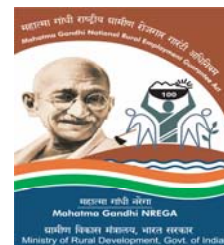


MGNREGS UPDATE

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Foundation for Ecological Security



Civil society groups to do NREGA audit again

Devesh Kumar/ February 01, 2011

New Delhi: The Manmohan Singh government has moved in to restore the role of civil society groups in conducting the social audit of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in an attempt to weed out corruption from various levels.

The Rural Development Ministry is in consultation with the Comptroller and Auditor General to remove the lacuna that had cropped up after social audit rules were amended in 2009 to eliminate the role of civil society groups.

A committee of state secretaries has also been formed to look into the issue, and it has been given a month to examine the issue and submit its report within two months.

Till 2009, civil society groups, such as Rajasthan's MKSS, played a crucial role in carrying out social audit of the programme within the state. They highlighted irregularities committed in its execution at various levels, triggering a wave of resentment among sarpanches, who opposed the scrutiny. A group of sarpanches subsequently obtained a stay from the high court on activities of these civil society organisations, and the exercise of social audit was jettisoned.

The government, in the meantime, incorporated Section 13 in Schedule I of the MGNREGA, by which the gram sabhas were assigned a pivotal role in the carrying out social audit within their domain. The move, however, resulted in reducing the process to a farce. "The sarpanches and the mukhiyas are the most powerful

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people in a village. Very few people would have the guts to raise their voice against them to highlight any irregularity," an official pointed out.

To remove the anomaly, the Rural Development Ministry is now working to club Section 24 of the MGNREGA with Section 17. Section 24 (1) says the central government may, in consultation with the CAG, prescribe appropriate arrangements for audits of the accounts of the schemes at all levels, while Section 24 (2) provides that the accounts of the scheme shall be maintained in such a form and in such manner as may be prescribed by the state government.

Section 17, on the other hand, makes out a case for social audit of work done in the panchayat by its gram sabha.

Andhra Pradesh, according to the rural development ministry, is the only state which has drafted social audit rules and had even set up a separate organisation for framing them. They have gone to the extent of inducting a civil society activist for heading the organisation, something which has paid rich dividends and is borne out by the fact that while in Andhra Pradesh misappropriation to the tune of Rs 88 crore has been detected so far, it is not even Rs 8 crore in the rest of the country. Besides, about 5,000 officials have been removed on charges of corruption and other irregularities.

The Rural Development Ministry had constituted 6 Sub-Groups of the Central Employment Guarantee Council (CEGC), one of which was headed by NAC member Aruna Roy. She had not only authored the report on social audit, she had also recommended adoption of the Andhra model for the rest of the country. To mark the fifth anniversary of the programme, the Rural Development Ministry has organised a function here on Wednesday. It will be attended by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Congress president Sonia Gandhi.

As the Congress-led alliance basks in its glory, activists feel this is the right juncture to do an honest stock-taking and go in for a course correction.

The scheme, it is pointed out, was able to keep the rural areas free of turmoil at the height of economic meltdown. It, however, appears to be sinking under the weight of corruption in some states. There is also little emphasis on creation of assets. MGNREGA would, these activists point out, be able to justify itself only if it leads to a healthy growth in agriculture. Despite being in existence for five years now, it has not been able to place its transparency mechanism and asset-creating processes in place.

There have been complaints galore involving financial irregularities on part of the officials and the Panchayati raj functionaries. Even the Supreme Court is seized of the matter. A report by former Union Rural Development Secretary K.B. Saxena into the implementation of the scheme in four districts of Uttar Pradesh came out with a horrifying picture. The sarpanches, it found out, had treated MGNREGA funds as their pocket money and had spent them either on venture which would do more harm than good or had been embezzling funds by denying employment to the needy.

The report also discovered that employment given under the Programme to Dalit women was negligible and, in most cases, purposely denied so that the agricultural wages could remain artificially depressed. Similar complaints have come from many other states, including Jharkhand, Orissa, Rajasthan and Bihar. In Madhya Pradesh, glaring instances have been found of dead persons in the wages register.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics/nation/civil-society-groups-to-do-nrega-audit-again/articleshow/7401035.cms>

Criteria for the Selection for the award of Best Gram Panchayats based on their contribution in implementing the MGNREGA

Ministry of Panchayati Raj/ February 01, 2011

Twelve Gram Panchayats from seven states have been selected for the Award under the Scheme of Awards for Best Performing Gram Panchayats for the year 2009-10. These are Khairwahi (Dondi Block) and Machandur (Durg Block) from Durg District of Chhattisgarh; Kalauna (Dadwal Block) from Sirsa District of Haryana; Nedumkandam (Nedumkandam Block) from Idduki and Kottukal (Athiyannoor Block) from Thiruvanthapuram districts of Kerala; Pandurna (Mukhed Block) from Nanded district of Maharashtra; Pampura (Asind Block) from district Bhilwara and Badwas Choti (Kushalgarh Block) from Banswara district of Rajasthan; Chuba Phong (Namathang Block) from South Sikkim district of Sikkim and Dhamna (Mauranipur Block) and Dhamna Khurd (Chirgaon Block) from district Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh.

These Panchayats will be awarded tomorrow at a function in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi to mark the completion of 5th year of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) by the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and the UPA Chairperson Smt. Sonia Gandhi. Union Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Shri Vilasrao Deshmukh will inaugurate the Sammelan.

These Panchayats have been selected by Ministry of Panchayati Raj after assessing their all round performance and their ability in delivering the results as per the demand. The parameter of selection is based on their contribution in implementing the MGNREGA.

The precise role of GP in implementing MGNREGA depends upon initiatives undertaken in creating awareness on MGNREGA in the village to enable the wage seekers to seek job under the Act; providing job to families who demanded work under MGNREGA for

employment during the year and keeping their proper record. This include No. of Group applications, Oral applications, Worksite applications and No of advance applications received as on date and also the record of families getting job along with those who didn't got job. The type of work under the MGNREGA comprises of Water conservation/ Drought proofing; Plantation; Roads/culverts; Irrigation works; Land development; Renovation/de-silting of tanks/ponds; Flood control & protection works; and Other works.

Details of worksite management include Number of mates, their selection process and provision of training to them, Planning and selection of shelf of projects – details of their planners and whether the works for NREGA was recommended by Gram Sabha. Timeline followed for NREGA works planning encompasses (i) the detail of the minutes of the Gram Sabha meeting held on every 2nd October to plan NREGA works and (ii) the meeting of 15th October every year to ascertain whether the GP developmental plan based on GS recommendations submitted to Block for approval. The Mode of payment adopted under MGNREGA in the village, Cash, Bank, Post Office Accounts; Biometric or any other; Record of Delay in payments and the procedure of Social audit of all works being done.

No. of work site inspection conducted and No. of separate Registers maintained is also a parameter for selection. These registers are for Registration, Job Card, Muster Roll, Employment, Works, Assets, Complaint and Monthly allotment and utilisation certificate watch register.

The Wage material ratio: wage component (in percentage) and record of any complaint received from NREGA workers regarding work site facilities available is also a part of the parameters.

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=69504>

Mahatma Gandhi NREGA Sammelan -2011 gets underway tomorrow

Ministry of Rural Development/ February 01, 2011

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) completes five years since its launch tomorrow. In order to commemorate the completion of the fifth year of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, the Ministry Of Rural Development is organizing Mahatma Gandhi NREGA Sammelan on Wednesday, the 2nd February, 2011. Five years ago on the same day, the scheme was launched from Anantapur district in Andhra Pradesh with the objective to provide every rural household a guarantee of at least 100 days of employment during a financial year by providing unskilled manual work in rural areas to those members of the rural household who volunteer to do such work. It is now spread over all the 625 districts of the country. The Sammelan aims to highlight the achievements of the State Governments in rural development. The interactions during the Sammelan will serve to facilitate exchange of information among State Governments, media persons, and members of the rural households. In addition it will provide an opportunity for learning and dissemination of best practices in the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA across the country.

Union Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister Shri Vilasrao Deshmukh will inaugurate the Sammelan. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi would address the gathering on this occasion. The major attraction would be the demonstration of Bio-Metric based ICT enabled MGNREGA process to ensure transparency and accountability in payment of wages to the right person in time. During the Sammelan, "Report to People on Mahatma Gandhi NREGA" showcasing the performance under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA over the past five years would be released along with the

"Rozgar Sutra" highlighting the provisions, rights and entitlements under the act . "Voices from the field" an interactive session has been organized wherein the workers who have completed 100 days of work under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA and the Sarpanchs from the rural areas would share their experiences along with District Project Co-ordinators. The District Programme Coordinators and their district teams, bank and post office functionaries and civil society organizations would be felicitated for their exemplary work.

Around 1200 participants from all over the country are likely to participate in the deliberations. These include among others the State Rural Development Ministers, the Deputy Chairperson and Members of Planning Commission, Members of Central Employment Guarantee Council, awardees of excellence in NREGA administration, awardees of Rozgar Jagrookta Puraskar Scheme, awardees of financial inclusion for Banks and Post Offices ,representatives of Panchayati Raj institutions, District Program Co-ordinators and his team members, Senior State Government Officials from the Rural Development Ministry, Heads of Financial institutions including Post Offices, Banks and Insurance Companies.

Under MGNREGA, 4.1 Crore households have been provided jobs in 2010-11 up to December 2010. Women constitute 47% while Scheduled Castes account for 28 %, and Scheduled tribes comprise 24% of those working in Mahatma Gandhi NREGA in 2010-11. The scheme has resulted in the financial inclusion of around 10 crore workers who have opened bank/post office accounts under the Scheme, has encouraged thrift and savings. Expenditure on wages since inception has been around Rs. 74677 crores which is around 70 % of the total expenditure. Wage rates under MGNREGA have been enhanced by the Ministry of Rural Development with effect from 1st January 2011 which has led to 17-30% hike in the wages under the premier flagship

program of the UPA Government. The wage rates enhancement has been linked to Consumer Price Index for the agricultural labour calculated on the basis of Rs. 100 or the actual wage rate, whichever is higher as on April 1st, 2009. The move is likely to benefit more than 5 crore beneficiaries under MGNREGA across the country. The new wages under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA come into effect from January 1, 2011 and are higher than the prevailing wage rates under MGNREGA at present in many states.

Over 68 lakh works have been taken up in 2010-11 under MGNREGA. Water Conservation, irrigation and land development account for over 75% of work taken up in 2010-11. Experience shows that the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable groups have sought employment under the program. Focus now is on transparency and accountability with social audits, Biometric enabled-ICT based MGNREGA process for safeguarding the worker's rights, enhanced productivity and sustainable development. These efforts along with the strengthening of Gram Panchayats and empowering the workers would go a long way towards ensuring that the benefits of development reach out to the needy and poor in the rural areas across the country.

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=69489>

Activist Sandeep Pandey returns NREGS award in protest

NDTV Correspondent/ February 02, 2011

New Delhi: Magsaysay award winner and activist Sandeep Pandey has decided to return the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) achievement award along with the cash award of Rs. 44,000 that was presented to him in February 2009.

In a letter to Rural Development Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh, he said that he is returning the award as no action has been taken yet in a 2009 incident in which dalit workers were beaten by the husband of a former

Initiative towards Energizing MGNREGA.

Panchayat leader in the presence of police when the workers had come to inspect the NREGS documents related to their wages.

The main grievances of the dalit workers were that they had been paid less than what was due to them. However, they were beaten up mercilessly by a Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) office-bearer.

Incidentally, the activist is returning the award on a day when Congress is celebrating 5 years of NREGA.

<http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/activist-sandeep-pandey-returns-nregs-award-in-protest-82872>

Tiruvannamalai to get NREGS award

R Satyanarayana/ February 02, 2011

Chennai: Tiruvannamalai district has been selected for a national award for successfully implementing the the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS). Tiruvannamalai is among the 10 top districts in the country that have successfully implemented the scheme which is being implemented in the district since 2006. District collector M Rajendran will receive the award in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Other districts are Churachandpur in Manipur, North Sikkim district in Sikkim, Dharwad in Karnataka, Kandhamal in Orissa, Sant Ravidas Nagar in Uttar Pradesh, Rajkot in Gujarat, Jalpaiguri in West Bengal and Anupur in Madhya Pradesh. In 2009-10, Rs 113.13 crore was disbursed as wages under MNREGS in Tiruvannamalai district. "During the current financial year, till December end, we have spent Rs 128 crore," said Tiruvannamalai project officer.

As per government norms, each employee, under the scheme, is paid Rs 100 per day as wages. "So far, 4,16,590 households have been issued job cards in the district and 5,74,936 individuals from 3.03 lakh families were provided jobs this year," said the official.

In 2009-10, as many as 3,685 works were completed in 860 locations in 18 blocks in the district. "I am working under the scheme for the past one year and currently I am engaged in road linking work. Government can double the current system of providing hundred days of work. Under this scheme, the government should also provide basic facilities such as drinking water and shelter at the work place," 40-year old Parvathi of Thatchur village in the district said.

P Subramaniam, working since the inception of the project, said the officials implementing MGNREGS pay the wages on time, which largely benefits him and his family. Thatchur president B Kuppusamy said in 2009-10, Rs 60 lakh was disbursed as wages.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/Tiruvannamalai-to-get-NREGS-award/articleshow/7408575.cms>

Rural job plan turns 5, but wages need to grow more

Prasad Nichenametla/ February 02, 2011

New Delhi: The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, UPA's flagship aam admi scheme, turns five on Wednesday. However, more than 30% of the rural India working under the right-to-work act would continue to receive wages below the guaranteed minimum as per the minimum wages act. On January 14, the ministry of rural development issued a notification revising the wage rates under the MNREGA from Rs 100 per day to between Rs 117 and Rs 181 (17-30 % hike) in different states.

The revision under Section 6(1) of the 2005 Act, coming in wake of inflationary pressures on the poor, adjusts the wages by indexing it to the Consumer Price Index of Agricultural Laborers (CPIAL).

Court cases aside, the question of how much the rural poor should be entitled to under MNREGA led to a standoff between the PM and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi in late 2010. While Gandhi, who also chairs the NAC, advocated NREGA wage linkage with statutory

minimum wages, the government, under Manmohan Singh, preferred the CPIAL calculation.

Though the ministry claims the revision takes NREGA wages above the minimum wages in 26 states and Union Territories, analysis by HT - going by present trend of demand and employment provided in the states - shows the other eight states that continue getting less than minimum wages constitute 1.3 crore households or 31% of the total 4.1 crore households provided work till now this fiscal (latest as per NREGA website). The percentage also reflects demand from these states.

The eight include smaller states such as Goa and Mizoram, which have fewer numbers of workers under the scheme.

But, the states also include the two showpieces under MNREGA — Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan — that brought in reforms like social audit, post office-bank payments into the mother of all schemes with a budget allocation of Rs 40,100 in 2010-11.

While minimum agricultural wage rate is R135 and R125 in Rajasthan and AP, the revised NREGA wage in these States is only Rs 119 and Rs 121.

Though numerous villages like Saru in Udaipur district of Rajasthan, have benefited from MNREGA, the average they receive is under R100 a day forcing ones like Govind Meena (30) go in search of work as far as Ahmedabad, Surat where he gets Rs 200 to Rs 250 per day. "NREGA is only for 100 days at the most and pays much less than what I earn there," he says.

Kerala, Karnataka, Punjab, Goa, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram are the other states where the new NREGA wages are lesser than prevailing minimum agricultural wages under the Minimum Wages Act 1948.

Civil society groups and jurists have lambasted the government move as a violation of legal and fundamental provisions. Additional solicitor general representing the government Indira Jaising submitted before the Supreme Court that payment of wages below

minimum wage would amount to forced labor. The AP high court earlier stayed the notification of wage rate of Rs 100.

“We operated within the provisions of the MGNREG Act which permits us to fix wages irrespective of what other laws say,” a ministry official said, adding the expenditure is more under the present head.

“Instead of arbitrary calculations connecting the questionable base rate of Rs 100, why not link NREGA wages to statutory minimum wages as fixed by the states according to local needs?” says Nikhil Dey of Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan.

According to MKSS, linking with minimum wage act only costs the Centre an additional Rs 1254 crore.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/Rural-job-plan-turns-5-but-wages-need-to-grow-more/Article1-657378.aspx>

Govt plans to create biometric data base of MNREGA workers

PTI/ February 02, 2011

New Delhi: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today said the government proposes to create a biometric database of all workers covered under its flagship MNREGA scheme and use it to authenticate work applications, work-site attendance and wage payments.

Making the announcement at a function held here to mark five years of the launch of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), Singh said, "We hope it will substantially reduce instances of discrimination in work allocation, delayed payments and bogus muster rolls.

The Prime Minister also expressed concern over problems in implementation of MNREGA in Naxal-affected areas. He announced that the government will establish a technical unit, comprising a panchayat development officer and a junior engineer, in each gram panchayat.

"Priority is being given to Left-wing extremism affected districts, and districts where the annual MNREGA expenditure is above Rs 100 crore," Singh said. He also took note of reports of harassment and intimidation of social auditors.

"Authorities should take strict action in such cases. Comprehensive rules to strengthen the social audit process by the gram sabha are being formulated," Singh said.

The Prime Minister maintained that MNREGA had generated 880 crore person days of work since its inception. "52 per cent of the work has been done by those belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and 47 per cent by women," he said.

Singh also noted that wages under MNREGA were now being disbursed through more than 10 crore bank and post office accounts.

<http://news.oneindia.in/2011/02/02/govtplans-to-create-biometric-data-base-of-mnregaworkers-aid0126.html>

Caught in controversies, MGNREGA completes five yrs

TNN/ February 02, 2011

Jaipur: Five years after it came into being, hundreds of NGOs and activists would come together to recount the success and failure of MGNREGA at Udyog Maidan near Statue Circle on Wednesday.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act had come into effect on February 2, 2006.

According to Nikhil Dey of the Suchna Evum Rozgar Ka Adhikar Abhiyan, "These five years have seen not just many people getting employment but also citizens taking on governments on several issues where the Act was not adhered to."

"But, still the fight is on over a number of issues. Besides, the issue of NREGA wages meeting the provisions of the Minimum Wages Act, factors like

transparency, social audit and accountability have to be accounted for," he added.

The gathering would discuss success stories along with those where despite efforts a lot remains to be done. Later, a rally would be taken out from the premises.

In Rajasthan, MGNREGA has been mired in controversies. First was the historic social audit carried out by the Abhiyan in Bhilwara that opened a can of worms, followed by numerous scams that were unearthed periodically even as special teams from the government started auditing accounts.

NGOs and activists staged a 43-day agitation in Jaipur to demand a redressal of several issues that had been plaguing the Act. While many issues were immediately addressed, some are still awaiting a solution.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/Caught-in-controversies-MGNREGA-completes-five-years/articleshow/7407535.cms>

PM awards Churachandpur for MGNREGA feat

The Sangai Express/ February 02, 2011

Lamka: The State's largest district, Churachandpur today scripted a historic feat as it received the coveted award for initiative in MGNREGA administration during the MGNREGA Sammelan held at Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi.

Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi presented the award to the DPC MGNREGA Churachandpur district Jacintha Lazarus alongside nine other districts selected from throughout the country for giving the best performances in the year 2009-10. Churachandpur, which topped the Ministry of Rural Development (MGNREGA division) list made the cut under the category, community participation and participation for livelihood generation. Jacintha credited the district job card holders for the rare achievement Churachandpur attained at the National level.

Initiative towards Energizing MGNREGA.

'I dedicate the award to all the Job Card holders back there (Churachandpur district),' she told The Sangai Express from New Delhi.

A group of the District MGNREGA team comprising of BDO Lamka, Mannuamching; AE DRDA Lhunpu Haokip, three POs, an SO, a village chief and a job card holder accompanied the DPC to New Delhi for the presentation at MGNREGA Sammelan that was inaugurated by Union Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Vilasrao Deshmukh early today.



The Churachandpur district delegation led by Deputy Commissioner Jacintha Lazarus at the MGNREGA Sammelan

The DRDA Churachandpur district initiative in planting sapling along the town's catchment area under MGNREGA was the main emphasis when the district made its nomination for the award sometime last year, and it is on this basis that the Ministry of Rural Development selected the district after duly assessing the district's all-round performance and its ability in delivering the results as per the demand, said a DRDA official from New Delhi.

DD News, the Government news portal, telecast the function as MGNREGA completed five years, allowing many residents here to watch the district's historic moment as it unfolded.

<http://e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=1..030211.feb11>

NREGS Benefits 61L Homes

Rural Development Minister opines that the introduction of biometric cards will help reduce corruption, and reveals that NREGS has been successful in AP.

INN/ February 02, 2011

Hyderabad: The state government on Wednesday cheered the introduction of biometric identity cards for labourers. The district collectors were given the power to punish corrupt officers who are found guilty of resorting to malpractices in the implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

Adopting a stern attitude, Rural Development Minister Dokka Manikya Varaprasad Rao told media persons at the Secretariat on Wednesday that officials resorting to fraud or irregularities in the implementation of welfare schemes and remittances to the workers would not be spared. "Those found guilty will be punished," he asserted.

Varaprasad Rao revealed that a decision to this effect has been taken, and that district collectors would be ordered to punish the corrupt officers.

He stated that ground level authorities were coming in the way of distribution of assets/wages to the labourers. "For this reason the government has introduced the usage of biometric identity by labourers while claiming their due. This is being done in order to do away with malpractices by the officials concerned at the grass-root level," he said.

Varaprasad Rao disclosed that to lay a road of 1km costing roughly Rs. 1,000, material and labour cost was around 60%, while the remaining was swallowed by contractors. This, he said, resulted in poor quality roads. Similarly the poor farmer suffered not because of poor MSP or less remunerative price for his produce; 20% of the losses incurred by farmers was due to spurious seeds, 40% due to floods, 20% due to irregularities by officials concerned 20 and 7% due to labourers.

The farmers are unable to cope up with the existing onslaught by the nature's fury coupled with large-scale malpractices, the minister opined.

To stem the simmering discontent and to stem the corrupt officials' advances, a central law was very much required, he opined.

The Parliament must enact a law to ensure the punishment of corrupt officials, and to benefit the farmers, Varaprasad Rao stated.

The minister exhorted the need of a law to ensure the fool-proof implementation of programs, and to protect the interests of poor farmers.

The minister revealed data to support the government's claim that Andhra Pradesh ranked 1st in the implementation the NREGS, with 61 lakh house-holds being provided with work and 32 crore man-days generated with a release of Rs. 8,000 crore including the central share, apart from an expenditure of Rs. 4,899 crore.

Another unique feature is the social audit whose teams monitor the program effectively. So far, Rs. 98 crore was objected by the social audit and Rs. 21 crore recovered, 7,790 officials have been dismissed, 424 suspended, 553 cases booked and 2,586 departmental enquiries initiated.

<http://www.fullhyderabad.com/hyderabad-news/adarsh-cards-to-help-curb-corruption-nregs-successful-in-ap-3492>

NREGA: Rajasthan slips in spending

TNN/ February 03, 2011

Jaipur: From being one of the top spenders in the country for the implementation of the MGNREGA two years ago, Rajasthan is fast sliding down the ladder. The state, this year, will be returning over half of the Rs 8,000 crore it had received from the Centre for its implementation.

The revelation came at a job fair organised by the Suchna Evum Rozgar ka Adhikar Abhiyan and several

other NGOs from across the state to mark the fifth year of the implementation of the NREGA in the country on Wednesday. Hundreds of workers across the state took part in the fair for a detailed discussion on the implementation of the scheme.

"It is really a matter of concern that from being a top spender in the country, this year Rajasthan has been able to use only 30 % of its budget. The figure is less than half the sum used last year," said social activist Aruna Roy, also a member of the National Advisory Council (NAC).

Compared to Rs 5,669.03 crore spent in 2009-10 under the scheme, 2010-11 saw the state spending Rs 2,541.22 crore till January 31.

State government officials said the poor spending by the state has been due to the heavy rains this year and reluctance of workers to take up MGNREGA jobs but activists felt otherwise.

"Why would any one want to take up work under MGNREGA when the wages are so low? At a time when the entire state has been agog with cries of increasing the wages of MGNREGA workers, the average wage paid per worker was Rs 75 last year. The figures for 2008-09 and 2009-10 stood at Rs 88.32 and 87.38 respectively," said Nikhil Dey, another activist with the Abhiyan.

"Last year also saw a massive drive against corruption in MGNREGA in the state and for about two months most sarpanchs and even the secretaries had stopped work. This also added to the reduced expenditure. Finally, the massive drive on transparency and orders by the government to ensure wall paintings are done in every gram panchayat saw the sarpanchs take less interest in getting the work done under the MGNREGA," he added.

Dey's remarks were substantiated by one Ram Singh of Jawaja panchayat in Ajmer who revealed that no work

had been sanctioned in his panchayat. "I fought for three months, before I was given work," he said.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/NREGA-Rajasthan-slips-in-spending-/articleshow/7414924.cms>

Poor work habits hit roads

- Piece rate system fetches results in rural schemes

Smita Bhattacharyya/ February 07, 2011

Jorhat: The Project Director of the District Rural Development Authority (DRDA), Sanjiv Puzari, has blamed poor work culture and lack of responsibility among villagers for the poor implementation of schemes under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in the area.

To get work completed in the district, the project director has introduced the piece rate system, under which workers will have to complete a given portion of work before getting their wages.

Explaining how work remains incomplete most of the time, Puzari said if a road-laying scheme is taken up for Rs 5 lakh, under NREGA guidelines, 60 per cent of the amount should go to unskilled labours as wages and 40 per cent as wages to skilled and semi-skilled workers and as cost of material.

"It is often seen that the unskilled labourers who take the major chunk of the money begin work at noon instead of 8am and manage to throw in only four to five shovels of mud at the site in the whole day. They ask for wages at 4pm as if it is their due instead of something they should work for," Puzari said.

He hinted that outside interference was responsible for the development of this kind of attitude among the NREGA job-card holders.

He said junior engineers in-charge of the rural schemes often faced problems from the workers "who demanded the money as if it was a right given by the government even if they did a paltry amount of work the entire day."

“In the process, 60 per cent of the total scheme amount gets used up as wages for unskilled labourers although only 80 per cent of 1km stretch of a road is laid,” Puzari, who took charge here about nine months ago, said.

He criticised organisations and newspapers that reported only half-truths about why the work remained unfinished, not taking into account the ground reality.

Puzari said the villagers did not realise that they were building an asset for themselves and they should do the work with responsibility and to the best of their ability, as “money once given for a scheme will never be given again.”

The piece rate system that started from January this year has proved to be effective. Under it, the unskilled workers are given the daily wage of Rs 130 (enhance from Rs 100 since January 1, 2011) only after they finish a fixed amount of work.

Another hindrance for poor work quality is the rule that no machinery can be used. As a result, while laying a road without bulldozer, the soil and gravel sometimes sink after the rain and damage the road.

“On such occasions also, the finger is pointed at us for using less material or other such allegations,” he said.

To get rid of such a situation, many roads are now being brick-laid like the olden days. The bricks are laid vertically and not flat so that they do not break easily.

http://www.telegraphindia.com/1110208/jsp/northeast/story_13547613.jsp

Budget 2011: NREGA outlay likely to stay flat this year

Deepshikha Sikarwar/ February 10, 2011

New Delhi: The forthcoming budget is unlikely to propose a steep hike in allocation of funds for the government's flagship rural welfare scheme despite a sharp increase in the wage rates under it.

The finance ministry is likely to allocate only 42,000-45,000 crore for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), a government official told ET.

The scheme will have an opening balance of about 10,000 crore, the official said. This precludes the need for higher allocation in the next fiscal. The 2010-11 budget had provided 40,100 crore for MGNREGA, making it the highest allocation for any single social welfare scheme. The minimum wages under the MGNREGA have risen between 17% and 30% after they were linked to inflation from January this year. In the current year itself, the higher wages will require an additional expenditure of 3,500 crore.

But the government is not in a position to raise allocation because of higher demand from other schemes and a possible sharp escalation in subsidies because of a rally in commodity prices.

The Food Security Act will require a much higher food subsidy allocation than the near 55,000 crore budgeted this year. Besides, despite the increase in wages, MGNREGA finances appear comfortable.

By the end of December, only 20,854 crore had been spent under the scheme. This means it has balance of nearly 17,000 crore for the remaining three months of the fiscal year.

The lower than budgeted spend shows that demand for the scheme is not as high as was expected. But there is a possibility that the higher wages under the scheme may increase the demand for jobs if the market wage rate for unskilled manual work is lower in the rural areas.

In some of the states, the wages under the scheme will rise to over 170 day after they are indexed to inflation. But since MGNREGA is a demand driven scheme, the government will have to provide more funds if the allocation fails to meet the demand.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/budget-2011-nrega-outlay-likely-to-stay-flat-this-year/articleshow/7464732.cms>

Works unfinished, Centre orders trail of NREGS funds

Ravish Tiwari / February 10 2011

New Delhi: Five years and Rs 75,000 crore later, the Centre has asked states to start a physical trail of expenses incurred under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS).

The move comes after the government found out that less than 5 per cent of the total 68.6 lakh works taken up to provide jobs to rural unemployed has been completed to date in the current fiscal.

Even cumulatively, since its inception in 2006, over 50 per cent of the works undertaken under NREGS has not been completed to date.

The low completion rate is alarming given that government records claim that around 880 crore man days of employment have been generated under the scheme till now.

According to Rural Development Ministry statistics, only 3.18 lakh works have been completed till December — around 4.6 per cent.

The Central government issued a stern directive to all state governments late last month, laying down five broad principles to ensure “strict compliance” regarding completion of works.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/Works-unfinished--Centre-orders-trail-of-NREGS-funds/748281/>

Complaints galore on unpaid wages of NREGS

The Sangai Express/ February 10, 2011

Imphal: In spite of its launch being solely aimed at upliftment of the poorer section of the society through provision of work, execution of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) here in the

Initiative towards Energizing MGNREGA.

State is unarguably far from being noble as a number of cases regarding unpaid wages had been reported to the Commission set up specifically to address irregularities. According to an informed source, number of case filed received so far by the Commission for redressal on unpaid wages is 634 out of which 585 cases have been disposed.

While most of the complaints were resolved amicably, in case of one particular case disciplinary action leading to termination from service was recommended by the Commission.

Majority of the workers engaged in NREGS related activities are said to be females with the Deputy Commissioner concerned assigned to monitor the scheme implementation at the district level and the same responsibility entrusted to the Pradhan at the local level.

Introduced by the UPA Government in 2006, NREGS envision provision of 100 working days in the year with the daily wage fixed at Rs 83. In Manipur, NREGS activities cover drainage works, dredging ponds, village road development and repairing, roadside jungle clearance etc, said the source adding that most of the complaints reported to the Commission concerns non-payment of wages even after execution of assigned tasks.

It is informed that out of 192 cases reported in 2009, 92 of them were against the department of Rural Development in 2010 44 cases were against the same department out of the total of 184. Invoking provisions of the Right to information Act 2005, NREGS job card holders as well as others sought information as to why the wages had not been paid or on various other related issues such as number of schemes initiated in a specific area and benefits supposed to be extended to the workers and their family.

The source further revealed that in case 30 days period given to heads of Department concerned to reply on the

complaint(s) do not evoke positive response, State Public information Officer has the right to approach legal experts for penalising guilty officials upto Rs 25,000. While expressing hope that more citizens will seek information to not only know benefits being provided through various welfare programmes but to drag corrupt officials to the Court, the source also revealed that maximum number of complaints was received in 2009 with the number touching 192 out of 189 cases were disposed.

Least number of complaints at 25 was received when the noble Scheme was launched in 2009.

<http://www.e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=7..110211.feb11>

NREGS workers set to get government health insurance cover

Surabhi / February 11, 2011

New Delhi: In a significant expansion of its health insurance scheme for the poor, the government has decided to bring workers under its flagship job guarantee programme as well as a host of workers from the unorganised sector, including rickshaw pullers and domestic workers.

The labour ministry has decided to include workers who have worked under the National Rural Employment Guarantee programme for a minimum of 15 days under the ambit of the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY).

The RSBY is another flagship scheme of the government which provides cashless health insurance cover to below poverty line families in the unorganised sector.

The scheme is extended to five members of the family, which includes the head of the household, spouse and up to three dependents, who are each given cash coverage up to Rs 30,000 for most diseases that require hospitalisation.

While finance minister Pranab Mukherjee had announced this as part of Budget 2010-11, the labour ministry will implement it from the fiscal starting April 1 this year.

“All those who worked under the NREGA for a period of 15 days in 2010-11, will be beneficiaries of our health insurance scheme starting 2011-12,” said a senior labour ministry official.

Further, the RSBY will make an exception and even cover those who are above the poverty line but have worked for the rural employment scheme.

Apart from this, the health insurance scheme will now also cover auto rickshaw drivers, rickshaw pullers, Anganwadi workers, domestic workers, toddy tappers and rag pickers as well. “We expect another three to four crore workers to come under the scheme’s ambit now,” the official said.

The labour ministry had last year extended the scheme to include railway porters, street vendors and postmen. Till October 15, 2010, 27 states are in the process of implementation of the scheme. The scheme has been operationalised in 24 states and more than 1.95 crore smart cards have been issued covering more than seven crore persons.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/nregs-workers-set-to-get-govt-health-insurance-cover/748602/2>

Orissa Cong panel alleges corruption in Central schemes in Nabarangpur district

Basant Rath/ February 11, 2011

Nabarangpur: To keep a check on the implementation of various Centrally-sponsored schemes, a meeting of the District Vigilance Monitoring Committee of the Congress was held under the chairmanship of local Congress MP Pradeep Majhi on Wednesday.

District Collector Sibabrata Dash, PD, DRDA, Dhruva Charana Panchbhaya, Executive Engineers of RD, RWSS, SOUTHCO, AEs of PWD, MI and LI and other

district officers, besides members of the committee were present.

Detailed discussions on the various Centrally-sponsored schemes like the NREGA, IAY, Mo Kudia, SGSY, RGGVY and PMGSY, works of PWD, IAY and Old Age Pension were held.

Committee members alleged that large-scale corruption and irregularities in the implementation of the programme under NREGA at Jharigam.

They also complained that massive corruptions were found in repair of office room, staff quarters, construction and improvement of roads. The people who have job cards are not being provided work. The members also raised the issue of fake job cards. The members also pointed out that there are cases of delay in payments under the NREGA.

Nabarangpur MLA Monahar Randhari and Umerkote MLA Jagabandhu Majhi and Prmod Padhy, representative of IT Minister Ramesh Majhi, alleged that only at the instance of the MP this meeting was held. They also alleged that non-members of the committee are going to blocks and asking questions to the officials.

They threatened to form a BJD committee. The Collector assured the MLAs to sort out the issue, the BJD MLAs left the meeting. MP Majhi said, "While the Central Governments have launched several schemes for welfare of economically weaker sections of the society, we have to ensure that the deserving people get the benefits from the schemes. The District Vigilance Monitoring Committees have been set up with the purpose to see whether the schemes are running successfully and deserving people are getting the benefits." The MP sought the details of the schemes so that they can be monitored.

<http://www.orissadiary.com/ShowDistrictNews.asp?id=24552>

Probe confirms anomalies under MGNREGS in Sonbhadra

Swati Mathur/ February 15, 2011,

Lucknow: Results of an investigation report filed by senior government of India officials have confirmed large scale anomalies in the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in Sonbhadra district of Uttar Pradesh. The investigation was conducted in the first week of January, in response to a series of complaints filed by Sanjay Dixit, member, Central Employment Guarantee Council, in August, 2010, that pointed to widespread misuse of MGNREGS funds, poor quality of construction work, as well as non-payment of dues to labourers.

Following the complaint, and to "ascertain the facts", the Ministry of Rural Development, in a letter dated October 28, 2010, constituted a 2-member team comprising G N Sharma, consultant (works) and N K Yadava, to conduct an inquiry into the allegations. The report, a copy of which is with TOI, in its concluding chapters, said: "The allegation made by the complainant that there is wrong selection of sites for construction of check dam, check damns are damaged because of poor quality of construction and use of substandard material, excessive expenditure...no proper utilisation of assets created, and non-payment of dues to the labourers have been found correct."

A detailed report of the anomalies, a copy of which was dispatched to Union rural development minister C P Joshi in August, 2010, showed irregular fund transactions in MGNREGS, running into several lakhs. When contacted, Dixit alleged: "District Sonbhadra saw the maximum NREGS payout in the last financial year. When a survey was conducted, however, much of the data was found to have been fudged. Large sums of money were also siphoned off."

In instances of anomalies noted, existing ponds were re-dug, muster rolls saw repeats of existing thumb prints, and panchayat level development officers even failed to certify the data. In addition, while check dams in various stages were in disrepair in most cases, NREGS norms were also flouted openly by using a tractor to carry out digging operations, where manual labour was needed for constructing a pond.

When contacted, DM Sonbhadra, Pandhari Yadav and assistant director rural development, UP, Anurag Yadav were unavailable for comment on Monday.

Following the complaints though, Sonbhadra district magistrate Pandhari Yadav had acknowledged that complaints had been voiced about faulty implementation of MNREGS and orders for recovery were issued against erring officials.

Interestingly, this is not the first instance when irregularities have been noticed in the implementation of MNREGS in UP. Instances were also reported in at least seven other districts, with the Centre suggesting calling in Clause 27 (2) of NREGS as a punitive measure, where the Central Government, on finding prima facie evidence of improper utilisation of funds may order stoppage of release of funds to the scheme and institute appropriate remedial measures for its proper implementation.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/lucknow/Probe-confirms-anomalies-under-MGNREGS-in-Sonbhadra/articleshow/7498109.cms>

NREGS is world's largest financial inclusion scheme

Garima Pant/ Feb 04, 2011

Working on a job site under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Sakuna Bai is eagerly awaiting her next work payment to reach her State Bank of India account. "I have to deposit my daughter's school fees," says the 30-year-old mother of three from Agrakhurd village, in Bagli Block of Dewas district in Madhya Pradesh. The bank account has been opened under NREGS and since 2008, when wages started getting directly transferred to workers' bank account, Sakuna Bai understood the importance of savings. "When we were paid in cash, there was hardly any money to spare. Borrowing money from moneylenders was always risky," she says. But for the past three years, life has become a little better for the family of seven, with both Sakuna and her husband getting work under NREGS.

While NREGS gave workers like Sakuna Bai a guaranteed 100 working days, it also introduced her to the world of banking. "I was initially hesitant to go to a bank. I had no idea about the working procedure," she adds. But gradual training by a local organisation, Samaj Pragati Sahyog (SPS), and the friendly attitude of the bank gave her confidence. Now she operates her husband's account too. "My husband has never set foot in the bank, except once while the account was being created. It's me who operates both accounts," says a proud Sakuna Bai.

Sakuna is just one face of the world's 'biggest financial inclusion programme', which NREGS has unintentionally become, with over 10 crore saving accounts opened in both banks and post offices.

In Bagli Block, as per MIS data, there are 47,166 job card holders, of which 32% or 15,236 have bank accounts, says Pramathesh Ambasta, founding member, Samaj Pragati Sahyog (SPS). SPS is an NGO working in Dewas, which also set up the National Consortium of

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) for NREGS in 2007. It has nine panchayats under its helm, where its working under a pilot project of the Madhya Pradesh government to enable better working of the NREGS.

"As per our records, there are 2,404 job card holders in the nine panchayats we are working in. Of these, 79% have bank accounts. The balances have not got an account opened because they are not in need of work and have never even reported for work. For such workers, even if bank accounts are opened, they become dormant or inoperative as there are no transactions," says Ambasta. While a number of states have employed models like banking correspondents, it's the banks that are directly involved when it comes to spreading the net of financial inclusion. State Bank of India and Bank of India are two of the major banks operating in Bagli region. "There has been an increase of 20-25% in the number of savings accounts since the time wages have started being transferred to the bank accounts under NREGS. Of the 9,000 savings accounts at present in the bank, 2,000 belong to NREGS account holders," says Milind Uikey, bank manager, State Bank of India, Punjapura. Uikey points out to the helping hand organisations like SPS have provided to ease their burden. "They become our connect points with villagers at the ground level, helping with photographs and other relevant documents," he adds. Bhuribai from Imlipura got help from one such organisation to open her bank account and is happy that finally she can get the full value of her work. "Earlier, when we were given cash payments, some amount or the other would not be given. Either there was no change available or I wasn't even aware as to how much I was supposed to get. Now I know that whatever work I do, the entire money goes into my bank account. It does get delayed occasionally; but otherwise, it works well," says the 25-year-old mother of four. Her only grouse: that she didn't have to spend hours to reach the bank. There are other hiccups

too, especially regarding paper work. These problems were more acute in the initial six-eight months (in 2008 after payment of wages through banks was made compulsory), and though these formalities still exist, things are streamlined now, says a district official. There are also delays in payments, but such issues haven't subdued the morale of the villagers. "I have a job and a bank account where I get my money in. If nothing works, I can go back to my fields which have also benefited from the various structures, like ponds that we had created under the NREGS" says Ayub Khan, a resident of Pandutalab. More power to the people!

<http://www.financialexpress.com/news/nregs-is-worlds-largest-financial-inclusion-scheme/745890/0>

Sreelatha Menon: Experimenting with the right to work

While Jalpaiguri used the job scheme to revive tea gardens, Sikkim used it to decentralise administration

Sreelatha Menon / February 06, 2011

New Delhi: The law providing 100 days of wage employment has been heard more for its abuse than its benefits in the five years of its existence. However, we take a look at some positive examples of district authorities experimenting with the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). Except in the case of Sikkim, the examples show the law being implemented entirely by the district authorities rather than the local Panchayat. In most cases, the collectors used the law to achieve goals outside the scheme's mandate.

A district collector in Jalpaiguri in West Bengal used it to revive 10 closed tea gardens there. The district was the second-largest tea producing area in the country, but adversity struck after ownership patterns changed. Individual owners started replacing big companies, which led to the closure of several gardens. Workers in

these gardens had been living in poverty for a decade and the government decided to give these gardens to companies on lease. The condition was that they would get possession on lease once they made it viable. Workers on the rolls had to be accommodated but there were far too many of them. The managements said the workforce had to be reduced. The collector then decided to use NREGS to subsidise labour. A worker has to get 280 days of work in a year. The management agreed to accommodate all the workers but would pay them for 189 days while the administration agreed to pay them for the remaining 100 days using NREGA wages.

The work started in September 2009 and within a year, 10 gardens were ready. About 81,000 workers, who had been living in poverty, got jobs in their own environment. Now, the management is busy setting up factories to start tea production, says Vandana Yadav, the district collector in Jalpaiguri.

Yadav says the same formula would be used to revive the remaining two closed gardens. She says the departure of big companies from the area a decade ago had caused the closure of several gardens, leading to dire poverty and deprivation.

The collector of Sant Ravidas Nagar at Badohi in Uttar Pradesh carried out a different experiment. The district has been a carpet industry hub. As many as 35,000 families were working in the carpet industry in Sant Ravidas Nagar. They were exploited and underpaid, because of which there was much distress migration.

NREGS made its entry and the district administration decided to use it as a tool to stop migration. It used propaganda and awareness campaigns – something that is seldom done in most districts – and targeted Dalits and the Musahhar community there.

The result was 14,365 families abandoned the carpet industry and opted for digging canals and roads under NREGS.

Now, is that good or bad? District collector Surendra justifies this, saying NREGS has given competition to the carpet industry which has been forced to raise wages.

A shining example of bureaucratic imagination can be found in Anupur in Madhya Pradesh, where the collector Kavindra Kaiwat tied up with the district cooperative bank and transferred all the NREGS accounts to it. The bank then provided mobile payment of wages at the workers' doorstep on designated days and within a fortnight of their work. An amount of Rs 54 crore has been disbursed as wages this financial year.

The example is now being adopted by the entire state.

Sikkim, however, took this up as a nation-building activity and to make decentralisation a reality. It devolved 100 per cent of the scheme to the Panchayats. People were assisted in doing their own planning and social audit. NGOs were brought to train people in social audit. Block-level offices were formed to implement the programme to provide accounts and technical support.

Where there is a will there is certainly a way. And in Sikkim, the way points towards decentralisation.

<http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/sreelatha-menon-experimentingthe-right-to-work/424179/>

Employment guarantee council rejig sidelines Dreze and Roy

Sreelatha Menon/ February 08, 2011

Politics seems to have got the better of other considerations in the composition of the Central Employment Guarantee Council (CEGC), a statutory body under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, with members Jean Dreze and Aruna Roy (also members of the National Advisory Council) facing removal.

Their offence seems to have been that they have angered the party members in the council with whom they had an open confrontation in one of the last meetings of the CEGC. The new council would have all the old members whose terms have been renewed though Dreze and Roy have been left out.

The new list which is likely to be announced soon has the approval of the party leadership according to sources and was approved by C P Joshi days before his exit as rural development minister.

The two activists have, however, been kept on as special invitees, that is they can be called if the minister so wishes. A member said that their removal was because rules don't allow more than three terms. However the NREGA rules don't restrict the terms of members. It only restricts the term of a council to one year. While Roy's term has been renewed thrice, Dreze has been renominated only twice so far. The CEGC was set up for the first time through a notification in 2007.

The rules, however, say that the 15 nominated members should be representatives of panchayats, village level workers bodies and grass root organisations rather than MPs from ruling party as they are now.

Former Congress MP and CEGC member Madhusudan Mistry had taken on both activists in the August meeting of the council accusing them of regarding themselves as architects of the Act and the council as their fiefdom. The tirade was allowed on the agenda of the council by C P Joshi and it was triggered by a note circulated by the activists saying that a panel full of Congress members inspired no confidence.

NREGA Section 10(3) (d) says that the Central Employment Guarantee Council shall include "not more than fifteen non-official members representing Panchayati Raj Institutions, organisations or workers and disadvantaged groups." This is blatantly violated in the existing council which is being renewed as it is except for two members.

The NREGA (Central Council) Rules says "12 members to be nominated by the central government from panchayati raj institutions, organisations of workers and disadvantaged groups". Two of them have to be chairpersons of district panchayats.

A look at the actual list of fifteen non-official members shows a different reality. It has Charan Das Mahant, MP (Congress), Bhakta Charan Das, MP (Congress), Nirmal Khatri, MP (Congress), Narayan Singh Amlabe, MP (Congress), M I Shanavas, MP (Congress), Raneer Narah, MP (Congress), Pradeep Kumar Majhi, MP (Congress), R Dhruvanarayana, MP (Congress), Ramesh Pandurang Gawande, MP/MLA (Congress), Madhusudan Mistry, former MP (Congress), Sanjay Dixit, MP (Congress), Renuka Chowdhury, MP (Congress), Sabina Yeasmin, Zila Parishad, and Ratan Ben Yadav, Zila Parishad.

The council is supposed to monitor the scheme and present annual reports in parliament. But this has not happened. In fact most recommendations of the council have been ignored in the past. Last year working groups were formed under the council, two of them under Dreze and Roy and these made recommendations on NREGA wages and transparency. Most of these have remained on paper.

The Ministry officials said that the council was being reconstituted but did not confirm reports of the ouster of the two NAC members by Joshi.

Nikhil De, activist and colleague of Aruna Roy, said no one has heard from the CEGC for a long time. "If either Dreze or Roy have been removed then they should have been informed", he said. He added that it was possible as the former rural development minister had reason to be upset with the duo. Dreze refused to comment on the matter.

<http://www.sify.com/finance/employment-guarantee-council-rejig-sidelines-dreze-and-roy-news-news-lcibEJgbjfi.html>

No. H-11014/6/2010-MGNREGA
Government of India
M/O Rural Development
(Mahatma Gandhi NREGA Division)

Dated, the 7th February, 2011

To,
Principal Secretary/Secretary (RD)
All States/UTs

Subject: Launching an afforestation drive along National Highways in the country to increase the green cover.

Sir/Madam,

Suggestions have been received by the Government to take action for plantation of trees on a large scale on the sides of National Highways through out the country. The issue has also been raised by Members of Parliament during debates in the Lok Sabha. As India has vast tracts of land along the National Highways throughout the country, this land can be utilized for planting trees of varying utility including minor economic uses, minor forest produces as well as for providing shelter against the scorching heat during the summer season. Afforestation and reafforestation can also be used to improve the quality of human life by soaking up pollution and dust from the air, re-building natural habitats and ecosystem, mitigate global warming and more particularly to get rain.

Afforestation and tree plantation is a permissible activity under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA. Operational Guidelines for MGNREGA provide for convergence of other rural development programmes with MGNREGA within the parameters of the Act. Guidelines for convergence of rural development programmes of Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoE&F) with MGNREGA have already been issued. These guidelines provide for convergence of MGNREGA activities with similar works under National Afforestation Programmes (NAP) of MoE&F. Reforestation and tree plantation such as Avenue plantation, Shelter belt plantation and road, rail, canal and boundary plantation etc. are permissible activities under NAP. Therefore, the State Governments may consider the suggestion regarding launching an afforestation drive along the National Highways in the country. However, this should mandatorily be within the norms and processes of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.

Yours faithfully,

Sharma
7/2
(Indu Sharma)
Director(MGNREGA)



भारत का राजपत्र

The Gazette of India

असाधारण

EXTRAORDINARY

भाग II—खण्ड 3—उप-खण्ड (ii)
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ग्रामीण विकास मंत्रालय

MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

अधिसूचना

NOTIFICATION

नई दिल्ली, 14 फरवरी, 2011

New Delhi, the 14th February, 2011

का.आ. 372(अ).—केन्द्रीय सरकार, महात्मा गांधी राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण रोजगार गारंटी अधिनियम, 2005 (2005 का 42) की धारा 6 की उप-धारा (1) द्वारा प्रदत्त शक्तियों का प्रयोग करते हुए एतद्वारा भारत के राजपत्र, असाधारण, में प्रकाशित ग्रामीण विकास मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार की अधिसूचना संख्या का.आ. 82(अ), दिनांक 14 जनवरी, 2011 में निम्नलिखित संशोधन करती है, अर्थात् :-

उक्त अधिसूचना में, प्रारंभिक पैराग्राफ में, शब्द, अक्षर और संख्या "1 जनवरी, 2011" के बाद शब्द "या संशोधित मजदूरी दर के वास्तविक भुगतान की तारीख, इनमें से जो भी बाद में हो", अंतर्विष्ट किए जाएंगे।

[फा. सं. जे-11011/1/2009-मनरेगा (भाग)]

अमिता शर्मा, संयुक्त सचिव

टिप्पण : मुख्य अधिसूचना भारत के राजपत्र, असाधारण, भाग-II, खंड-3, उप-खण्ड (ii) में सं. का.आ. 82(अ), दिनांक 14 जनवरी, 2011 के जरिए प्रकाशित की गई थी।

S.O. 372(E).—In exercise of the powers conferred by Sub-section (1) of Section 6 of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (42 of 2005), the Central Government hereby makes the following amendments in the notification of the Government of India in the Ministry of Rural Development, published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary *vide* number S.O. 82(E), dated the 14th January, 2011, namely :—

In the said notification, in the opening paragraph, after the words, letters and figures "1st day of January, 2011", the words "or the date of actual payment of the revised wage rate, whichever is later" shall be inserted.

[F. No. J-11011/1/2009-MGNREGA(Pt.)]

AMITA SHARMA, Jt. Secy.

Note : The principal notification was published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part-II, Section 3, Sub-section (ii) *vide* number S.O. 82(E), dated the 14th January, 2011.

This information bulletin is a part of our initiative towards energizing NREGA. This initiative is supported by Concern World Wide, India.



FOUNDATION FOR ECOLOGICAL SECURITY

The Foundation for Ecological Security works towards the ecological restoration and conservation of land and water resources, in the uplands and other eco-fragile, degraded and marginalized Zones of the country and to set in place the processes of coordinated human effort and governance to this end.