

Eagle eye: Kerala district to monitor NREGS online

Transparency is the name of the game. The names of job seekers, the wages they are paid and many other details of employment under the government's flagship National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) will soon be made available online in a Kerala district.

Wayanad, the district headquarters of which is Kalpetta, will soon become the first district in the state to execute total online monitoring of India's much touted rural jobs scheme.

The NREGS is aimed at generating employment in India's backward regions and proposes to provide 100 workdays for the rural poor in a year.

In Wayanad, one of the two districts in Kerala where the scheme was first introduced, a computerised system to monitor the NREGS is already in place at the block and district levels.

'The online system will be complete when all the village panchyats are ready with a broadband connection,' C.V. Joy, the joint programme coordinator for the NREGS in Wayanad district, told IANS.

Under the NREGS, job seekers should first register their names with the respective village panchayats. Upon registration, they will get an employment card. 'The employment card is just like a ration card. If you want work you have to produce the employment card.'

The online system will be armed with all the information on the NREGS like details of job seekers, the project they are employed in, the amount of wages paid and the funds deployed for a project. All these details can be accessed and monitored through the internet.

'Transparency is the biggest advantage of the system. You can access information from any place. In villages, the data is manually compiled at present. This will change soon,' Joy said.

The online system will also reduce the scope for malpractices. The payments for the NREGS are credited to bank accounts. Computerisation will now allow online generation of payment instruction to the banks.

'The NREGS beneficiaries have around 87,000 bank accounts in the district. The nationalised banks, where the NREGS fund remains, upon receiving the payment instruction through e-mail, will credit the amount to the beneficiary account,' said Joy.

The district generated an average of 48 workdays in the last financial year. 'This year we are confident of generating 100 work days as stipulated in the scheme,' he added.

The software for the system is a product of the National Informatics Centre, a wing under Department of Information Technology providing the network backbone and e-governance support to the central and state governments.

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