

## Today's Prelims Topics

### Trump bans the creation of a 'digital dollar'

#### Context

US President Donald Trump has issued an executive order banning the establishment of a central bank digital currency.

#### About Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)

- It is a digital form of national currency **issued and regulated by a country's central bank**, representing a digital version of physical cash and legal tender.
- **It can also be programmed** for certain selected users or within a specific region of a country.
- **Types of CBDC**
  - **Retail CBDC:** CBDC that can be used for people for day-to-day transactions.
  - **Wholesale CBDC:** CBDC that can be used only by financial institutions such as Banks, NBFCs etc.
- **Benefits of CBDC:**
  - Freely Convertible.
  - Programmable
  - Fungible Legal tender.
  - Enables direct Bilateral Currency Exchanges.
- RBI has also launched **e-rupee**, a digital version of currency notes.
- CBDC appears as a **liability on the RBI's balance sheet**.
- **Finance Act 2022** amended the **RBI Act**, enabling it to introduce Central Bank Digital Currency.



#### UPSC PYQ

**Q.** With reference to Central Bank digital currencies, consider the following statements: **(2023)**

- (1) It is possible to make payments in a digital currency without using the US dollar or SWIFT system.
- (2) A digital currency can be distributed with a condition programmed into it such as a time- frame for spending it.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: C**

#### Source:

- [The Hindu - Digital Dollar](#)

## Origin of Whip System

### Context

Recently Vice President Mr. Jagdeep Dhankhar criticized the use of party whips, arguing they restrict MPs' freedom of expression and enforce party servility.

### Origin of Whip system

- The term "whip" originates from the hunting fields of **England**, where a "whipper-in" would bring straying hounds back into the pack.
- The term was later adopted in politics by **Edmund Burke**, who referred to it in the context of gathering followers to support the King's ministers.

### About Whip system in India

- The **whip system** has been a part of India's parliamentary history since the country's independence.
- This post is **neither mentioned in the rules of houses nor in the constitution. It owes its origin to parliamentary conventions.**
- They are appointed by respective political parties.
- **Function:**
  - The whip ensures **attendance and party-line voting** during critical votes in Parliament, especially when a **division** (counting votes) is held on matters crucial to the party's agenda.
  - Violating a whip, particularly a strict three-line whip, can lead to **disqualification under the Anti-Defection Law.**
- The **Minister of Parliamentary Affairs is the Chief Whip of Government.**

### Types of Whips

- **One-Line Whip:** Informs MPs about a vote but allows abstention.
- **Two-Line Whip:** Directs MPs to be present but does not instruct on how to vote.
- **Three-Line Whip:** Requires MPs to be present and vote strictly according to the party line. This is the most commonly used whip and has the strictest enforcement.

### Global Practices

- **United Kingdom (UK) :** In UK, breaking the three-line whip leads to a person's expulsion from the party; however, **the member may continue serving as an independent member** of Parliament until the party accepts him/her back

### Source:

- [Indian Express - Origins of Whip system](#)

## Multi-Utility Legged Equipment

### Context

The Indian Army displayed Robotic Mules (Multi-Utility Legged Equipment) during the Republic Day Parade in Kolkata.

### What are Robotic Mules ?

- It is a four-legged, remote-controlled ground robot designed to support military operations in diverse terrains.
- **Control:** The mule is controlled by a remote control and can be operated using Wi-Fi or Long-Term Evolution (LTE).
- **Features:**
  - It has a payload capacity of 12 kg.
  - It can operate in temperatures ranging from -20°C to +45°C, and has a battery life of at least three hours.
  - It can climb stairs and steep hills and navigate snow-clad ground and rugged mountains.
  - It also has electro-optics and infrared to help it recognize objects.
- **Uses**
  - The mule can transport small loads to frontline soldiers, and can be used for surveillance in mountainous regions.
  - It can also be equipped with small arms to engage enemies.



### Source:

- [The Hindu - Mules](#)

## SANJAY - Battlefield Surveillance System

### Context

Recently the Union Defence Minister launched SANJAY, an advanced Battlefield Surveillance System (BSS).

### About SANJAY

- **SANJAY Battlefield Surveillance System (BSS)** is a state-of-the-art military technology developed by India to enhance battlefield awareness and improve decision-making during combat operations.
- **Development:** Indigenously developed by Indian Army and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)
- **Key Features:**
  - **Multi-Sensor Integration:** It combines data from various sensors, including: Ground-based radars, Drones and UAVs, Thermal imagers & Electro-optic systems.
  - **Real-Time Information Sharing:** Data is shared instantly with command centers and troops in the field → enabling faster decision-making.
  - **Terrain Adaptability:** Effective in diverse terrains, including mountains, deserts and forested areas → crucial for India's strategic requirements.
  - **High-Tech Surveillance:** It incorporates advanced imaging, tracking and data processing technologies.



### Source:

- [DD News - advanced Battlefield Surveillance System 'SANJAY'](#)

## Birthright Citizenship in the US and India

### Context

Recently a **federal judge** temporarily blocked President Donald Trump's executive order that sought to curtail birthright citizenship in the US.

### Origin of birthright citizenship in the US

- At the time of **US independence (1776)**, citizenship was largely governed by state laws. There was a general belief that citizenship could be granted to those born within US territory.
- The original **US Constitution** recognized "natural born citizens" in **Article 2**, though it did not define the term. It likely included both **jus soli** (birthright citizenship) and **jus sanguinis** (citizenship through American parents).
- **14th Amendment - 1866**: It clarified that "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside."

### Birthright Citizenship in India

- **Constituent Assembly Debate**: When framing the Indian Constitution, there was debate over whether to grant birthright citizenship.
  - **P.S. Deshmukh** argued against it, claiming it would make Indian citizenship too easy to obtain, while **B.R. Ambedkar and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** supported it.
- **Constitution (1950)**: **Article 5** of the Constitution stated that all individuals born before the commencement of the Constitution were Indian citizens. It did not establish a universal birthright to citizenship.

### Citizenship Act of 1955 and Amendments

- **Initial Provisions (1955)**: The **Citizenship Act of 1955** granted **birthright citizenship** under **Section 3** to all individuals born in India after **January 26, 1950**, with exceptions for children born to foreign diplomats or enemy aliens.
- **Amendment (1986)**: The **1986 amendment** restricted birthright citizenship by requiring that at least one parent be an Indian citizen for the child to automatically acquire Indian citizenship. This change targeted **migrants from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and other regions**.
- **Further Amendment (2003)**: The **2003 amendment** added a provision stating that children born in India to parents who are **illegal immigrants** would not acquire Indian citizenship at birth.

### Source:

- [Indian Express - US birthright citizenship](#)

## Paraquat

### Context

Recently, a 24-year old woman was awarded death sentence by a Thiruvananthapuram court which found her guilty of poisoning her boyfriend with a chemical herbicide called paraquat.

### About Paraquate

- Paraquat, also known as **paraquat dichloride** or **methyl viologen**, is one of the world's most widely used herbicides.
- **Primary Use:** It is used to control weeds and desiccate crops like **cotton** before harvest.
- **Hazard Classification:** The **WHO** classifies paraquat as **Category 2** (moderately hazardous and irritating) chemical.
- **Global Ban:** Paraquat is banned in **over 70 countries**, including **China** and the **European Union**, due to its high toxicity.
- **Routes of Exposure:**
  - **Ingestion:** Accidental swallowing.
  - **Skin Contact:** Prolonged skin contact.
  - **Inhalation**
- **Treatment for Paraquat Poisoning:**
  - There are no known specific antidotes for paraquat poisoning.
  - **Immediate Actions:** The **CDC** recommends swallowing activated **charcoal** or **Fuller's earth (multani mitti)** to absorb the chemical.
  - **Immunosuppression or charcoal haemoperfusion** - potential hospital treatment

### Source:

- [Indian Express - Paraquat](#)

## Why Trump wants Greenland

### Context

President Donald Trump expressed interest in acquiring **Greenland** for the **protection of the free world**, stating it would be an **unfriendly act** if Denmark did not allow this.

### Reasons Behind Trump's Interest in Greenland

- **Strategic Security:** Proximity to Europe, enabling US to monitor activities of rivals like **Russia and China**. Trump has described **Greenland** as “**an absolute necessity**” for national security.
- **Arctic Trade Route:** Greenland lies along a **shorter Arctic Sea shipping route**. Climate change may enhance the strategic importance of this route, reducing dependence on the **Panama Canal**.
- **Mineral Resources:** Greenland has deposits of **copper, lithium and cobalt**, essential for electric vehicle batteries and other technologies.
- **China's Role:**
  - **Chinese Presence:** China has been involved in **mining and infrastructure** development in Greenland, holding **11% of investments** in its mineral sector. This has raised concerns in the **U.S.** about China's growing influence in the **Arctic**.
  - **Polar Silk Road:** China's **Belt and Road Initiative** has extended to Greenland through the **Polar Silk Road**.



### Historical Context of US Interest in Greenland

- The US has shown interest in Greenland since the 1940s, initially driven by World War II security concerns.
- **In 1946**, America proposed to buy Greenland, aiming to counter Soviet influence in the Arctic.
- Although Denmark rejected the offer, subsequent agreements allowed the US to establish military bases on the island, underscoring its strategic importance.

### About Greenland

- **Location:** Between the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans. It is the **world's largest island**.
- Presently it is an **autonomous territory under the Kingdom of Denmark**.
- **Three-fourth** of its surface is **permanently covered by ice**.
- It is majorly inhabited by the **Inuit community**.

### Source:

- [Indian Express - Greenland](#)

## News in Shorts

### Where did dinosaurs first appear ?

- A recent study published in Current Biology has proposed a surprising new location for Dinosaur emergence.
- The research examines the fossil record, evolutionary relationships, and Earth's geography during the Triassic Period to trace back the birthplace of dinosaurs.

### Dominance of Dinosaurs

- Dinosaurs dominated Earth's land ecosystems for millions of years with diverse forms:
  - **Plant-eating giants:** Argentinosaurus
  - **Meat-eating predators:** Tyrannosaurus
  - **Unusual species:** Therizinosaurus, known for its Wolverine-like claws.
- Despite their dominance, the exact time and location of their **origin remain uncertain.**

### Proposed Location for Dinosaur Origins

- Researchers suggest dinosaurs likely originated in regions that today include the **Sahara Desert and the Amazon Rainforest.**
- These areas are now separated by thousands of kilometers and the Atlantic Ocean due to **plate tectonics** but were once part of **Gondwana**, the southern portion of the supercontinent Pangaea.
- Dinosaurs are believed to have emerged **245-230 million years ago**, during the **Triassic Period.**

### Source:

- [The Hindu - Where did dinosaur first appear](#)

### Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS)

- GBS is a rare neurological disorder that occurs when the body's immune system attacks the peripheral nervous system.
- This can cause muscle weakness, tingling and sometimes paralysis.
- **Cause:** The exact cause of GBS is unknown but it is often preceded by an infection. This could be a bacterial or viral infection. This leads the immune system to attack the body itself.
  - In rare cases, it can be caused by a **vaccination.**
- **Treatment:** GBS treatment involves procedures like **plasmapheresis**, which removes plasma and replaces it with other fluids.



### Source:



- [Indian Express - GBS](#)

### Kodaikanal Solar Observatory - 125 years of solar physics research in India

- The conference on 'Sun, Space Weather and Solar-Stellar Connections' was organised by the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) to commemorate the **125th anniversary of the Kodaikanal Solar Observatory**.
- It was established in **1899** and is operated by the **Indian Institute of Astrophysics**.
- It is located in **Kodaikanal, Palani hills (Tamil Nadu)**.
- It was set up to obtain more data on how the sun heats up Earth's atmosphere and to understand monsoon patterns.



Source:

- [PIB - 125 years of solar physics research in India](#)

### Environment Ministry panel clears new Sikkim dam

- A new **118.64-meter-high concrete gravity dam** has been proposed by **Sikkim Urja Ltd** to replace the **rockfill concrete dam** of the **Teesta-III hydel project**, which was destroyed during a **glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF)** in **October 2023**.
- The **Environment Ministry's Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC)** approved the proposal despite concerns about the dam's safety and the lack of approval for the dam's design.
- **Approval conditions:** The proposal was approved with conditions such as setting up **early warning systems**, mapping **glacial lakes** and ensuring the dam design is approved by relevant authorities like the **Central Water Commission (CWC)** and **Geological Survey of India (GSI)**.

#### GLOF Incident - October 2023

- The **South Lhonak glacial lake burst in Sikkim**, caused significant flooding which led to the loss of 40 lives and **washed away the Teesta-III Chungthang Dam**.
- The flood's destructive impact has raised questions about the new dam's capacity to withstand future GLOF events.

Source:

- [Indian Express - New Sikkim Dam](#)

## Editorial Summary

### Trump Second Term Hopes for Indo-Pacific

#### Context

The inauguration of Donald Trump as the 47th President of the United States signals a vital moment in global geopolitics, particularly for the Indo-Pacific region.

#### More In News

- The presence of the foreign ministers from India, Japan, and Australia — America's key Quad partners — at the inauguration underscores the strategic importance of this grouping in Mr. Trump's foreign policy vision.

#### First Term: Trump's Stance on the Indo-Pacific Region

- **Adoption of the Term 'Indo-Pacific':**
  - **Shift in Terminology:** Trump's administration replaced 'Asia-Pacific' with 'Indo-Pacific,' expanding the strategic focus to include the Indian Ocean.
  - **Geopolitical Recalibration:** This reflected a wider lens critical to global trade, security, and stability, with an intent to counter China's influence.
  - **Focus Areas:** Emphasised securing sea lines of communication, addressing maritime challenges, and integrating defence, security, and political considerations alongside economic cooperation.
- **Structural Changes in U.S. Defence Strategy:**
  - **Rebranding of Command:** Renamed the **U.S. Pacific Command** as the **U.S. Indo-Pacific Command** in 2018, highlighting the region's operational importance.
  - **Specialised Units:** Established units within the Office of the Secretary of Defence to focus on partnerships with Indo-Pacific allies.
- **Revival of the Quad Alliance:**
  - **Recognition of the Quad:** Trump identified the Indo-Pacific as the fulcrum of 21st-century geopolitics, strengthening the Quad partnership with India, Japan, and Australia.
  - **Institutionalisation:** Elevated the Quad dialogue to the ministerial level, focusing on:
    - Maritime security
    - Supply chain resilience
    - Technological standards



#### Legacy and Continuity Under Joe Biden

- **Biden's Approach:** The Indo-Pacific framework developed under Trump was inherited and expanded by the Biden administration.
  - **First Quad Leaders' Summit (2021):** Convened to deepen collaboration.
  - **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (2022):** Complemented the strategic focus with economic engagement.
  - **Broad Agenda:** Included vaccines, climate change, critical technologies, and infrastructure development.

- **Emphasis:** Multilateralism and rules-based order aligned the Quad's mission with global governance goals.

### Hopes for Trump's Second Term: Key Prospects in the Indo-Pacific Region

- **Assertive Stance on China:** Likely to adopt a stronger hard-power approach to counter China's rising influence in the Indo-Pacific.
  - At his confirmation hearing, **U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio** described China as the U.S.'s "most formidable adversary."
- **Strengthened Quad Cooperation:**
  - **Inaugural Quad Meeting:** Foreign ministers of India, Japan, and Australia attended Trump's inauguration, reflecting the importance of the Quad in his foreign policy vision.
  - **First Major Initiative:** A meeting of Quad foreign ministers on **January 21, 2025**, reaffirmed the U.S.'s commitment to the Indo-Pacific.
  - **Key Outcomes:**
    - Commitment to international law, peace, stability, and maritime security.
    - Opposition to unilateral actions that alter the status quo through coercion.
    - Emphasis on resilient supply chains and technological security.
    - Agreement on regular ministerial meetings and preparation for a Quad leaders' summit hosted by India.
- **Focus on Defence and Hard Power Dynamics:** Expected to boost security frameworks to ensure regional stability.
  - Likely to prioritise maritime and technological security while addressing emerging threats.
- **Shared Responsibility Among Allies:** Reliance on **India, Japan, and Australia** to share the burden of regional security.
  - Bilateral meetings, with India being the first partner to engage with the new administration.
- **Preservation of Rules-Based Order:** Trump's administration is expected to balance hard power strategies with broader mechanisms to uphold the rules-based order and regional prosperity.

Source: [The Hindu: An enduring commitment to the Indo-Pacific](#)

## Should Governors Head State Universities?

### Context

The role of the Governor as Chancellor of State universities, rooted in colonial-era practices, has sparked debates.

### Historical Context and Role of the Governor

#### Colonial Legacy

- The position of Governor as Chancellor was inherited from British colonial rule, established in 1857 when the first three universities were created in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. Governors were appointed as ex-officio Chancellors to maintain control over these institutions.
- This model was intended to restrict university autonomy rather than promote it, leading to a legacy that continues to affect university governance in India today.

#### Evolution of the Role

- From 1947 to 1967, Governors were largely ceremonial due to Congress party dominance. However, post-1967, with various states being governed by parties other than the ruling party at the Centre, Governors increasingly became political instruments of the Central government.



State public universities are established through laws passed by state legislatures, with the Governor typically designated as the Chancellor.

The Chancellor serves as the head of public universities and is responsible for appointing the Vice-Chancellor.

The Chancellor has the authority to declare any university proceedings invalid if they do not comply with existing laws.

In certain states, such as Bihar, Gujarat, and Jharkhand, the Chancellor is empowered to conduct inspections within the university.

The Chancellor presides over university convocations and confirms proposals for awarding honorary degrees.

In Telangana, the Chancellor is appointed by the state government, differing from the typical model.

The Chancellor leads meetings of various university bodies, including the Court/Senate, which address general policy matters related to university development.

The Court/Senate decides on key issues such as establishing new departments, conferring or withdrawing degrees and titles, and instituting fellowships.

The West Bengal University Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2022 designates the Chief Minister of West Bengal as the Chancellor of 31 public universities in the state, replacing the Governor in this role.

### Challenges Associated with Current Model

- **Politicization of the Office:** The First Administrative Reforms Commission (1966–77) criticized the politicization of the Governor's office, noting that many were appointed based on political loyalty rather than merit.

- A study by Professor Ashok Pankaj (1950-2015) revealed that 52% of Governors were politicians, 26% retired bureaucrats, and only 22% came from academia or judiciary backgrounds.
- **Dual Authority Issues:** Governors wield significant power without accountability, leading to conflicts between university leadership and state governments.
  - Unlike the President, who consults the Ministry of Education for appointments in Central universities, Governors act unilaterally for State universities.
  - Delegated legislations in Central universities are laid before Parliament; State university laws lack similar oversight, leading to unilateral decisions by Governors.
  - This dual authority creates administrative paralysis, particularly in appointing Vice-Chancellors and implementing projects.
- **Lack of Expertise:** Many Governors lack academic qualifications or experience, resulting in non-transparent and questionable decisions.
- **Political Interference:** Governors prioritize the Centre's political agenda, undermining autonomy and federalism.

### Insights from Commissions

- **Rajamannar Committee (1969-71):** Suggested Governors act on the advice of State governments even in their statutory roles.
- **Sarkaria Commission (1983-88):** Recommended Governors consult Chief Ministers while retaining independent judgment.
- **National Commission to Review the Constitution (2000-02):** Advocated for political neutrality, greater autonomy, and supportive, rather than authoritative, roles for Chancellors.
- **M.M. Punchhi Commission (2007-10):** Suggested States appoint academicians or experts as Chancellors to ensure academic independence.

### Proposed Reform Models

- **Governor as Ceremonial Chancellor:** Gujarat (1978), Karnataka (2000), and Maharashtra (2021) adopted variations requiring Governors to act on State government advice.
- **Chief Minister as Chancellor:** Bills passed in West Bengal and Punjab (2023) and Tamil Nadu (2022) await Presidential assent.
- **State-Appointed Chancellor:** Telangana (2015) and Kerala (2022) passed Bills appointing ceremonial Chancellors who are eminent academicians or public figures.
- **Chancellor Elected by University Bodies:** Inspired by Oxford and Cambridge, where university bodies or alumni elect ceremonial Chancellors.
- **Chancellor Appointed by Executive Council:** Global examples like McGill University (Canada) and Melbourne University (Australia) appoint ceremonial Chancellors through transparent processes.

Source: [The Hindu: Should Governors head State universities?](#)

## Detailed Coverage

### No Additional Funds For MGNREGS; Wages Delayed

#### Context

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) faced a budget shortfall in 2024-25, with no additional allocation provided, leading to delays in wage disbursement for workers.

#### About MGNREGS

- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) serves as the legislative foundation for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).
- **Launch:** 2005 by the Ministry of Rural Development
- **Key Features:**
  - To provide at least **100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year** to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.
  - **Unemployment allowance** must be provided if work is not allotted.
  - The scheme is funded by the **Central Government (100% wages)** and a **shared material cost (60% Centre, 40% States)**.
  - Aims to improve the economic resources available to the poor.
  - Proactively focuses on including all social segments.
  - Strengthens the role and capabilities of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).

#### Provisions and Regulation

- **Section 3 (3):** The disbursement of daily wages shall be made on a weekly basis or in any case not later than a fortnight after the date on which such work was done.
- **Section 7(1) of MGNREGA:** It is a **legal guarantee**, ensuring that **any rural adult can request work** and must **receive it within 15 days**.
  - If this **commitment is not met**, an "**unemployment allowance**" must be provided.
- **Section 17 of MGNREGA:** This requires Gram Sabhas to oversee work execution, establishing a legal foundation for social audits.
- **2011 Rules for Auditing MGNREGA:** Developed in collaboration with India's CAG, establish social audit procedures and specify the duties of entities like the **Social Audit Unit (SAU)**, state governments, and MGNREGA field workers.
  - **Social audit units function independently** from MGNREGA implementing agencies, guaranteeing unbiased evaluations, and **are funded with 0.5% of the state's previous year's MGNREGA spending**.

#### Benefits of MGNREGA

- **Rural Income Enhancement:** The scheme offers critical employment opportunities, particularly in off-seasons, thereby boosting household incomes in rural areas.
  - **E.g.,** In villages like Sarai in Bihar, MGNREGA has significantly augmented local incomes, especially in non-agricultural periods.
- **Mitigating Rural-Urban Migration:** By providing local employment, MGNREGA lessens the need for rural residents to migrate to urban areas for work.
  - **E.g.,** In Neemka in Uttar Pradesh, the scheme has reduced economic-driven migration and improved local living conditions.
- **Women's Economic Independence:** With its mandate for female labor participation and direct wage payments to women.

- **E.g.,** In Kudumbashree (Kerala), the program has led to the formation of significant women-led initiatives.
- **Cushioning Against Economic Shocks:** The scheme has been a lifeline during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, providing essential employment to those in need.
- **Community Asset Development:** MGNREGA plays a vital role in reviving and creating community assets, particularly in water conservation.
  - **E.g.,** The restoration of traditional irrigation systems like Kul in Himachal Pradesh, which has revitalized local agriculture.
- **Environmental Restoration:** The program contributes to environmental conservation efforts, such as afforestation and soil conservation.
  - **E.g.,** In regions like Sundarbans, West Bengal, MGNREGA has been instrumental in mangrove plantation and soil erosion control.
- **Local Infrastructure Improvement:** Beyond agricultural support, MGNREGA has facilitated the development of basic rural infrastructure, such as roads and public buildings.
  - **E.g.,** In tribal areas of Chhattisgarh, the scheme has significantly improved connectivity and access to facilities.
- **Skill Development:** In tribal belts of Odisha, MGNREGA has provided training in traditional arts, aiding in preserving cultural heritage while enhancing livelihoods.

#### What are the Challenges Associated

- **Deficient Disbursement Of Unemployment Allowances:** In the financial year 2023-24, only ₹90,000 was released as unemployment allowance, a stark decrease from ₹7.8 lakh in 2022-23.
  - This drastic reduction indicates a failure to meet the scheme's objective of providing financial support to workers when employment demands are unmet.
- **A report by civil society organisations LibTech India and NREGA Sangharsh Morcha:**
  - **Account Deletions:** Mandatory linking of Aadhaar to job cards under the Aadhaar-Based Payment System (ABPS) led to severe consequences for many workers:
    - **E.g.,** Approximately 39 lakh workers were deleted from MGNREGS rolls between April and September 2024 alone due to non-compliance with Aadhaar linking requirements.
  - **Payment Delays:** Around 67 million workers had not received wages since April 2024, primarily due to issues stemming from the Aadhaar linking process.
- **Low Budget Allocation Trend:** The 2024-25 allocation of ₹86,000 crore was insufficient to meet demands, marking a shift from past trends where additional funds were allocated as needed.
  - **E.g.,** during the pandemic in 2020-21, the allocation increased from ₹61,500 crore to ₹1,11,500 crore, reflecting responsiveness to demand.
- **Minimum Wage Determination:** A panel from the **Ministry of Rural Development** has highlighted that, currently linked to the **Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL)**, fails to account for the diverse nature of work performed under the scheme.

#### Fact

- In January 2023, the Centre pushed for **mandatory use** of the National Mobile Monitoring System (which was introduced in 2021) and Aadhaar Based Payment System (ABPS, introduced in 2017) for marking attendance and the payment of wages respectively.

#### Steps to Strengthen the MGNREGA Scheme

- **Increase Budget Allocation:** Allocate sufficient funds to ensure timely wage payments, meet rising demand for rural employment, and safeguard workers' dignity and livelihood.
- **Enhance Digital Systems:** Review and upgrade digital tools like ABPS to address technical issues, improve infrastructure, and ensure user-friendliness, especially for rural workers.

- **Improve Accountability Mechanisms:** Strengthen mechanisms to address delays, enforce timely compensation as per MGNREGA provisions, and enhance reporting, monitoring, and grievance redress systems.
- **Switch Minimum Wage Determination:** Switch to the Consumer Price Index-Rural (CPI-R), as it is more updated and considers higher costs associated with education and healthcare.
- **Implement Reforms for Equity:** Introduce reforms to ensure transparent and efficient wage distribution, eliminate caste-based inequalities, and promote fair treatment for all workers.

**Sources:**

- [The Hindu: No additional funds for MGNREGS; wages delayed](#)
- [The Hindu: Only ₹90,000 released as 'unemployment allowance' in FY 24 under MGNREGS](#)
- [DTE: MGNREGS: Millions affected as Aadhar linking woes result in rural workers' account deletion, payment delays](#)
- [The Print: 8 crore MGNREGS workers deleted in 2 yrs. Centre's Budget cuts, tech push to blame — NGO report](#)

