

Use rural job scheme to end poverty by 2015: minister

Rural Development Minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh Friday called for using the centre flagship rural job scheme as a tool to eradicate poverty from the country by 2015.

What makes the National Rural Employment Guarantee (NREG) scheme a tool to fight against poverty is its effective and corruption free implementation. Through this scheme, we can eradicate poverty by 2015, said Singh at a national seminar on the rural job scheme held here Friday.

We must devise viable and effective strategies in implementing the scheme with zero tolerance towards corruption and ensure the benefits percolate to the society's targeted groups, he said.

The government April 1 this year extended the scheme to all 604 districts, and over 30 million households were provided with employment in 2007-08.

The seminar intended to strengthen the network of policy makers, researchers, grassroots organisations, academicians, activists and media, and facilitate an intensive, high quality discussion on the issues and insights into the rural job scheme.

The NREG scheme has the potential to change the face of rural India if the stakeholders can ensure transparency, accountability and strict vigilance and monitoring through awareness and the people's participation, he said.

According to him, the central government released Rs.126 billion in 2007-08, and a total of 1.43 billion days employment were generated under the scheme.

He said that 16 million accounts had so far been opened in the scheduled banks and post-offices, where the wages were directly deposited by the district administration.

Minister of State for Commerce and Power Jairam Ramesh underlined the need for better monitoring and evaluation of NREG scheme through effective use of information technology, while Minister of State for Rural Development Chandra Sekhar Sahu said the scheme had enhanced food security among the poor.

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