

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development

March 16, 2021

In news : Recently, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development has submitted its report to Lok Sabha

Key highlights of the report

- The report submitted by the panel slammed the government's laxity in raising the amount, pointing out that recommendations to increase the sums have been made for the last two years as well.
- Pension: It said that the Centre must increase the "meagre" pensions provided for poor senior citizens, widows and disabled people
- It report said that the relevance of a marquee scheme like National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) in reaching out to the poor and downtrodden section of the society does not go amiss in the eyes of the Committee
- The report points out that the Committee are baffled to observe the meagre amount of assistance ranging from Rs.200 to Rs.500 per month under the different components of this Scheme
- The panel reminded the government that it had previously urged the increase of these miniscule pensions in its reports on the Department of Rural Development's (DoRD) demand for grants in 2019-20 and 2020-21
- Hence the Committee again vehemently recommends the DoRD to look into this issue with utmost sincerity and hasten their processes for bringing an increase in the assistance amount under NSAP
- It also questioned DORD for delays and disparities in the payment of wages and unemployment allowances under

the flagship MGNREGA scheme especially during Covid-19 pandemic.

- In its report, the committee said that the callous approach of the State Governments in the proper implementation of the provision of unemployment allowance, finding that the provision is not implemented in letter and spirit at the grass root level.
- It also questioned the issue of disparity in MGNREGA wages in different states

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act /program

- 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 the statutory minimum wage.
- The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) is monitoring the entire implementation of this scheme in association with state governments.
- It also aims at addressing causes of chronic poverty through the works (projects) that are undertaken, and thus ensuring sustainable development.
- Further, there is an emphasis on strengthening the process of decentralisation through giving a significant role to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in planning and implementing these works.

The National Social Assistance Program (NSAP)

NSAP which came into effect from 15th August, 1995 aims at ensuring a minimum national standard for social assistance to the poor in addition to the benefits that states are currently providing or might provide in future

Components of NSAP

Presently NSAP comprises of five schemes, namely –

- Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)
- Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS)
- Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS)
- National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) and
- Annapurna: It aims at providing food security to meet the requirement of those senior citizens who, though eligible, have remained uncovered under the NOAPS