

# CLEAN SWIPE FOR MGNREGS ATTENDANCE APP ONLY IN 8 STATES

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Digital presence: The app can be used offline, with the attendance getting recorded at places where the signal strength is high. RAO GN

Five months after the Union government's order making it mandatory to record attendance of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) workers through a government mobile application, National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS), at work sites where 20 or more people are employed, at least three States — Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Assam — are pushing for making this universal, though a majority of the States still have concerns about it.

September data put out by the Union Rural Development Ministry show only eight States have recorded usage of the app at 90% or more worksites. They are Assam (93.42%), Odisha (92%), Tamil Nadu (93%), Karnataka (92%), Kerala (91.5%), Tripura (91%), Uttarakhand (91%) and Puducherry (99%). In Puducherry, though the usage is high, the number of worksites in September was just 774.

"We have listened to complaints and made several tweaks to make it easier for the end user. One big change is allowing offline use of the app. The mates can record the attendance even if there is no Internet connectivity and it will get uploaded whenever they reach a place which has the necessary signal strength," the official said. The official further added that based on complaints, the app and procedures were constantly evolving.

## Many shortcomings

There are still a host of shortcomings for which the worker ends up paying the penalty. The data from the Ministry reveal that in nine States and Union Territories, the usage of the app is 50% or less. These States are Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Goa, Nagaland, Andaman and Nicobar and Jammu and Kashmir. In case of Goa and Nagaland, the usage is zero.

Andhra Pradesh, which has one of the largest MGNREGS workforce, used the NMMS app for recording attendance in September only in 21.48% of over 92,000 work sites. In August this number was at 9.56%.

In Uttar Pradesh, another State which receives a significant percentage of total MGNREGS national funds, in September, out of 1.3 lakh work sites, only in 50.19% the muster roll was filled via the app. The September numbers are marginally better than August, when it was 48.31%.

In the States which have been reporting high usage too, many workers end up suffering wage losses due to technical glitches. Nikhil Shenoy, divisional secretary, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, Jodhpur, Rajasthan has an illustrative example. Rajasthan has reported 86.75% rate of usage of the app. "We tallied the physical muster rolls with the digital one captured by the NMMS app for 14 gram panchayats in Dungepur district of Rajasthan for the month of September. Our analysis shows that 302 labour days are missing from the attendance records in the app. It is well and good that the government wants to bring in more transparency via the app.

Why should the workers have to pay the penalty. For them loss of wages even for one day could be catastrophic," he said.

Another example is Bihar, where a sharp dip was reported in app usage from 75.15% in August to 54.26% in September.

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