedy, suffering, or unusual historical events.
  - These sites include cemeteries, battlefields, memorials, disaster zones, and crime scenes.
- **Examples of Prominent Dark Tourism Sites:** Auschwitz Concentration Camp (Poland): A reminder of the Holocaust.
  - **Chernobyl** (Ukraine): Site of a catastrophic nuclear disaster.
  - **Ground Zero** (New York): Memorial for the victims of the 9/11 attacks.
  - **Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park** (Japan): Commemorates victims of the atomic bombing in 1945.
  - **Jallianwala Bagh (Amritsar, Punjab)** : The site of the tragic 1919 massacre, where innocent lives were lost, Jallianwala Bagh serves as a powerful tribute to resilience and sacrifice.

### Reasons for Popularity

- **Emotional Connection:** Visitors seek to engage deeply with the history and emotions of those affected by past tragedies.
- **Curiosity and Uniqueness:** Dark tourism offers unique, non-traditional experiences distinct from typical tourist attractions.
- **Reflection on Mortality:** It prompts introspection about life, death, and historical significance, offering a “reality check.”

### Role of Social Media

- **Amplifies Interest:** Posts, photos, and videos shared by users increase the visibility of dark tourism sites.
- **Influencers’ Role:** Social media influencers visit these sites for content creation, sometimes focusing on aesthetics and personal branding rather than respectful engagement.
- **Curiosity Driven:** The visual appeal of dark sites on social media encourages others to visit.

### Ethical Considerations

- Dark tourism offers a unique and thought-provoking way to explore history and human experience.
- Experts in the field of tourism ethics stress the importance of respectful engagement.

- it is essential to approach these sites with respect and sensitivity, the educational and emotional value they provide can be profound.

### **Conclusion**

- Dark tourism occupies a complex space in the world of travel. It allows people to confront uncomfortable truths about the past and engage with history in a meaningful way. However, it also carries ethical challenges, especially in the context of social media and content creation, where the gravity of these sites can sometimes be overshadowed by the pursuit of visually captivating images.
- As dark tourism continues to grow, it is important for travelers to approach these sites with the respect and understanding they deserve.

