

“Significant Employment and Enterprise Thrust in Rural Areas”**“Significant Employment and Enterprise Thrust in Rural Areas”**

The Department of Rural Development has been making concerted efforts to improve the work availability in rural areas. Besides wage employment opportunities under MGNREGS, it is also promoting skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled wage labour in a very large rural housing programme like PMAY-Gramin and in road construction sector under PMGSY. The Budget of the Department of Rural Development has more than doubled since 2012-13. Adding the State contribution, in all the programmes as also the large transfers under the 14th Finance Commission for rural infrastructure, the total fund available is over 3 times of what it was 5 years ago. 51 lakh houses under construction, nearly 1 lakh kilometers of roads in different stages of construction and large scale wage work available under MGNREGS especially for agriculture and allied activities, have ensured greater opportunities for wage employment.

The Department is also promoting enterprises through a concerted thrust on Bank loan linkage for women Self-Help Groups under Deendayal Antyodaya National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM). Currently, the linkage is of more than Rs. 47,000 crores, which is being used to promote useful enterprises like Custom Hiring Centers, Rural transport, agriculture and allied activities, animal husbandry, horticulture, handloom and handicrafts, retail business etc. The Bank linkage for women Self-Help Groups has also more than doubled over the last 3 years. The placement-based wage employment skill programmes like DDU-GKY and the self-employment programmes through RSETI are also helping households to move up the skilling ladder and in diversifying livelihoods.

MGNREGS being a demand-based programme, over Rs.40,000 crores from Government of India has already been released to States. Adequate funds have been released for drought affected States like Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. On account of drought, States like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and parts of Telangana have also received higher releases in the first quarter. The labour budget of States like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Puducherry have been increased to meet additional demand for wage employment. Timely release of wages is ensured in nearly 85% cases (within 15 days) so far. Follow up with Department of Financial Services and CMDs of Banks and Department of Post has been taken up to ensure that fund released through Banks/Post Offices reach the labourers' account immediately. The Government of India follows the General Financial Rules(GFR) strictly and therefore requires audited accounts of the previous financial year from the State Governments before approving any release after 30th September, 2017. States are complying with the financial provisions of GFR and funds are appropriately being released after due scrutiny. The Government is determined to maintain the fund flow under MGNREGS. To ensure very high timely payments to labourers, additional funds have been asked for to meet the demand.

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