



Current Affairs of the Day

House panel flags issues plaguing MGNREGS

1. Fake job cards, widespread corruption, late uploading of muster rolls, and huge pending payments for wages and materials are among the issues hampering the MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) scheme, apart from insufficient funding, according to a Parliamentary Standing Committee report.
2. “Genuine laborers not getting their dues while the money keeps changing hands due to collusion of unscrupulous elements surrounding the implementation of the scheme at ground level is a bitter truth of the time,” said the report.
3. The Committee said that study visits and observations had shown that “rozgar Sevak-s are in the habit of filling up kachha muster at the start and go to the Block once a week for online uploading of muster-rolls”.
4. It noted that if the muster-roll is not updated and uploaded within the stipulated time, it could not be backdated, causing a loss in payment.
5. It noted that the intent of a demand-driven scheme for the marginalized was defeated when pending wages amounted to ₹4,060 crores.
6. The panel found it “alarming” that in such a scenario, the budget estimates for the scheme for 2022-23 were reduced from the ₹78,000 crores sought by the Department of Rural Development to ₹73,000 crores.

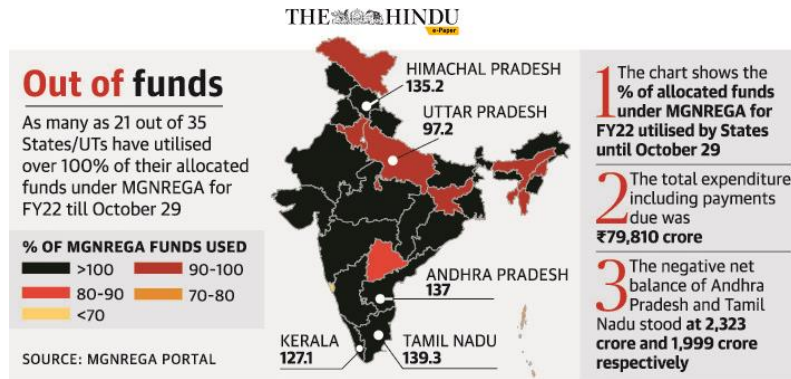
MGNREGA:
Basic Features

- 100 days' wage employment assurance
- Unemployment allowance if work not provided
- A fixed timeline for payment of wages, compensation for delayed payments
- Transparency & Accountability
- Wages to be credited to Bank/ Post office accounts



Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin

1. With regard to the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin, the panel said ground-level observations exposed corruption.
2. The study visits undertaken frequently by the Committee to see the actual implementation of the schemes of the Department of Rural Development have revealed a dismal scenario wherein such beneficiaries availing the benefit of assistance through PMAY-G have emerged who are already well off and have built expensive houses, belying their claims of being a genuine beneficiary.



‘Social media used to hack democracy’

1. The danger of social media being abused to hack democracy is rising and the government should put an end to the “systematic interference” of Facebook and other social media giants in electoral politics of the world’s largest democracy, Congress president Sonia Gandhi said.
2. Global companies such as Facebook and Twitter were increasingly used to shape political narratives by leaders, political parties and their proxies.
3. Social media companies were not providing a level playing field to all political parties and referred to the investigation done by The Wall Street Journal last year in which it was claimed that Facebook bent its own rules on hate speech to favor politicians of the ruling party.



‘EV sales will rise 10 times by 2022-end’

1. Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari made an ardent plea in Parliament for adopting alternative fuels and said sales of electric vehicles (EVs) were set to rise by 10 times by 2022-end in the country.
2. Between 2019-20 and 2020-21, sale of two-wheeler EVs rose by 422% going up from 28,508 to 1,49,068; three-wheelers by 75% from 90,216 to 1,57,682; and four-wheelers up by 230% from 4,695 to 15,860. The number of electric buses increased from 80 to 1,177 — over 1,200%.
3. According to data shared by the Minister with the House, the number of EVs registered (3,24,840) in 2021 was 1.7% of petrol and diesel vehicles registered (1,83,12,760) that year.
4. It is important for the country to adopt alternative fuels to cut dependence on the import of oil and reduce the import bills.
5. The Minister acknowledged that the cost of batteries in India was a big challenge. Efforts were also being made to promote battery manufacturing.

In the interest of the economy and environment

1. Presently, the Indian import of crude oil [costs] ₹8 lakh crore. The way the automobiles are now increasing, the import will be to the tune of ₹25 lakh crore.
2. So, this is the time for all of us — in the economic interest, in the interest of our country, and in the interest of ecology and environment — to switch over to alternative fuels like electricity, ethanol, methanol, biodiesel, bio-CNG, and green hydrogen.

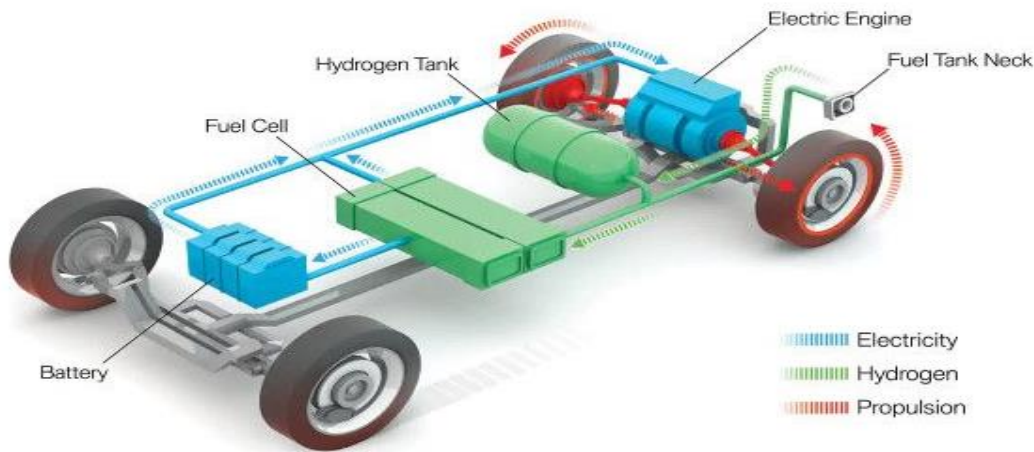
Benefits of hydrogen

1. The Minister hailed hydrogen as the “fuel for the future”. He launched a Green Hydrogen Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle (FCEV) by Toyota.
2. An MoU was also signed by Toyota Kirloskar Motor Pvt Ltd and the International Center for Automotive Technology (ICAT) for a pilot project to evaluate the vehicle’s performance on Indian roads and climatic conditions.
3. “We can collect sewage and by using electrolysis we can get green hydrogen. We can compress it with the generator running on ethanol, which again is a biofuel, and we will get the main hydrogen,” the Minister said about the technology used.

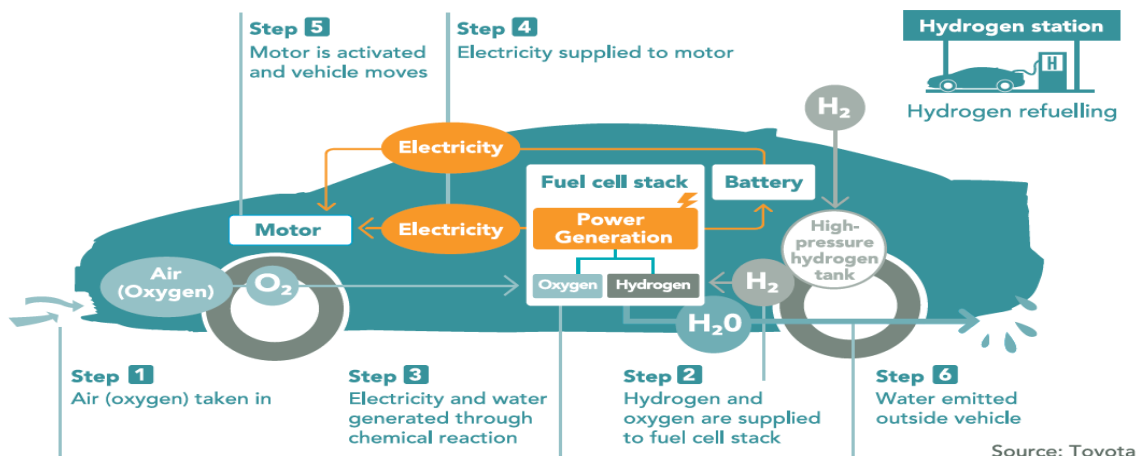


- It is an important initiative that will promote clean energy and environmental protection by reducing dependence on fossil fuels and thereby make India 'Energy Self-reliant' by 2047.
- Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle (FCEV), powered by Hydrogen, is one of the best Zero-Emission solutions. It is completely environmentally friendly with no tailpipe emissions other than water.

Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle (FCEV)



Vehicle operating principles



Quick & easy to refuel



Emits nothing but water vapour



Smooth & quiet ride



Drives like a normal car



Long travel range



Zero CO₂ while driving



Comparable running costs



Progress, but at a slow pace

The 2019 SRS data shows India is improving on many indicators but more needs to be done. The findings of the 2019 Sample Registration Survey (SRS) — they are the only official source of demographic data in India apart from the Census — provide important insights into the ongoing demographic transformation in India. At least three of them, and associated policy implications, are significant.

Fertility rates:

1. One, fertility behavior in rural and urban areas is increasingly converging. SRS data shows that rural fertility has been falling at a faster rate than urban fertility, a trend that will eventually bring the size of rural and urban households on par.
2. Rural total fertility rate (TFR) is now the closest to its urban counterpart since 2006, the earliest period for which this data is available. TFR is the number of children a woman is expected to have in her reproductive age (15-49 years).
3. Given India's rapid urbanization process, this will generate additional tailwinds for the urban population share in India.
4. This, when read with trends of the increasing share of the working-age population (15-59 years) in India — the share of under-15 children has been falling for some time — underlines the need for ensuring adequate and healthy employment growth outside agriculture.

Impact of Education:

1. The second interesting aspect that SRS highlights is the importance of education in bringing down TFR among women. This number is three for illiterate women and just 1.6 for women who have finished college education.
2. SRS data also shows that the average age of women at the time of marriage is increasing consistently. These two findings clearly point out that the empowerment of women through education is an effective way to ensure marriage at an appropriate age and stabilize the population.
3. When seen in this context, laws that seek to impose penalties on families with more than two children or plan to increase the minimum age of marriage for women, appear to be unnecessary.



Child and maternal welfare

1. Finally, SRS numbers offer fresh evidence that India is making an improvement on developmental indicators such as child and maternal welfare including mortality.
2. While this is good news, and the pace of improvement has increased for some indicators, it is also a fact that India is still a laggard on many of these indicators.
3. What SRS data also shows is that there are examples within India — the southern states do much better on these counts — which can be successfully emulated to accelerate our progress on such indicators.

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| <p>MAINS DAWP</p> | <p>Q1. “A robust renewables waste management and recycling ecosystem could help people and India reduce environmental harm, provide energy security, and also create new jobs.” Elaborate.</p> <p>Q2. “The empowerment of women through education is an effective way to ensure marriage at an appropriate age and stabilize the population.” Comment</p> <p>Q3. Discuss the working principle of the Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle (FCEV). Elaborate upon its economic and environmental benefits for India.</p> |
| <p>MCQs</p> | <p>Q1. Consider the following statements</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The total fertility rate (TFR) is the number of children a woman is expected to have in her reproductive age (15-49 years). 2. Education is important in bringing down TFR among women <p>Which of the above statements is/are correct?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. 1 only b. 2 only c. Both 1 and 2 d. Neither 1 nor 2 |